

The Rhetorical Precis

from the work of Margaret Woodworth

This type of writing provides a condensed statement of the text's main point (the summary part), followed by brief statements about the text's rhetorical elements: the author's purpose, methods and intended audience (the analysis part).

A Structure for the Rhetorical Precis

- **Sentence #1:** Name of author, genre and title of work (date in parentheses)... a rhetorically accurate VERB (such as "claims," "argues," "suggests," "asserts," etc.)...a THAT clause containing the main idea or thesis statement of the work.
- **Sentence #2:** A section-by-section explanation of what the author is doing (verb) and how he/she is doing it (methods)
- **Sentence #3:** A statement of the author's apparent purpose, followed by an "IN ORDER TO" phrase.
- **Sentence #4:** A description of the intended audience and/or the relationship the author establishes with the audience.

Fill in Starter Template

1. In _____'s _____ (date),
 (author) (genre) (title)
 she _____ that _____.
 (verb) (main idea)

2. The author first _____ by/with _____;
 (verb phrase) (methods)

she then _____ by/with _____,
 (verb phrase) (methods)

and to conclude she _____
 (verb phrase)

by/with _____.
 (methods)

3. Her purpose is to _____ in order to _____.

4. She seems to have a _____ audience in mind because

_____.

Sample Rhetorical Precis

In her online article “Who Cares if Johnny Can’t Read” (1997), Larissa McFarquhar asserts that Americans are reading more than ever despite claims to the contrary, and it is time to reconsider why we value reading so much, especially certain kinds of “high culture” reading. MacFarquhar supports her claims about American reading habits with facts and statistics that compare past and present reading practices, and she challenges common assumptions by raising questions about reading’s intrinsic value. Her purpose is to dispel certain myths in order to raise new and more important questions about the value of reading and other media in our culture. She seems to have a young, hip, somewhat irreverent audience in mind because her tone is sarcastic, and she suggests that the ideas she opposes are old-fashioned positions.