

Hello, students. My name is Dr. Martina Shabram, and I will be your instructor for today's lesson. I'm genuinely excited to teach you these concepts. So let's get started.

What is today's plan? Well, this lesson is about discerning the purpose and audience of our texts and identifying that purpose and audience by assessing content, mode, and language. Let's begin by talking about audience and purpose.

You'll recall that the purpose is the intended goal or value of a text. And the audience is the reader of the text, which can be intended, targeted by the author, or unintended, not specifically targeted by the author. And by now you can tell that assessing, identifying, and directing your writing towards the purpose and audience is an essential task.

So in order to figure out what the purpose and audience of a text is, there are some clues we can look for, the content, the mode of writing, the word choice, the formality level, and the overall tone. Doing analysis of these elements within someone else's writing helps you better deploy those same tools in your own writing and provides you with useful examples of effective ways to target your intended audience and fulfill your intended purpose. So let's do a lightning fast review of those tools so that we can practice and, thus become purpose and audience experts.

Lightning round one, content. The content of a text is just what the author has chosen as the subject and what they're telling you about that subject, which is closely tied to the purpose. For example, if the purpose is to convince people to buy a certain product, the content will feature its most attractive selling points. Sometimes authors say exactly what their purposes is.

But even when the author doesn't say what their purpose is outright, you can look for these clues. To find the purpose, look for the kinds of details, examples, explanations, descriptions, and arguments the author chooses. To find the audience, assess the overall subject matter and also the way the author addresses it in order to make guesses about the audience they intend.

Lightning round two, mode. Remember that there are four main modes, narrative, which is driven by story, descriptive, which is used to provide details, informative, which provides data without biased opinions, and argumentative, which takes a side on a debate. So in any piece of writing, you're bound to see descriptive, informative, and argumentative statements. But because each mode has its perfect purpose, if you look for which modes are used most commonly in any text, you're likely to be headed in the general direction of their purpose even though the purpose will be more narrow than the mode itself.

Lightning round three, word choice. The words we choose, including both the vocabulary level we select and the connotations and denotations of our words, are related to our audience and purpose. Vocabulary level can tell us a lot about the intended audience, such as their level of education or what age range they're in. And the tone struck by the connotations and denotations of the words gives us clues about how the reader is meant to feel.

Lightning round four, formality. How formal or informal a text is depends on its audience and is revealed in the level of vocabulary, the complexity of the sentences, and how personal the content is. Academic and professional writing tends to be more formal, whereas personal writing is usually informal. Fifth and final lightning round, tone.

Tone is a writer's attitude towards the subject as conveyed through a piece of writing. Looking to the tone that the author affects can tell you what that author's attitude about the subject is, which can clue us into the overall purpose and how they want their audience to feel about that subject. For example, if the purpose of the text is to inform the reader about an environmental crisis, then the tone is likely to be grave and serious.

Whoa, OK, now that we've gotten through the lightning rounds, let's practice. Again, take a moment to pause if that's what's best for your reading pace. This piece has a totally different tone, right? The tone is markedly more formal even though this is clearly correspondence.

So because this is an email or letter for an academic setting sent from a student to her professor, it is more formal than other kinds of emails. And the tone is pretty neutral. So what's the purpose?

Well, it seems to me that the direct intent is to inform the professor about the student's absence and that the student will visit office hours. But the underlying purpose seems to be showing the professor how responsible the student is. See how she emphasizes the steps she took to ameliorate any negative consequences of missing class.

Now let's bring all of these tools to bear on a more substantive text and assess what purpose and audience we think it's meant to serve. Remember that you have a toolkit with content, mode, word choice, formality level, and tone. Using those tools, let's assess the purpose and audience that the author intends. Take a moment to read by pausing, and press play when you're ready to discuss.

OK, what do you notice? Let's go through what each tool reveals to us. What's the content? This is about education and cost and why education is important. That's pretty clear.

So what mode is this in? Well, much of this paragraph features informative statements. But by the

end, the language shifts into a more argumentative mode. I'd say that overall the purpose seems to be convincing the reader to support universal access to higher education.

Do we have any more hints about the purpose that would push us in that direction? Well, the tone tells us a lot here. These words are more evocative and emotional than a neutral informative piece might be. But this isn't inflammatory rhetoric.

This is a subtle tone. It's neither strident and angry nor wholly dispassionate. I'd characterize the tone then as motivated, committed, or energized. So it seems to me that the precise purpose is not just to convince the reader but also to spur the reader to action, perhaps to get people to join a movement.

OK, so who is it trying to talk to? Who's the audience? Well, let's look at the word choice. What level is the vocabulary?

I'd say this is precise and intellectual, saying that something is tangible instead of concrete or describing the citizenry instead of citizens or even residents is pretty academic. So we might assume an educated audience and perhaps an audience of adults instead of kids. And the sentence structure is equally academic with some complex and lengthy sentences and some poetic turns of phrase.

OK, what about the connotations and denotations of the words? We've already talked about the overall tone, but are there any words that stand out to you in their connotative power? Well, for me, rich store of knowledge seems pretty evocative. The author could have just said that students will know more about the world. But by adding implications of financial benefit, this phrase connotes material wealth.

Therefore, the connotations of the words lend themselves to the overall message about worth. So what's the verdict? Using all these tools, I'd say we've done a pretty thorough analysis of the purpose and audience of this paragraph.

So what did we cover today? This lesson did a lightning fast review of content, word choice, mode, formality, tone. And then we used all of those tools together to analyze and assess some texts, both simple and complex to identify their purpose and audience. Well, students, I hope you had as much fun as I did. Thank you.