

AUTHOR'S PURPOSE

1. The **author's purpose** answers the questions, "What is the author trying to do? Why has he author written this piece?" The **author's purpose** for writing may be defined or described in the following ways:
 - A. It is the author's reason for writing.
 - B. It is *what* the author hopes to convey to the reader and why he wants to convey it.
 - C. It is the effect that the author wants to create with words.
 - D. It is expressed through the tone or mood of the writing.
 - E. It is reflected in the vocabulary the author chooses to use.
 - F. It is often clearly stated for the reader.
 - G. It is sometimes relatively hidden and must be inferred by the reader.
 - H. It is influenced by the author's background, knowledge, and beliefs about the subject.

2. The four **modes of discourse** or **author's purpose** are: narration, description, exposition, persuasion.

A. Narration: to tell a story (fictional) or recount events.

When the author's purpose is *to tell a story* or recount events-narrate-then the author will write in ways that

- a. Develop characters
- b. **Present a sequence** of events
- c. To tell a story
- d. Develop a mood appropriate to the story

Example: The first public Fourth of July celebration I remember was Tuscon, Arizona, in 1966. My family and I arrived at the fair grounds a little before dusk, and the only space we found to sit was on a little rise overlooking a huge field filled with people. As the sn set , people in the field started lighting fireworks, shooting off Roman candles and bottle rockets. It sounded like a battle--and looked like a riot. Suddenly, from a hundred feet behind where we were sitting, the real show began. .

B. Description: to appeal to the senses in order to create an image in the mind of the reader.

When the author's purpose is to *create an image* in the mind of the reader-describe-then the author will write in ways that

- a. Create a mental picture for the reader
- b. Involve the reader's imagination
- c. Specify details that appeal to the senses
- d. Follow a spatial organization so the reader is oriented within the setting of the story
- e. Describe the places, people, and events
- f. Create a sensory impressions
- g. Make the people and events come alive
- h. Create mood as well as images

Example: Hard and cruel and bitter was the land that met his gaze. Before his feet the highest ridge of the Ephel Duath fell steeply in great cliffs down into a dark trough, on the further side of which there rose another ridge, much lower, its edge notched and jagged with crags like fangs that stood out black against the red light behind them: it was the grim Morgai, the inner ring of the fences of the land. Far beyond it, but almost straight ahead, across a wide lake of darkness dotted with tiny fires, there was a great burning glow; and from it rose in huge columns a swirling smoke, dusky red at the roots, black above where it merged into the billowing canopy that roofed in all the accursed land.

C. Exposition: To present information or instruction.

When the author's purpose is *to provide the reader with information*-exposition- then the author will write in ways that

- a. Present information clearly and accurately
- b. Inform the reader fully about the topic
- c. Clarify confusing information for the reader
- d. Give directions for the reader to follow
- e. Present sequences of events or steps as they have happened or can happen
- f. Define terms which have special meanings in context
- g. Define terms which may be unfamiliar or confusing to the reader
- h. Discuss concepts, premises, theories, and ideas
- I. Organize information into meaningful patterns
- j. Present and analyze relevant data and information
- k. Enumerate (list) related items, facts, and ideas
- l. Compare ways in which topics are related or similar
- m. Contrast the ways in which topics are diverse or different
- n. Analyze the causes of or the results of events or actions
- o. Analyze ideas, breaking them down into their various parts
- p. Separate and identify facts and opinions
- q. Present information on both sides of an issue so the reader can make an informed decision

Most of the writing in college textbooks is **exposition**. Textbooks are largely written to provide information or give instruction to the reader. The author may use many different ways of organizing this informational material.

Example: Electoral rules differ also. Whereas American candidates can only run for public office in the district or state in which they live, British candidates can represent a district regardless of where they live. This is due to a difference in the theory of government. A British MP represents the nation; a member of the U.S. Congress represents a district.

D. Persuasion: to convince the reader of a particular point of view, usually the author's.

When the **author's purpose or mode of discourse** is to *convince the reader of a particular point of view* through persuasion (by appealing to the reader's emotions) or argument (by appealing to the reader's intellect), then the author will write in ways that

- a. Convince the reader
- b. Argue for a particular point of view
- c. Praise or approve an action already taken (or not taken)
- d. Rally support for one side of an issue
- e. Change the reader's mind by reasoned argument
- f. Influence the reader's beliefs about the topic
- g. Present the arguments of one side of an issue
- h. Criticize opposing points of view (the other side of an issue)
- I. Provide support for the author's point of view
- j. Present more opinions than fact
- k. Make an emotional appeal through connotative language
- l. Make clear the bias of an author

Example: (Part of a letter written by Martin Luther King to a group of ministers who criticized him for breaking the law and getting arrested). I hope you are able to see the distinction I am trying to point out. In no sense do I advocate evading the law, as would the rabid segregationist. That would lead to anarchy. One who breaks an unjust law must do so openly, lovingly, and with a willingness to accept the penalty. I submit that an individual who breaks a law that conscience tell him is unjust and who willingly accepts the penalty of imprisonment in order to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice is in reality expressing the highest respect for the law. (Explanation: When he says "the distinction I am trying to make" and "I submit that," he is indicating his point of view and defending it).