

Sayback

Writer:

What do you hear me saying overall?

Responder:

Are you saying overall that ...?

With Sayback we're basically checking with the writer to see if what we understand the writer's draft to be saying is what the writer meant to say. But this is also really helpful for us as readers in *figuring out* what a piece of writing is saying.

To give a writer a Sayback for their draft read the whole thing, then, try to sum up in a sentence what you feel the writer is "getting at." Feel free to try this with several "draft" sentences. Write your response in a mildly questioning tone that invites the writer to respond. Think of yourself as inviting the writer to restate and get closer to what they want to say.

It's Like:

Sayback is like what we do sometimes after we hear a teacher give a lot of instructions about an assignment. We ask to clarify, "*Are you saying this draft will be due next week, but also due later as part of the final portfolio?*"

Example:

"Are you saying overall that injustice has always existed and still exists?
Are you saying overall that injustice is usually about the majority oppressing the minority, like with Martin Luther King Jr.?"

Are you saying overall that the fight against injustice starts within the minorities being oppressed?

Are you saying overall that justice can't be revenge, and that usually laws are about revenge?

Are you saying overall that injustice is when a government *says* it grants people rights but doesn't actually live up to what they say?"

Tutor Notes on Sayback

The Writer Can:

I think I'm saying overall ...

Watch out for:

Just listing back smaller claims of the draft, or responding paragraph by paragraph. Sayback should be about what the whole text is saying overall. Use Skeleton Feedback to look at individual claims.

Background & Theory

Used by Sondra Perl and Elaine Avidon of the New York City Writing Project. We revised the lens to add the word “overall” because some students would just make lists of topics or claims in the paper, rather than trying to get at the crux of what the writer seems to be trying to say.