

WRITING A PRÉCIS

A précis is the abbreviated version of a literary text. It contains only the “essentials” of the text and so offers readers just the highlights of the short story, poem, or novel. (A critical article written about the literary work requires an abstract, rather than a précis, for its summary.) A précis is written in your own words in *objective, accurate, precise* language, and avoids any opinion or analysis. Below is an example of a précis written by students in a Composition II class.

Précis for Guy de Maupassant’s “The Necklace”

A charming Mathilde “settles” to marry Loisel, a clerk. Daydreaming about wealth, she pouts when Loisel gives her the invitation to a special party. Her attire is improper, she insists. Finally, he buys her a dress and advises her to wear her rich friend’s necklace. She has a successful evening. However, at home, she discovers the necklace gone. They use loan shark money to replace the necklace and move to an attic. Mathilde cooks her meals, scrubs her floors, and haggles with merchants. Ten years later, having paid the debt, she learns that the necklace was fake.