

Determining The Author's Main Purpose

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Directions and Key Concept

For each item, the task is to determine the author's main purpose: to entertain, persuade, inform, or combine two or more purposes. The best answer depends on the dominant effect the author is trying to create. A text may contain facts without having information as its primary purpose, and a story may persuade through its plot while still mainly entertaining. Genre, tone, evidence, intended audience, and the action expected from the reader all provide clues (NSW Department of Education, n.d.).

To inform means to explain, describe, clarify, or provide factual knowledge. To persuade means to influence a belief, judgment, choice, or behavior. To entertain means to engage the reader through story, imagery, humor, suspense, emotion, or imaginative language. These purposes overlap. The analysis below identifies the primary purpose first and then explains any important secondary purpose (ReadWriteThink, n.d.).

1. A Story About a Family Trying to Stay Together and Survive the Great Depression in the Midwest During the 1930s

Author's purpose: Entertain and inform.

The primary purpose is likely to entertain because the text is described as a story about a family. A story normally develops characters, conflict, setting, emotion, and a sequence of events intended to keep readers interested. The struggle to remain united during economic hardship can create suspense and emotional attachment. Readers may wonder whether the family will find food, work, shelter, or a way to preserve its relationships.

The story may also inform readers about the Great Depression. Through the family's experiences, readers can learn about unemployment, farm loss, migration, poverty, relief programs, changing family roles, and life in the Midwestern United States during the 1930s. However, the information is delivered through fictional or narrative form rather than as a complete historical account. The author's dominant purpose remains entertainment, while historical setting creates an informative secondary purpose.

To classify the work accurately, a reader should examine whether the historical details are researched

and central. If the Great Depression is merely background for an unrelated adventure, the informative purpose is weaker. If the family's daily experiences are used deliberately to teach history, both purposes are strong.

2. A Section in a History Book Describing the Conditions and Causes of the Great Depression in the Midwest During the 1930s

Author's purpose: Inform.

The main purpose of a history-book section is to provide factual explanation. The author would likely define economic conditions, identify causes, present dates, compare regions, use evidence, and explain effects on farms, banks, industries, families, and communities. The organization may include headings, maps, photographs, statistics, and primary-source quotations.

Unlike the family story in item one, this text is not primarily designed around fictional suspense or character development. It may be engaging and may use vivid examples, but those techniques support learning. The reader is expected to understand why the Depression occurred and how it affected the Midwest.

A history writer may also attempt to persuade readers toward a particular interpretation, such as emphasizing banking failure, agricultural overproduction, inequality, policy decisions, or environmental disaster. Nevertheless, the description of causes and conditions indicates that informing is the central purpose. Any persuasive element should be supported through historical evidence.

3. An Instructional Booklet Describing How to Operate a Smartphone

Author's purpose: Inform.

The booklet is intended to teach the user how to perform tasks. It may explain how to turn on the device, connect to a network, make calls, send messages, install applications, change settings, protect privacy, and solve common problems. Instructions are usually arranged in numbered steps and supported by diagrams or screenshots.

The practical outcome is successful operation of the smartphone. The author is not mainly asking the reader to believe that one phone is superior or trying to create an imaginative experience. Clear, accurate, and accessible information is therefore the main purpose.

Instructional writing can contain minor persuasive elements, such as warnings to use a secure password or recommendations to enable updates. These statements encourage safe behavior, but they remain part of the broader informative purpose. The booklet’s success is measured by whether the user can understand and complete the procedures.

4. An Article in Which the Author Argues That an iPhone Is Better Than an Android Phone

Author’s purpose: Persuade.

The word “argues” signals persuasion. The author wants readers to agree that the iPhone is superior. The article may compare design, software updates, privacy, security, resale value, cameras, applications, ecosystem integration, customization, price, or reliability. Evidence and examples may be used, but they are selected to support a judgment.

The earlier answer states that there are no supporting facts, but an argumentative article can include many facts. The presence of facts does not change the dominant purpose. Information becomes part of persuasion when it is organized to influence preference. A responsible writer should also acknowledge Android strengths and define what “better” means because different users value different features.

The intended reader may be deciding which phone to purchase or debating the two platforms. The author hopes to affect that decision. Therefore, persuasion is the best classification, with information functioning as supporting material.

5. A Poem About Why the iPhone Is the Greatest Consumer Electronic Device Ever Made

Author’s purpose: Entertain and persuade.

A poem is normally written to create an imaginative, emotional, rhythmic, or humorous experience. Word choice, imagery, sound, exaggeration, symbolism, and structure entertain the reader. A poem praising the iPhone may be serious, playful, ironic, or satirical.

The claim that the iPhone is the greatest device also gives the poem a persuasive purpose. The speaker may celebrate convenience, design, communication, creativity, or cultural impact in a way that encourages admiration. Even exaggerated praise can shape the reader’s view.

Informing is not the strongest secondary purpose merely because the poem mentions a thesis. A thesis is a claim, not necessarily factual instruction. Unless the poem provides substantial explanatory

information, it is more accurate to classify it as entertaining and persuading. If the praise is sarcastic and actually criticizes dependence on technology, the persuasive message may be the opposite of the literal statement. Tone must therefore be examined.

6. The Story of a Young Athlete Who Takes Steroids and Whose Life and Future Fall Apart

Author's purpose: Entertain and persuade, with an informative element.

The story format suggests entertainment. Readers follow a character, conflict, decisions, consequences, and emotional development. The athlete's rise and decline may create tension and sympathy. Narrative details make the issue memorable.

The consequences of steroid use strongly suggest a persuasive purpose. By showing health problems, damaged relationships, lost opportunities, suspension, or regret, the author discourages readers from using steroids. This is persuasion through example rather than direct command.

The story may also inform if it accurately explains physical or psychological effects. However, fictional consequences alone should not be treated as medical evidence. Its principal purposes are to entertain and persuade. The reader should distinguish a cautionary narrative from a scientific report.

7. A Medical Report Describing the Effects of Steroids on the Human Body

Author's purpose: Inform.

A medical report is designed to present clinical or scientific information. It may explain the difference between prescribed corticosteroids and anabolic-androgenic steroids, describe intended uses, summarize adverse effects, report observations, and discuss risk according to dose and duration. It should use precise terminology and evidence.

The report may affect behavior because readers could decide not to misuse steroids after learning the risks. That consequence does not automatically make persuasion the main purpose. The writer's immediate task is to describe and explain the effects accurately rather than to tell a story or advocate a brand.

The original explanation calls a medical report "solid documentation of diagnosis or treatment." Some medical reports do document individual diagnosis, but the description here could also refer to a research or educational report. The classification remains informative because the author provides knowledge about the body.

8. A Speech by a Professional Athlete Listing the Negative Effects of Steroids and Urging Young Athletes Not to Use Them

Author's purpose: Persuade and inform.

The word “urging” clearly signals persuasion. The speaker wants young athletes to avoid steroids. The athlete may use personal credibility, emotional examples, warnings about careers, and appeals to health, fairness, or integrity. The expected outcome is a behavioral choice.

The list of negative effects gives the speech an informative purpose as well. The audience learns about health risks, rule violations, dependency, mood changes, or long-term consequences. Accurate facts strengthen the persuasive message.

The dominant purpose is persuasion because the information is selected to change behavior. Ethos is created by the speaker's professional status, logos through evidence, and pathos through concern for young athletes. A strong speech should avoid exaggeration because unreliable claims can weaken trust.

9. A Booklet Containing School Rules and the Consequences for Violating Them

Author's purpose: Inform, with a persuasive or regulatory secondary purpose.

The booklet primarily informs students and families about expected conduct. It may define attendance rules, academic honesty, dress, technology use, bullying, safety, discipline, appeal, and consequences. Clear communication is necessary so that people know what the school requires.

The consequences are also intended to discourage violations and encourage compliance. This creates a persuasive or regulatory element. However, the text is not necessarily arguing that each rule is morally best. Its central purpose is to provide official information about the institution's policies.

The distinction matters because consequences do more than persuade; they establish administrative expectations. A fair booklet should explain rules in understandable language, identify student rights, and describe how decisions can be reviewed. Information supports accountability.

10. A Story About a Young Boy Who Moves to a New School, Is Bullied, Gains Confidence Through a Sports Team, and Learns to Stand Up for Himself

Author's purpose: Entertain and persuade.

The text is a story, so entertainment is a major purpose. Readers follow the boy's move, isolation, conflict, friendship, training, and growth. Character development and emotional resolution create engagement.

The story also persuades readers that bullying should be confronted, supportive communities matter, and confidence can develop through participation. It may encourage bystanders to help or victims to seek support. The message is communicated through the character's experience rather than through a formal argument.

The classification should not imply that joining sports is the only or universally correct response to bullying. A responsible story can show adults, school policy, peers, counseling, and safety planning as part of the solution. The persuasive lesson is broader: people deserve support, and bullying should not be accepted.

How Genre Reveals Purpose

Genre provides an initial clue. Stories and poems commonly entertain, textbooks and reports commonly inform, and editorials and speeches commonly persuade. Genre is not a final answer because writers can combine purposes. A historical novel informs, a satirical poem persuades, and a public-service story may teach safety (NSW Department of Education, n.d.).

Readers should examine what occupies the most space and what the author expects after reading. If the main result is new knowledge, the purpose is informative. If the author expects agreement or action, it is persuasive. If the main effect is imaginative or emotional engagement, it is entertaining.

Tone and Language

Neutral definitions, chronological explanation, and evidence often signal information. Commands, evaluative words, claims of superiority, emotional appeals, and calls to action often signal persuasion. Dialogue, imagery, humor, suspense, and figurative language often signal entertainment (ReadWriteThink, n.d.).

These signals can overlap. A persuasive speech may tell a moving story, and an informative article

may use humor. The reader should identify the dominant pattern rather than count isolated words.

Facts Do Not Automatically Mean “Inform”

Almost every persuasive text uses information. An advertisement may state battery life, price, or speed, but those facts are presented to influence a purchase. The main purpose is therefore persuasion. Similarly, a story can contain accurate history while remaining primarily entertainment (NSW Department of Education, n.d.).

The question is not whether facts appear. It is why they appear and how they are organized. Information supporting a claim serves persuasion; information explaining a subject without advocating a decision serves an informative purpose.

Entertainment Can Carry a Serious Message

A story about steroids or bullying may be enjoyable to read while addressing serious harm. Entertainment does not mean the topic is trivial. Narrative can make ethical and health issues easier to understand by showing consequences through characters.

Readers should remain aware that fictional events are constructed. A story can persuade strongly even when it does not provide complete or representative evidence. Additional factual sources may be necessary for real-life decisions.

Conclusion

Author’s purpose is best identified by examining genre, tone, evidence, audience, and intended effect. The Great Depression story entertains and informs, while the history-book section and smartphone manual primarily inform. The iPhone article persuades, and the iPhone poem entertains and persuades. The steroid story entertains and discourages misuse, while the medical report informs and the athlete’s speech persuades through information.

The school-rule booklet primarily informs while encouraging compliance. The bullying story entertains and promotes confidence, support, and resistance to mistreatment. Several items combine purposes, but one purpose usually remains dominant. Accurate classification requires explaining not only what the text contains but what the author is trying to accomplish with it.

References

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