

Rhetorical Précis Template

A rhetorical précis (pronounced *pray-see*) differs from a summary in that it is a less neutral, more analytical condensation of both the content and method of the original text. If you think of a summary as primarily a brief representation of what a text says, then you might think of the rhetorical précis as a brief representation of what a text both says and does. Although less common than a summary, a rhetorical précis is a particularly useful way to sum up your understanding of how a text works rhetorically.

► THE STRUCTURE OF A RHETORICAL PRÉCIS

Sentence One: Name of author, genre, and title of work, date in parentheses; a rhetorically active verb; and a THAT clause containing the major assertion or thesis in the text.

Sentence Two: An explanation of how the author develops and supports the thesis.

Sentence Three: A statement of the author's apparent purpose, followed by an "in order to" phrase.

Sentence Four: A description of the intended audience and/or the relationship the author establishes with the audience.

► CLASSIC RHETORICAL PRÉCIS SENTENCE STARTERS

Sentence One (Who/What?)

_____, in the _____, _____,
(Author) (A) (Title, punctuated correctly)
 _____ that _____
(B) (major assertion/thesis statement)

Sentence Two (How?)

_____ supports his/her _____ by _____
(Author's Last Name) (B) (C)

Sentence Three (Why?)

The author's purpose is to _____
(D)
 _____ in order to / so that _____

Sentence Four (To Whom?)

The author writes in _____ tone for _____.
(E) (audience)

Word Bank – some possibilities (see additional handouts)

A	B	C	D	E
article, book review, essay, column, editorial	argues, argument, asserts, assertion, suggests, suggestion, claims, questions, explains, explanation	comparing, contrasting, telling, explaining, illustrating, demonstrating, defining, describing, listing	show point out suggest inform persuade convince	Formal informal sarcastic humorous contemptuous

The Rhetorical Précis Cont’—a Breakdown of B

<p>SENTENCE 1 – include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the name of author,• a phrase describing the author (optional),• the type and title of work, the date of work (inserted in parentheses),• a <u>rhetorically accurate</u> verb (such as “assert,” “argue,” “suggest,” “imply,” “claim,” etc.) that describes what the author is doing in the text,• a THAT clause in which you state the major assertion (thesis statement/claim) of the author’s text.	<p>EXAMPLE:</p> <p>Toni Morrison, a well-known scholar in the humanities, in her essay, “Disturbing Nurses and the Kindness of Sharks,” implies THAT racism in the United States has affected the craft and process of American novelists.</p>
<p>SENTENCE 2 : An explanation of <u>how</u> the author develops and/or supports the thesis (for instance, <i>comparing and contrasting, defining, narrating, illustrating, defining, using humor or sarcasm, relating personal experience, depending on facts /statistics /opinion, etc.</i>). Consider the author’s organization, use of evidence, and/or strategies used to construct his/her argument. Your explanation is usually presented in the same chronological order that the items of support are presented in the work.</p>	<p>EXAMPLE:</p> <p>Morrison supports her implication by describing how Ernest Hemingway writes about black characters and by illustrating his strategies for plot development seen within his novels and short stories.</p>
<p>SENTENCE 3: A statement of the author’s apparent purpose, followed by an IN ORDER TO phrase in which you explain what the author wants the audience to do or feel as a result of reading the work.</p>	<p>EXAMPLE:</p> <p>Her purpose is to make her readers aware of the cruel reality of racism underlying some of the greatest works of American literature IN ORDER TO help them examine the far-reaching effects racism has not only on those discriminated against but also on those who discriminate.</p>
<p>SENTENCE 4: A description of the intended audience and the relationship the author establishes with the audience.</p>	<p>EXAMPLE:</p> <p>She establishes a formal and highly analytical tone with her audience of racially-mixed, theoretically-sophisticated readers and critical interpreters of American literature.</p>

Additional Templates for the Rhetorical Précis (Don't always sound the same)

Provided below are three templates you can refer to when using the rhetorical précis form. You should use these for guidance, but use your best judgment about how to form sentences appropriate to the text and/or author you write about.

1. (Author's credentials), (author's first and last name), **in his/her** (type of text), (title of text), **published in** (publishing info), **addresses the topic of** (topic of text) **and argues that** (argument).
2. **S/he supports this claim by** _____, **then** _____, **and finally** _____.
3. (Author's last name)'s **purpose is to** (author's purpose in writing) **in order to** (change in reader/society the author wants to achieve).
4. **He/she adopts a(n)** _____ **tone for his/her audience, the readers of** (publication) **and others interested in the topic of** _____.

1. **In the** (type of text), (title of text) (year), author (author's first and last name), (author's credentials), **asserts that** (argument) and **suggests** (explanation of sub-claims or resolution).
2. **S/he backs up this claim by doing the following: first, s/he** _____; **next, s/he** _____; **last, s/he** _____.
3. (Author's last name) **appears to write in hopes of** (author's purpose in writing) **in order to** (change in reader/society the author wants to achieve).
4. **Because of the author's** _____ **tone, it seems as if s/he writes for a** _____ **and** _____ **audience.**

1. **In his/her** (type of text) (title of text) (year), (author's credentials) (author's first and last name) **asserts that** (argument) **by addressing** _____, _____, and _____.
2. **By supplying the reader with information about** _____ **and** _____, (author's last name) **builds his/her claims about** _____.
3. (Author's name) **wishes to convey to readers the importance of** (author's purpose in writing) **in order to** (change in reader/society the author wants to achieve).
4. **The author's audience likely consists of those interested in** _____ **as is evident through his/her references to** _____ **and** _____; **s/he addresses readers with a tone that is** _____ **and** _____.