

Grade 7 Playlist: Determine an Author's Purpose and Point of View

Aligns with *CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.7.6*:

- *Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author distinguishes his or her position from that of others.*

Welcome

Reading nonfiction informational texts like historical documents, speeches, or even technical instructions is a very different exercise from reading fiction. When reading an informational text, a reader identifies the purpose and point of view to understand the significance of the text. This playlist explores the skills a reader will use to discover these features, through an analysis of an excerpt of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's first inaugural address to the nation.

Objectives

In this playlist, students will learn and practice how to:

- determine an author's purpose.
- determine a point of view.
- analyze how the author differentiates his/her position from those of others.

Review

Key Terms

- An author's **purpose** is his or her reason for writing. Most writing is done with the purpose of entertaining, persuading, or informing the reader.
- The author's **point of view** is the way he or she looks at the topic. The **position** on the subject is the author's opinion or judgment of it.
 - Point of view is developed through the **narrator**, or the person speaking in a piece of writing. In nonfiction texts, the narrator is sometimes the author (first-person point of view) and other times it is an unknown voice (third-person point of view).



Background: Understanding 1933

To understand and appreciate the very first speech Franklin D. Roosevelt delivered as president, it is important to understand the serious economic trouble the United States was facing in 1933. Four years earlier, in 1929, the stock market in New York collapsed, erasing entire fortunes. This collapse brought an end to a decade of heavy investment in the stock market and risky financial behavior. It also revealed the weaknesses in the U.S. economy. Soon after the crash, the country descended into what's known as the Great Depression. People lost their homes, farms, and entire savings. Soon factories closed down and once-bustling cities ground to a slow crawl. Americans were frightened and uncertain about the future. This was the environment, one of fear and anxiety, in which Roosevelt delivered his speech.

Watch!

Watch this video to learn more about the Great Depression:

- <https://www.opened.com/video/discussing-the-great-depression/113923>

A Closer Look: Understanding Purpose

There are as many reasons for writing as there are subjects to write about. Here are four basic categories:

Narrative writing serves the purpose of telling a story, sometimes to inform the reader and sometimes to entertain.	Most narrative writing is fictional, but nonfiction examples include personal memoirs, biographies, and anecdotes.
Descriptive writing serves the purpose of reporting the features of something, like the way it looks, sounds, or feels.	Character sketches, captions for photos, and some types of advertisements are examples of descriptive writing.
Expository writing serves the purpose of explaining something to the reader or informing them about a subject.	Most nonfiction writing is expository, including nonfiction books and articles, encyclopedia entries, news reports, and instruction manuals.
Persuasive writing serves the purpose of presenting an opinion and trying to convince the reader to accept this opinion.	Newspaper editorials try to be persuasive, as do advertisements, speeches, literary essays, and critical reviews.

Of course, it is possible for a piece of writing to fall within more than one category. A novel that tells a true story in a dramatic fashion can be considered both expository and narrative, while an advertisement that gives a description of a good or service to convince someone to buy it is both descriptive and persuasive.



Teaching Notes: Determine an Author's Purpose and Point of View

The goal of RI.7.6 is for students to learn how to determine the purpose of a text and the speaker's point of view and to distinguish between the speaker's point of view and other points of view. The following information contains ideas that teachers can incorporate into their classrooms as well as additional resources to peruse and integrate into instruction as appropriate.

Activities

1. Select an editorial from a local newspaper about current events, local or national. Make sure it is a topic that the students will understand reasonably well.
2. Have students read the excerpt to find its purpose, the author's point of view, and any other points of view described. Consider having them draft a paragraph addressing these two points and using the information in the documents to support their analysis. It is also productive to have students work in small groups or pairs.
3. Provide the students with a short analysis of your own. Be sure to follow the same pattern the students were directed to use. Identify the purpose and the different points of view. Support your analysis with clear examples from the excerpt.
4. Identify a number of important statements in the document that reflect different points of view. For the first one or two, walk students through these examples and help them understand how the statements you've selected reflect the different points of view. Then, have the students perform the same exercise as a class. Be prepared to help them with clues and additional context.

Writing Prompts

1. Provide student with another short editorial or excerpt from a historical document like a speech. If it is a historical document, make sure it has an argument, a point of view, and a clear purpose, and that it identifies other alternative points of view. Have them draft a short essay identifying these features and how they work together.
2. Have the students conduct research to locate two well-known speeches or letters given or written by well-known people from history that present different positions or points of view. Instruct the students to write an essay of at least 4–5 paragraphs explaining the differences in point of view between the two works and how they represent historical differences.

