**Study Island Lesson:**

**Writing Purpose**

*An author can write for different reasons. It is important for you to understand the author's purpose in a text. The following are different purposes an author may have in mind while writing.*

* **Describe:** Some writing describes something or how to do something. For example, the directions that come with a cell phone have the purpose of describing how set up voice mail, check text messages, and so forth.

* **Inform:** Some writing has the purpose of informing. Most news articles in the newspaper are written to inform. A biography usually has the purpose of informing the reader about the person's life.

* **Persuade:** Some writing is written for the purpose of persuasion. A good example of persuasive writing is the writing found in advertisements. Advertisements are designed to persuade you to buy a certain product. Speeches by politicians are also examples of persuasive writing.

* **Narrate:** Narration has the purpose of telling a story. The narrator relates a series of events.

* **Entertain:** Some writing has the purpose of entertaining. The comic strips in the newspaper are there to entertain the readers with humor. A mystery novel and a fairy tale are also good examples of writing that have the purpose of entertaining.

**Author's Purpose and Attitude**

*A challenging but essential task for the reader is to determine the****author's attitude,****which is related to the author's****tone.****The reader must determine this aspect of a passage by analyzing the author's perspective and point of view—how the author thinks and feels about a particular subject.*

In speaking, one's gestures, voice inflections, pauses, and facial expressions can reveal a speaker's attitude toward the subject matter. However, because none of those things can be experienced by reading a work or text, an author's attitude or tone has to be inferred from less obvious clues.

You must closely read an author's writing to notice the clues and details he or she may reveal through words. There are several steps that may help you determine the author's attitude.

**First, you may want to examine the author's purpose for writing.** There are a number of verbs that can describe an author's purpose.

* argue
* condemn
* describe
* enlighten
* entertain
* explain
* express
* illustrate
* inform
* instruct
* investigate
* narrate
* persuade
* report
* teach
* warn

**Next, think about the tone of the work.** Examine the choice of words the author uses to get his or her point across. If the author's purpose for writing is to persuade, are the words he or she uses overwhelmingly positive or negative? Think about whether or not the words reveal favoritism toward a particular point of view.

**Finally, think about whether the author has fairly presented all the sides of an issue.** Examine whether or not sufficient evidence has been given to dispute opposing viewpoints. Omitting or downplaying a viewpoint can reveal how an author feels about a topic.

The following is a list of words that can help describe the author's attitude or tone.

* arrogant
* compassionate
* critical
* cynical
* defensive
* humorous
* impartial
* inspirational
* ironic
* moralizing
* nostalgic
* patriotic
* perplexed
* pessimistic
* reflective
* reverent
* satirical
* sentimental
* serious
* witty

**Ask yourself these questions when you are attempting to determine the author's attitude in a passage:**

1. What is the author's purpose in writing?
2. Has the author presented all sides of an argument?
3. If so, is the article balanced toward all positions or biased toward one?
4. Is there enough evidence to support each side?
5. Is the evidence reliable and convincing?'
6. Does the author use words that convey emotion?
7. Does the article seem to present propaganda?

*example:*

Consider the author's attitude in the passage below.

|  |
| --- |
|      Conserving water is important for our environment, future generations, and your wallet. Most people don't realize this, but water is a finite resource. All the water we will ever have is on the planet right now. It is important to consider this when thinking about the importance of water conservation. If we are not good stewards of water, our future generations will suffer for it. Fresh drinking water resources are limited for people, but also remember that animals and water species also depend on it for life. It is important for us to think about and facilitate their survival in addition to our own. Cutting back on the water used during showers or for watering plants outdoors can also help save you money. |

The author's purpose for writing this passage is to convince readers that water conservation is important. He or she presents the argument by discussing reasons why saving water is important. The author's attitude in this passage is serious.