

I. Determining Authors' Purpose Exercises

Is the author's purpose to inform/instruct, to entertain, or to persuade?

Try to determine from each of the following essay titles whether the author's *main purpose* is to **inform/instruct**, to **entertain**, or to **persuade**. Circle your choice. If a title seems like it might have two purposes, **pick one and write a brief explanation for your choice**.

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|--|----------|-----------------|-----------|----------|
| 1. Title: How to Improve Your Golf Swing | Purpose: | inform/instruct | entertain | persuade |
| 2. Title: Fight Back! Vote! | Purpose: | inform/instruct | entertain | persuade |
| 3. Title: Six Ways to Boost Decision-Making Skills | Purpose: | inform/instruct | entertain | persuade |
| 4. Title: Give Yourself a Gift: Read a Book | Purpose: | inform/instruct | entertain | persuade |
| 5. Title: My Most Embarrassing Moment | Purpose: | inform/instruct | entertain | persuade |
| 6. Title: Yes, You CAN Be Financially Secure for Life! | Purpose: | inform/instruct | entertain | persuade |
| 7. Title: The Year's Best Country-and-Western CDs | Purpose: | inform/instruct | entertain | persuade |
| 8. Title: Sell Your Home without a Realtor | Purpose: | inform/instruct | entertain | persuade |
| 9. Title: Five Types of Context Clues | Purpose: | inform/instruct | entertain | persuade |
| 10. Title: The Worst Vacation in History | Purpose: | inform/instruct | entertain | persuade |
| 11. Title: Causes of Bone Loss in women | Purpose: | inform/instruct | entertain | persuade |
| 12. Title: When Pigs Fly! | Purpose: | inform/instruct | entertain | persuade |
| 13. Title: New Treatments for Asthma | Purpose: | inform/instruct | entertain | persuade |
| 14. Title: Buy a Smoke Detector and Save Your Life | Purpose: | inform/instruct | entertain | persuade |
| 15. Title: How to Built a Custom Computer | Purpose: | inform/instruct | entertain | persuade |
| 16. Title: I Passed the Driver's Test but Lost My Mind | Purpose: | inform/instruct | entertain | persuade |
| 17. Title: Success Secrets of Top Athletes | Purpose: | inform/instruct | entertain | persuade |
| 18. Title: The Case for a Smoking Ban in Public Places | Purpose: | inform/instruct | entertain | persuade |
| 19. Title: How to Look Busy While Doing Nothing | Purpose: | inform/instruct | entertain | persuade |
| 20. Title: Volunteer for Habitat for Humanity! | Purpose: | inform/instruct | entertain | persuade |

Satire, Irony, and Sarcasm: Understanding the Difference

Satire & Satirists: Writers, comedians, and others use *satire* to *expose* “problems” they see in the ideas or actions of an individual, a group, an institution, a society, etc., usually with a view to correcting it.

Perhaps the most common use of satire is by comedians and others who “highlight” the views and actions of a political party or administration they don’t agree with, using some form of comedy that, when you get right down to it, is an insult.

Irony & Sarcasm: Satirists frequently use both **irony** and **sarcasm**.

Irony is the difference between **what is said** and **what is really meant or done**; between **what is expected** and **what really happens**.

The following “true news stories” are examples of irony that happens in everyday life. Try to explain *why* each is ironic.

1. The average cost of rehabilitating a seal after the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill in Alaska was \$80,000. At a special ceremony, two of the most expensively saved animals were released back into the wild amid cheers and applause from onlookers. A minute later they were both eaten by a killer whale.
2. A psychology student in New York rented out her spare room to a carpenter in order to nag him constantly and study his reactions. After weeks of needling, he snapped and beat her repeatedly with an axe, leaving her mentally retarded.
3. A woman came home to find her husband in the kitchen, shaking frantically with what looked like a wire running from his waist towards the electric kettle. Intending to jolt him away from the deadly current she whacked him with a handy plank of wood by the back door, breaking his arm in two places. Till that moment he had been happily listening to his mp3 player.
4. Two animal rights protesters were protesting at the cruelty of sending pigs to a slaughterhouse in Bonn, Germany. Suddenly the pigs, all two thousand of them, escaped through a broken fence and stampeded, trampling the two hapless protesters to death.
5. Iraqi terrorist Khay Rahnajet didn't pay enough postage on a letter bomb. It came back with "return to sender" stamped on it. Forgetting it was the bomb, he opened it and was blown to bits.

Sarcasm is typically **praise which is really an insult**; sarcasm generally involves **malice**, the desire to put someone down, e.g., "This is my brilliant son, who failed out of college." The following are famous quotations that would be considered sarcasm. Try to explain what makes them sarcastic.

1. Sometimes I need what only you can provide: your absence. - Ashleigh Brilliant
2. It's always darkest before it turns absolutely pitch black. - Paul Newman
3. I feel so miserable without you, it's almost like having you here. - Stephen Bishop
4. He has no enemies, but is intensely disliked by his friends. - Oscar Wilde
5. He was happily married - but his wife wasn't. - Victor Borge
6. Reader, suppose you were an idiot.
And suppose you were a member of Congress. But I repeat myself. - Mark Twain
7. The trouble with her is that she lacks the power of conversation
but not the power of speech. - George Bernard Shaw
8. No, Groucho is not my real name. I am breaking it in for a friend.

I never forget a face, but in your case I'll be glad to make an exception.

I find television very educating. Every time somebody turns on the set, I go into the other room and read a book.

I have had a perfectly wonderful evening, but this wasn't it.

I didn't like the play, but then I saw it under adverse conditions - the curtain was up.

- Groucho Marx