



Author's Purpose: Definition & Examples

Lesson Transcript

This lesson explains the purpose behind various types of writing. In addition, author's purpose is defined using examples to illustrate the explanations.

Author's Purpose

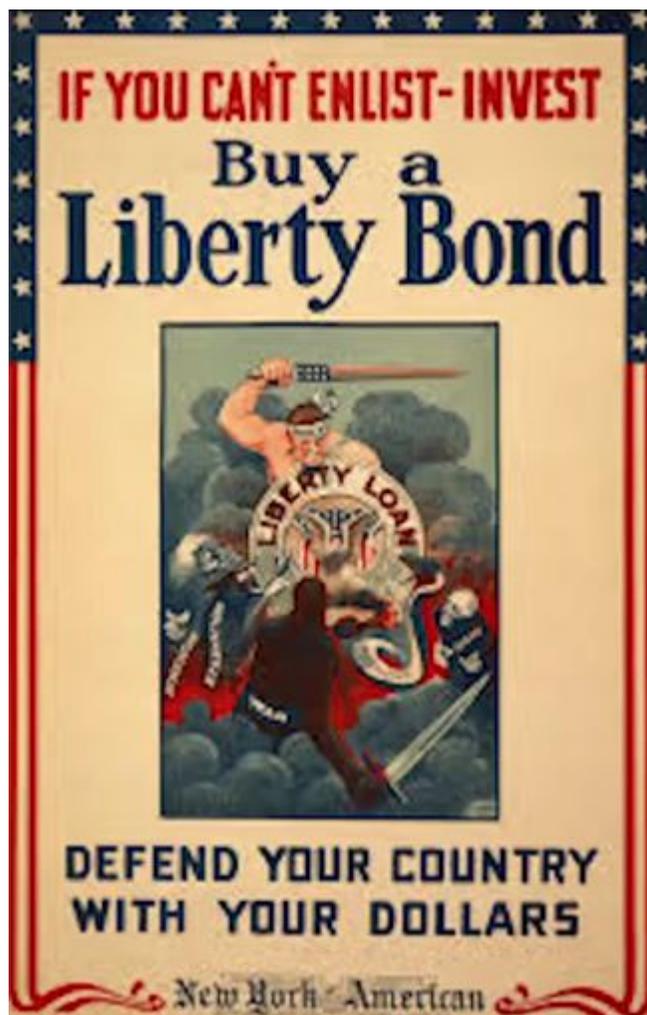
Many different types of writing exist in the world, ranging from classic Shakespearean plays to politicians' speeches to the screenplay treatments that inspired this summer's biggest blockbuster hits. These works may vary in tone, genre and type, but as pieces of writing, they should have one thing in common: a purpose.

Authors write for many different reasons. Those reasons are called the **author's purpose**. Depending on the purpose, authors may choose all different sorts of writing formats, genres and vernacular. A simple trick to summarize the three main categories of author's purpose is to use the acronym **PIE**, which stands for persuade, inform and entertain. Although there are many reasons to write, to persuade, to inform and to entertain represent the three main forms of author's purpose. Most other reasons can be grouped into those three broader categories.

Persuade

To persuade is the first main type of author's purpose. Text written to persuade means the author's goal is to convince the reader to agree with the author. This might mean the author wants the reader to think or even act in a specific way. This type of writing is extremely common. Any piece which pushes a certain opinion or asks for some sort of call for action is persuasive writing.

It is true that in these types of writing the author shares his opinion, but usually he also provides facts and examples. This information serves to support the author's opinion and further convince the reader to agree with him. Examples of persuasive writing include speeches, advertisements, commercials and newspaper editorials. Any forms of propaganda are examples of pieces written to persuade. Look at the picture below and identify how the author wants you to think or to act.



Inform

The second main type of author's purpose is **to inform**. In this format, the author's goal is to enlighten the reader about real-world topics and provide facts on those topics. However, in contrast to pieces written to persuade, these facts are not used to support a specific opinion. The facts are presented in order to teach the reader. Examples of texts written to inform include textbooks, cookbooks, newspapers and encyclopedias.

All these forms are written in order to provide information to the reader. It is also important to note that many authors present their works as informational texts, while at the same time inserting their own opinions into the piece. As a reader, be sure to be ready for opinions masked as information. For instance, some newspapers claim to only report the facts, but on careful inspection it is clear it might be trying to persuade you to believe a specific idea. Be on the lookout for these hidden opinions.

Entertain

The final main category of author's purpose is **to entertain**. This contains almost all examples of what you think of when you hear the word 'literature.' Authors who write to entertain have the goal of telling a story or describing real or imaginary characters, places and events. This includes all

pieces of fiction, which is literature that is not real.

Some examples of pieces written to entertain include poems, novels, short stories, plays, musicals and comics. The famous *Harry Potter* series, *The Hunger Games* trilogy, the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* books and any other of the popular pieces of fiction are all examples of writing with the purpose to entertain. This is perhaps why these novels get to be so popular. Readers are extremely entertained and absorbed with these stories; they just can't get enough, which often leads to sequels, movies and even TV shows.

Multiple Author's Purpose

Some nonfiction works can fall under multiple categories. For example, autobiographies and biographies are based on real people and the events that really happened in their lives, so you might assume they are examples of pieces written to inform. However, some people are truly entertained hearing these true stories. Thus, autobiographies and biographies can fall under both to inform and to entertain.

Lesson Summary

Knowing the **author's purpose** behind writing is very important. It can change the format or structure of the piece, and even the words the author uses. There are three main categories of author's purpose, which can be remembered using the acronym **PIE**; this stands for **to persuade**, **to inform** and **to entertain**. It is important to note that there can be other subcategories of author's purpose. For example, to express, to surprise, to scare, to describe, etc., but all those can fall into one of the three major categories. As a reader, it's very important to be able to identify the author's purpose in order to fully understand that piece of writing.

Learning Outcomes

Once you are finished, you should be able to:

- List and describe the three main categories of author's purpose in writing
- Identify the author's purpose of a written work