

## – Rhetorical Précis –

A rhetorical précis 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 the 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.

**ADDITION:** I’d like you to select and include two sentences from the text you are reviewing (a film review, a journal article, a book chapter, a newspaper, an entry in an electronic database – whatever!) at the bottom of *each* entry of your Rhetorical Précis. Select these quotes based on your perception of their usefulness to you as you begin thinking through your next essay. Maybe you will use the quote; maybe you won’t. The point is to get you thinking about how other “voices” *might* be integrated into your own writing, about how other “voices” inform and/or influence your own thinking.

### Rhetorical Précis: A [MadLibs](#)-Style Sentence Starters

**What follows is meant to assist us as we *begin* this process. We’ve discussed scaffolding a fair number of times. Here’s another example of it. As you become more proficient, you need not follow this formula *exactly* every time, but this model can help you get in the rhythm of what we’re doing here....**

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## Rhetorical Précis: A Scaffold

### Sentence One || *What?*

*Name of the 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.*

\_\_\_\_\_, in the \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,  
 (Author) (A) (Title)

\_\_\_\_\_ that \_\_\_\_\_  
 (B)

### Sentence Two || *How?*

*An explanation of how the author develops and supports the thesis.*

\_\_\_\_\_ supports his/her/their \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Author's Last Name) (B) (C)

### Sentence Three || *Why?*

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

The author's purpose is to \_\_\_\_\_  
 (D)

\_\_\_\_\_ in order to / so that \_\_\_\_\_.

### Sentence Four || *To Whom?*

*A description of the intended audience and/or the relationship the author establishes with the audience.*

The author writes in a \_\_\_\_\_ tone for \_\_\_\_\_.  
 (E) (audience – who is it?)

**Potentially useful quotation one:** \_\_\_\_\_.

**Potentially useful quotation two:** \_\_\_\_\_.

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, argumentative, humorous, non/biased, contemptuous, approachable