

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_\_

## How to Write a Rhetorical Précis: A "Reading Rhetorically" Assignment

### Key Term

**Rhetorical Précis:** a method of description that enables one to quickly and effectively describe the argument an author is making in a text; a highly structured summary, usually a paragraph or two, which records the essential rhetorical elements in any spoken or written discourse.

### Introduction

Your rhetorical précis will only be comprised of four sentences.

### How to Write a Rhetorical Précis

Each sentence in a rhetorical précis has a specific purpose. Read the information below to learn the purpose of each.

#### **Sentence #1:**

In the first sentence, provide the name of the author, a phrase describing the author (if possible), the type and title of the work, the date the work was published in parenthesis right after the title, a rhetorically accurate verb (e.g. "asserts," "argues," "suggests," "implies," "claims," etc.) that describes what the author is **doing** in the text, and a THAT clause in which you state the major assertion (the claim or argument) of the author's text.

**Example** (indent the first sentence as it is the beginning of a paragraph):

*In the introduction to his book The Nature of Prejudice (1954), Gordon Allport, a Harvard psychologist, suggests that we need a better, more comprehensive, working definition of the word prejudice.*

#### **Sentence #2:**

In sentence number two, explain how the author develops, structures, and/or supports the argument (e.g. comparing and contrasting, narrating, illustrating, defining, etc.). Present your explanation in the same chronological order that the items of support are presented in the work.

**Example** (the sentence that follows “Example #1” above):

*He gives readers a list of apparent instances of prejudices in the opening passage, and, in the second half of the piece, he discusses various existing definitions of prejudice, each one a little more complex than the one before.*

**Sentence #3**

In the third sentence, state the author’s apparent purpose for writing the text, followed by an “**in order to**” phrase which explains what the author wants the audience to do, feel, or understand as a result of reading the text.

**Example** (the sentence that follows “Example #2” above):

*Allport wrote this piece in order for readers to have a definitive definition of the word prejudice.*

**Sentence #4**

In the fourth sentence, describe the intended audience

**Example** (the sentence that follows “Example # 3” above):

*His audience appears to be anyone who would be concerned about prejudice in society and/or in themselves.*

**Example of a Rhetorical Précis:**

*In the introduction to his book The Nature of Prejudice (1954), Gordon Allport, a Harvard psychologist, suggests that we need a better, more comprehensive, working definition of the word prejudice. He gives readers a list of apparent instances of prejudices in the opening passage, and, in the second half of the piece, he discusses various existing definitions of prejudice, each one a little more complex than the one before. Allport wrote this piece in order for readers to have a definitive definition of the word prejudice. His audience appears to be anyone who would be concerned about prejudice in society and/or in themselves.*

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### Four-Sentence Summary Frame for Informational Text (Precis)

**Title of Selection:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Sentence 1 (Who/What?)**

\_\_\_\_\_ in the \_\_\_\_\_,  
(Author's Full Name) (A-noun) (Title of text)  
 \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, that \_\_\_\_\_  
(B-verb)

**Sentence 2 (How?)**

\_\_\_\_\_ supports his/her \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_  
(Author's Last Name) (B-noun) (C-verb / used as gerund)

**Sentence 3 (Why?)**

The author's purpose is to \_\_\_\_\_  
(D-verb / used as infinitive)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ in order to/so that \_\_\_\_\_

**Sentence 4 (To Whom?)**

The author writes in a \_\_\_\_\_ style for \_\_\_\_\_  
(E-adjective)  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
(his/her audience, the readers of)  
 and others interested in the topic of \_\_\_\_\_

**Word Bank** These are merely suggestions. Feel free to use other words.

A (genre)	B	C	D	E
(news/magazine/journal) article book review, editorial, first-hand report, personal or biographical essay, biography, research report	analyzes/analysis argues/argument, asserts/assertion, discusses/discussion, focuses on/focus explains/explanation	comparing / contrasting retelling, explaining, illustrating, defending, demonstrating, defining, describing, listing, arguing, showing, justifying, relating, reporting, noting, emphasizing, pointing out, highlighting the fact	argue, call attention to, deny, show, point out, prove suggest, inform, persuade, disclose, report, convince	<u>(register/language)</u> formal, impersonal casual, informal <u>(tone)</u> humorous, emotional, friendly, reasoned, logical, exaggerated,