Readers pay special attention to a paper’s introduction, thesis, topic sentences, and conclusion. The thesis and topic sentences of each paragraph should form a backbone of your discussion, with the rest of the paper fleshing these parts out with evidence and explanation. Since the prompt asks you to compare strategies (or documents), compare or contrast the strategies of the second (third, fourth, etc.) author with those of the first. Test: Can you gather the gist of the essay by looking at the key sentences (thesis, topic)?

**Introductions:** Avoid devoting sentences to general information, such as where Cady Stanton was born and the long history of women’s lack of rights. Instead, start by focusing almost immediately on the texts you describe and their contexts. Name the texts and their authors in the first paragraph; you may introduce acronyms for the “Declaration of Independence” (DOI) and the “Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions” (DOS). The thesis (organizing idea) usually appears at the end of this paragraph.

**Thesis:** While your tentative thesis might state, “Truth and Grimke used diction, logic, and appeals to emotion to [verb] their audiences,” such a claim remains generic. Almost all authors use diction, logic, and appeals to emotion, so your task is to specify the kinds of diction, logic, appeals to emotion, and other rhetorical strategies the writers or speakers used. You might mention formal language, references to religion (which?), familiar or domestic figures of speech, complicated syntax, evidence of courage, heart rending life events, etc.

Ex. 1: Douglass’s and Stone and Blackwell’s documents share the strategies of informal diction, use of compelling personal experience, and simple sentence structure; Douglass employs elaborate figurative language and the spouses use repetition and name-calling.

Ex. 2: Douglass and Truth both use compelling personal experience and repetition, but D. adds simple, repetitive sentences in contrast to T.’s complex syntax and legalistic diction.

**Forecasting:** If you mention “personal experience and repetition” (A & B) “simple repetitive sentences” (C), and “complex syntax and legalistic diction” (C & E) and then discuss the elements in the order A, B, C, D, and E, you have forecast that order.

**Topic sentences** introduce the main idea of a paragraph. Although the writer may arrive at that idea after writing the paragraph, seeing it at the start helps the reader. Avoid starting paragraphs with quotations; they belong in paragraphs as supporting evidence.

**Conclusions:** A paper’s last paragraph makes a final impression on the reader. Good conclusions remind readers of the main points (name them vs. expecting readers to remember them). A strong conclusion also synthesizes the main ideas, considers their implications, relates the strategies to the context, finds hidden similarities or reasons for differences, etc. Resist the temptation to generalize; keep a tight focus on the texts and authors you discuss or at least on activism and rhetorical strategies. Make the final sentence memorable; choose precise active verbs (see below) and careful claims.
**Using quotations:** Include quotations as evidence for your claims; readers want to believe you, but evidence will convince them. Make sure to introduce your quotations instead of “dropping” them as independent sentences. In addition, refer to the part of the quotation you find significant. (Readers cannot read your mind, so you must tell them the exact significance you want them to notice.)

Dropped quotation: “Ain’t I a woman?”
Identifying (or introductory) tag: “Truth asks, ‘Ain’t I a woman’?”

**Sentence structure:** Put the main idea in the main clause, not in a subordinate clause. Good basic sentences tell “**who** or **what verbs (what)**” or **subject-verb-object** (optional).

**Verbs:** Use precise **active verbs** versus “to be” verbs (is, are, was, were, been, being).

Ex.: Whereas Cady Stanton’s essay is addressing women, women are not the primary audience for Douglass’s piece. Revise: Whereas C S’s essay [ ] women, D’s piece [ ] a different audience.

Ex. Women who are already in support of women’s rights would be in agreement. Revise: Women who already [ ] women’s rights would [ ].

*Avoid* using the **passive** voice: It can be said, is said by Douglass vs. “Douglass [ ].

*Avoid using a “naked pronoun”* (this, that, these, those); such pronouns confuse readers. Instead, insert nouns to avoid confusion and add content.

Ex.: “This is the true power of Cady Stanton’s argument.”
This *appeal to working women* (or *orderly refutation of objections*) gives the argument power.