

Appendix E: Purposes for Writing

Most writing takes four purposeful forms:

- narrative
- descriptive
- expository
- persuasive

What is narrative writing?

A narrative is a story. It contains specific elements that work together to create interest for not only the author but also the reader. A narrative encourages the readers to feel that they are a part of the story. The writer attempts to help readers feel as they are hearing the story directly so that they experience what the characters are doing or what is being done to them. Narratives have plots to make readers wonder what will happen next. They contain conflict and dilemmas, and the resolution is important to the readers. Narratives have vivid settings that capture the imagination. Most narratives have themes, such as friendship, growing up, and survival, that make readers think about the story and its purpose long after they have finished the story. Myths, legends, fables, and other made-up stories are fiction. Authors use narrative writing techniques to tell these tales.

What is descriptive writing?

Descriptive writing describes people, events, places, or objects. After planning the description, the writer uses appropriate paragraph form to compose the description. That is, the writer composes a topic sentence that will introduce the person, place, or item to be described and then provides details. The writer attempts to help readers feel that they can see, feel, hear, or taste the thing they are reading about. Writers use specific details and precise word choices. Descriptive writing includes material such as character sketches, directions to a location, and descriptions of an event (e.g., roasting marshmallows, descriptions of a room).

What is expository writing?

Expository writing instructs or informs. Expository writing is nonfiction that explains and describes a process or presents facts, details, and background information about past events and discoveries. Expository is the most common form of writing and reading assigned in school. Science projects, research papers for history, and mathematical word problems are a few examples. Students often take tests that require them to write summaries, journal entries, directions, memoirs, or informational articles. In each of these, students must do expository writing. Students must identify and stay on the topic; develop the topic with simple facts, details, examples, and explanations; and exclude extraneous and inappropriate information.

What is persuasive writing?

Persuasive writing persuades the reader to act or adopt an opinion. In the prewriting stage, writers must identify their audience and the desired effect of their writing. Persuasive writing may take the form of business letters to persuade readers to adopt a stand or provide a product, letters of recommendation to persuade a company or school to consider an applicant, and so on. Writers must show awareness of the audience's interests, beliefs, or priorities. Students also use persuasive writing when they must respond to or critique literature. Their responses must identify their own judgments about the literature and support their judgments with references to the text, other works, other authors, non-print media, and personal knowledge.