

# Sample Rhetorical Précis

Below is a sample Rhetorical Précis with comments embedded. To read the comments, position the cursor over the ✓ mark and click on it. A new window will open with a commentary on that part of the Rhetorical Précis. This interactive sample is designed to give you a way to examine an example of a well-formed Précis and to explore commentary about it. First, read through the Précis at least twice. Make note of the elements of the Rhetorical Précis as listed below. Identify each element of the directions in the sample. Then explore the commentary by selecting the comment marks ✓. When you select a comment mark, make sure to make note of the context in the Précis it occurs in. You are working here to understand the form of Rhetorical Précis.

## The Rhetorical Précis Format

- a) In a single coherent sentence give the following:
  - name of the author, title of the work, date in parenthesis;
  - a rhetorically accurate verb (such as "assert," "argue," "deny," "refute," "prove," "disprove," "explain," etc.);
  - a *that* clause containing the major claim (thesis statement) of the work.
- b) In a single coherent sentence give an explanation of how the author develops and supports the major claim (thesis statement).
- c) In a single coherent sentence give a statement of the author's purpose, followed by an "in order" phrase.
- d) In a single coherent sentence give a description of the intended audience and/or the relationship the author establishes with the audience.

Charles S. Peirce's ✓ article, "The Fixation of Belief (1877)," ✓ asserts that ✓ humans have psychological and social mechanisms designed to protect and cement (or "fix") our beliefs. ✓ Peirce backs this claim up with descriptions of four methods of fixing belief, pointing out the effectiveness and potential weaknesses of each method. ✓ Peirce's purpose is to point out the ways that people commonly establish their belief systems ✓ in order to ✓ jolt the awareness of the reader into considering how their own belief system may be the product of such methods and to consider what Peirce calls "the method of science" as a progressive alternative to the other three. ✓ Given the technical language used in the article, Peirce is writing to an well-educated audience with some knowledge of philosophy and history and a willingness to other ways of thinking. ✓

