

The 2-Sentence Rhetorical Summary

And Why You Should Integrate It Into Your Source-Based Essays

In academic essay writing, students are often expected to include outside sources. Too often, though, writers don't *introduce* or *summarize* their sources; instead, they jump right into *quoting* a source or *paraphrasing* a specific point the author(s) of the source make.

But academic readers (ahem ahem, your professors) as well as *any reader who may be unfamiliar with your sources* (aka: likely everybody) will often expect (and need!) two things:

1. a **rhetorical introduction** to the source (so as to gauge its context and credibility), and
2. a **brief summary** of the source (so as to make better sense of the more specific points or quotes from the source that you, the writer, intend to share to make *your own* points).

Thus, a good rule of thumb for academic writing is*:

**If you're going to include sources in your academic writing,
be sure to first introduce and briefly summarize them for your reader.**

*There is at least one exception, however: when you're writing in the **sciences**, sometimes only [parenthetical citations](#) are called for. So do check with your science professors about their preferences for source uses.

What *rhetorical* summaries are not:

- Your response to, reflections on, or evaluation of the text (your opinions or feelings about what's good/bad or wrong/right, what's missing, what's important, etc.)
- Your discussion of a specific claim, example, quote, or concept of a source
- Your own argument or analysis as inspired by the text

All of those “moves” can (and many should!) come later in your essay—**but only after** you've introduced and summarized the source.

A Breakdown of a Highly Structured 2-Sentence Summary

<p>SENTENCE 1 – include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the name of author, • a phrase describing the author’s credentials, • the type (genre) and title of work (and sometimes the publication title and date of the publication), • a rhetorically accurate verb (such as “assert,” “argue,” “suggest,” “imply,” “claim,” “posit,” etc.) that describes what the author is <i>doing</i> in the text, • a <u>THAT</u> clause in which you state the major assertion (thesis statement/claim/purpose) of the author’s text. 	<p>EXAMPLE:</p> <p>Toni Morrison, a well-known scholar in the humanities, in her essay, “Disturbing Nurses and the Kindness of Sharks,” implies <u>THAT</u> racism in the United States has affected the craft and process of American novelists.</p>
<p>SENTENCE 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An explanation of how the author develops and/or supports the thesis (for instance, <i>comparing and contrasting, defining, narrating, illustrating, defining, using humor or sarcasm, relating personal experience, depending on facts /statistics /opinion, etc.</i>). • Consider the author’s organization, use of evidence, and/or strategies used to construct his/her argument. • Note how after the author’s full name is used once, the writer refers to them only by last name. 	<p>EXAMPLE:</p> <p>Morrison supports her implication by describing how Ernest Hemingway writes about black characters and by illustrating his strategies for plot development seen within his novels and short stories.</p>

And there you have it, folks:

a two-sentence rhetorical summary
that can be integrated into your essay to introduce a source!

But wait! There’s more! Sometimes you may want to emphasize a point that has to do with the source’s purpose and audience. In that case, you can go for a third **OPTIONAL** sentence:

<p>SENTENCE 3 (optional):</p> <p>A statement of the author’s apparent purpose, followed by an IN ORDER TO phrase in which you explain what the author wants their <u>specific audience</u> to do or feel in response to the text.</p>	<p>EXAMPLE:</p> <p>Her purpose is to expose the cruel reality of racism underlying some of the greatest works of American literature IN ORDER TO encourage <u>any reader who has read such literature</u> to examine the far-reaching effects racism has not only on those discriminated against but also on those who discriminate.</p>
--	---

Templates for the Rhetorical 2-Sentence Summary

Now it's your turn! Provided below are three templates you can refer to when introducing a source in your essays. You should refer to these for guidance, but use your best judgment about how to reform and vary your sentences so as to not appear formulaic / robotic. If your sentences get too long and unwieldy, just break them up into multiple sentences. NBD.

1. (Author's credentials), (author's first and last name), **in his/her/their** (type of text), (title of text), **published in** (publishing info), **addresses the topic of** (topic of text) **and argues that** (argument).
2. **S/he/They support(s) this claim by** _____, **then** _____, **and finally** _____.
3. (Author's last name)'s **purpose is to** (author's purpose in writing) **in order to** (goal the author wants to achieve) **for his/her/their audience, the readers of** (publication) **and others interested in the topic of** _____. (OPTIONAL SENTENCE)

1. **In the** (type of text), (title of text) ((year)), **author** (author's first and last name), (author's credentials), **asserts that** (argument) **and suggests** (explanation of sub-claims or resolution).
2. **S/he/They back(s) up this claim by doing the following: first, s/he/they** _____; **next, s/he/they** _____; **last, s/he/they** _____.
3. (Author's last name) **appears to write for** (author's intended audience) **in order to** (author's purpose in writing/the change in society they aim to achieve). (OPTIONAL SENTENCE)

1. **In his/her/their** (type of text) (title of text) ((year)), (author's credentials) (author's first and last name) **asserts that** (argument) **by addressing** _____, _____, **and** _____.
2. **By supplying information about** _____ **and** _____, (author's last name) **builds his/her claims about** _____.
3. (Author's name)'s **audience likely consists of those interested in** _____; **the author wishes to convey to these readers the importance of** (author's purpose in writing) **in order to** (change in reader/society the author wants to achieve). (OPTIONAL SENTENCE)