

# How to not write a bad academic art paper.

(or, common problems and things to remember)

READ the directions.

Don't just describe the  
reading.

WHY?

Because your reader  
would rather just read the  
reading.

(And come up with their own ideas.)

And because this paper  
isn't about what Edward  
Shanken thinks.

This paper is about  
what **YOU** think.

Do use the reading's  
argument as **SUPPORT**  
for your argument.

What's the difference?

THE READING  
(Edward Shanken's ideas)

THE READING  
(Edward Shanken's ideas)

Your ideas

Your ideas

What about the  
artwork?

Don't JUST describe  
the artwork.

Tell me what the **artwork**  
**DOES** (or fails to do).

But I'm not an art  
expert.

This is you speaking.

Duh.

This is me (Kelly) speaking.

It's ok if I don't agree  
with you....

Me again.

I disagree with  
everybody. (including my  
professors)

Still me.

(except Jesse  
Jackson...mostly)

I think you get the point.

Try.

And **SUPPORT** your  
argument with the  
reading.

And someone else who  
probably knows what  
they're talking about.

The artwork LOOKS  
(sounds, smells, tastes, feels...)  
like this.

This is you in the writing assignment.

The artwork **DOES**  
this.

Still you for a while.

It **DOES** this, because it **LOOKS**  
(*etc.*) like this, or because it **IS** this  
thing. And those things **DO** this, or  
that, sometimes they **DO** that too.

And Edward Shanken  
**AGREES** with me.

And this other person  
**AGREES** with me!

So...

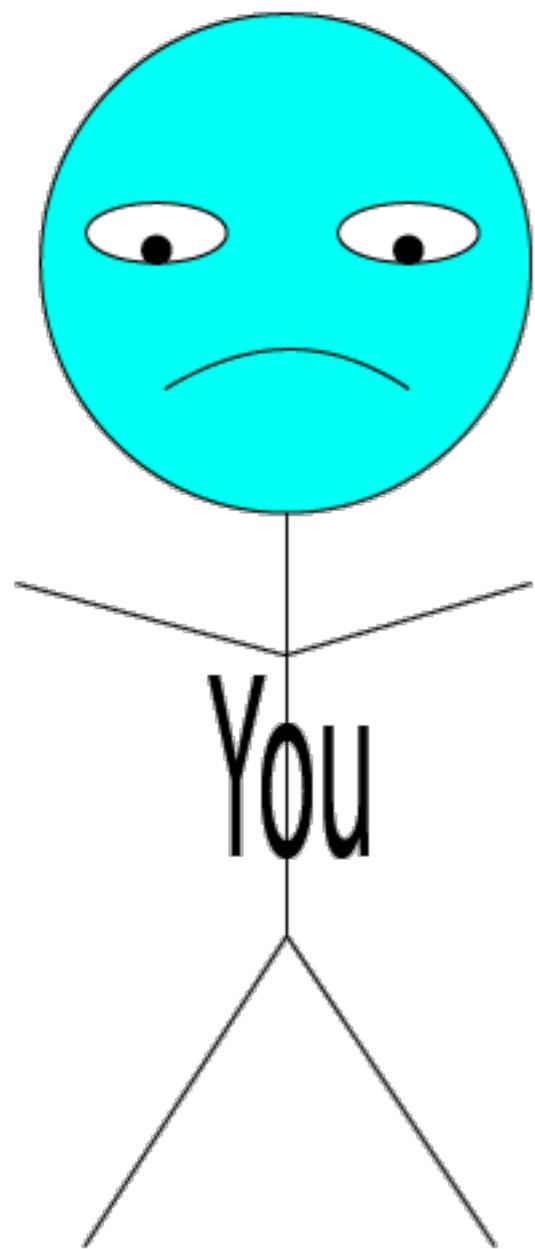
This is something the **artwork** does  
(or doesn't do), because of **these**  
reasons, and **these experts** (artists,  
curators, theorists...) **agree** with me.

The point of your paper.

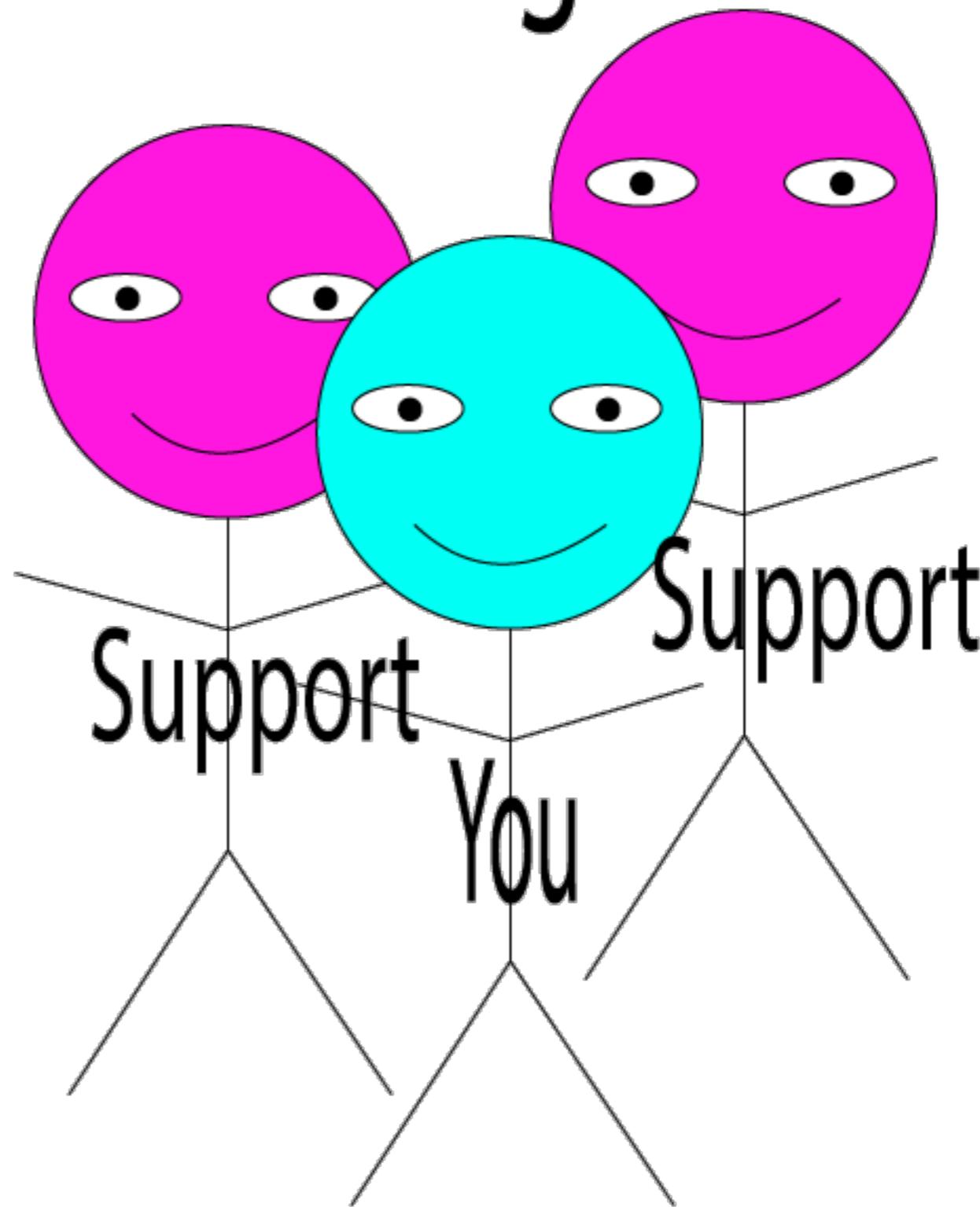
You should agree with  
me too.

I (Kelly) might actually agree with you now.

# Opinion



# Critical Argument



You only have enough  
room to make one  
argument in these writings.

Now that you know  
how to do that.

DON'T

Don't write: I believe, I  
think, I love, My  
interpretation, I agree....

The reader knows that you wrote the writing. They assume that you believe your beliefs and think what you think.

Also don't write: This is true, beautiful, unique, interesting...

Unless you are going to **define**  
truth, beauty, uniqueness, or  
interestingness and find **support**  
for this definition.

Never assume that the reader shares the same definition for conceptual words.

# con·cep·tu·al

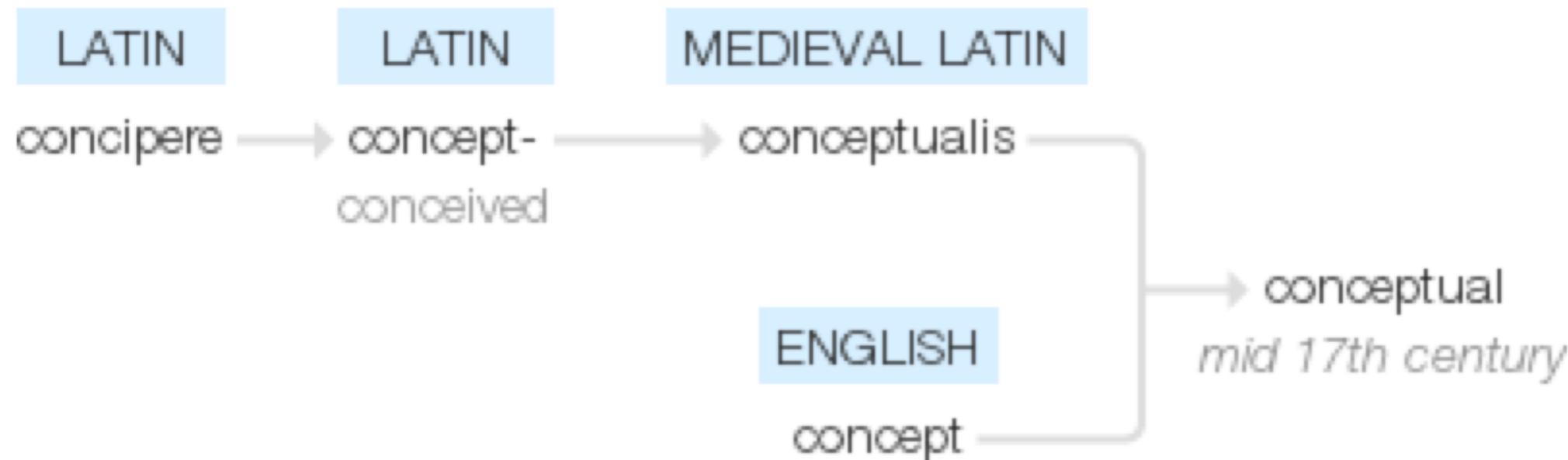
/kən'sep(t)SH(əw)əl/

*adjective*

adjective: **conceptual**

of, relating to, or based on mental concepts.  
"philosophy deals with conceptual difficulties"

## Origin



mid 17th century: from medieval Latin *conceptualis*, from Latin *concept-* 'conceived,' from the verb *concupere* (see [concept](#)).

Speaking of  
definitions...

Never use words that  
you don't understand.

Even if they're from the  
reading.

Or words like thus,  
however, therefore, such  
as, nonetheless...

Words from the reading support your argument; **however**, they work against you if you don't know what they mean.

Also, don't trust  
spellcheck.

Don't forget to use quotes or write "According to..." if you are using someone else's ideas.

Don't ask questions  
unless you also answer  
them.

Questions are great in  
discussion.

But this paper is about  
what **YOU** think.

**ALWAYS** check your  
links.

**READ** your paper  
before you turn it in.

And FOLLOW the  
directions.