

THE RHETORICAL PRÉCIS

A Starting Point for Analysis

**adapted 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).

	This sentence(s) establishes the...	<i>For example...</i>
Sentence 1. Name of the author, genre, and title of the work (date in parenthesis, if available) + a rhetorically accurate VERB (see list at end) + a THAT clause containing the major assertion or thesis statement of the work.	FACTS MAIN IDEA	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 types of “high culture” reading.
Sentence 2. A section-by-section explanation of what the author is doing (VERB) and how he/she is doing it; the proof	EVIDENCE	McFarquhar 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.
Sentence 3. A explanation of the author’s apparent purpose, followed by an IN ORDER TO statement	PURPOSE / INTENT	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.
Sentence 4. A description of the effect on the intended audience and/or the relationship the author establishes with the audience	EFFECT ON AUDIENCE	Her argument is particularly effective for a younger, somewhat irreverent audience because of her sarcastic tone, suggesting that the ideas she opposes are old-fashioned positions.

AP ENGLISH EXCELLENCE

ASSERT
what

PROOF
how

EXPLAIN
why

EFFECT
to whom?