

Writing a Rhetorical Precis

RI.9-10.1 – Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RI.9-10.2 – Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

RI.9-10.3 – Analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed, and the connections that are drawn between them.

RI.9-10.6 – Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.

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RI.9-10.9 – Analyze seminal U.S. documents of historical and literary significance (e.g., Washington’s Farewell Address, the Gettysburg Address, Roosevelt’s Four Freedoms speech, King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail”), including how they address related themes and concept.

W.9-10.1d – Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.

W.9-10.2 – Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content

Procedures

1. Assign an essay or speech to read.
2. Instruct students to annotate the reading selection or simply have them read it and discuss it. Your discussion should focus on: (1) the thesis statement or main idea; (2) how the author develops and supports the thesis; (3) the author’s purpose; (4) the intended audience.
3. Hand out the rhetorical precis handout provided. It contains all the directions you need.

Here's an example.

In his famous “I Have a Dream” speech (August 28, 1963), Martin Luther King Jr claims that it’s time that the rights guaranteed by the Declaration of Independence and US Constitution need to be applied to all citizens—black or white. King alludes to foundational US documents—the Emancipation Proclamation, Declaration of Independence and Constitution; foundational religious literature—the Bible and spirituals; and uses metaphors and analogies about business and money. King’s speech attempts to convince the American people that his cause is just while at the same time motivating his followers to take action. His ultimate purpose is to persuade Congress to pass legislation guaranteeing rights to all citizens (which manifests itself just months later with the Civil Rights Act of 1964). King’s obvious audience are the people in attendance at the speech. His remarks, however, are intended for a national audience, people who are familiar with important American philosophies of freedom. A more specific audience would be Congress, who handles their business just minutes away from the location of his famous speech.

Here's a legend/key

1. The first sentence should contain the name of the author, genre, title of work, date in parentheses, a rhetorically accurate verb (asserts, argues, suggests, implies, claims), and a “that” clause that contains the main point of the work (the thesis statement).
2. Next is an explanation of how the author develops his or her claim and supports the thesis statement.
3. Third is a statement of the author’s purpose followed by an “in order to” statement or phrase (the action the author/speaker desires)
4. A description of the intended audience and/or the relationship established by the author with the audience.

Rhetorical Précis

| | A | B | C | D |
|--------------------|--|---|---|--|
| Content | Paragraph contains all necessary elements of a rhetorical précis. All information is clear, accurate, and formatted correctly. | Paragraph contains all necessary elements of a rhetorical précis. Most information is clear, accurate, and formatted correctly. | Paragraph contains all necessary elements of a rhetorical précis. Some information is clear, accurate, and formatted correctly. | Paragraph is missing one of the necessary elements of a rhetorical précis. |
| Analysis | Paragraph contains accurate and clear analysis of the author's main idea, methods, intended audience, and purpose. | Paragraph contains accurate analysis of the author's main idea, methods, intended audience, and purpose. | Paragraph contains analysis of the author's main idea, methods, intended audience, and purpose. | Paragraph doesn't contain analysis for all the required elements. |
| Style | Style is appropriate for audience. Style includes word choice, sentence structure, use or non-use of figurative language, and voice. | Style is mostly appropriate for audience. Style includes word choice, sentence structure, use or non-use of figurative language, and voice. | Style is below standard appropriate for audience. Style includes word choice, sentence structure, use or non-use of figurative language, and voice. | Style is not appropriate for audience. Style includes word choice, sentence structure, use or non-use of figurative language, and voice. |
| Conventions | There are no mistakes in spelling, punctuation, grammar, etc. | There are 1-2 mistakes in spelling, punctuation, grammar, etc. | There are 3-4 mistakes in spelling, punctuation, grammar, etc. | There are 5-6 mistakes in spelling, punctuation, grammar, etc. |

Name: _____

Due Date: _____

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