

Author's Purpose & Message



TEKS 4.10(A) Explain the author's purpose and message within a text.

Objective:

I can explain why an author wrote a text (the purpose) and what the author wants me to understand or take away (the message), using evidence from the text.

The anchor strategy students will repeat all lesson:

Why did the author write it? What do they want me to take away? How do I know? (Name the purpose → find the evidence that proves it → state the message in your own words.)

TEACHER NOTES

This lesson targets three specific misconceptions, named here so you can listen for them:

- 1. Confusing topic with purpose** — students answer "the author wrote about octopuses" (the topic) instead of "the author wrote to inform readers about octopuses" (the purpose). The topic is what the text is about; the purpose is why the author wrote it — to persuade, to inform, or to entertain.
- 2. Labeling the purpose without evidence** — students say "to inform" or "to persuade" but cannot point to the clue words and details that prove it: opinion words and calls to action ("should," "must") signal persuading; facts and examples signal informing; characters, dialogue, and plot signal entertaining.
- 3. Confusing purpose with message** — students give one when asked for the other, or state a small fact from the text as the message. The purpose is why the author wrote; the message is the big idea the author wants readers to walk away understanding — stated as a complete thought, not a detail.

The Purpose & Message Map (next page) is the fix: it places "Purpose," "Evidence," and "Message" in a visible left-to-right flow with arrows. Students cannot name a purpose without proving it (middle box), and they cannot stop at the purpose without stating the message (last box). The map separates why the author wrote from what the reader should take away, which breaks the habit of answering with the topic.

Teacher language to keep repeating:

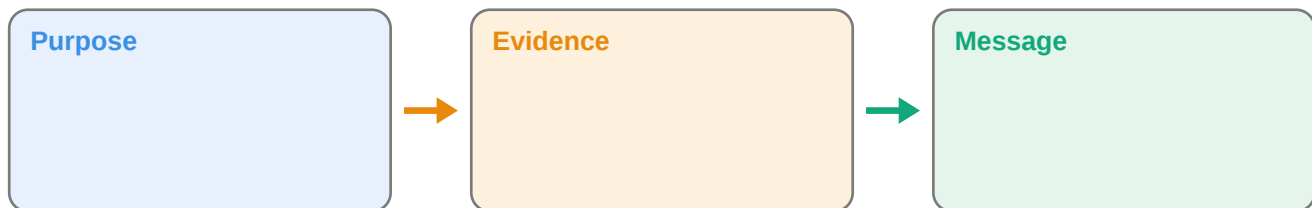
"That's the topic — but why did the author write it?" • "Prove it — what words in the text show that purpose?" • "What does the author want you to remember after you close the book?" • "Purpose is why the author wrote; message is what you take away." • "Why? What? How do you know?"

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Graphic Organizer — Purpose & Message Map

Figure out why the author wrote the text and what they want you to take away. The Purpose box names why the author wrote — to persuade, to inform, or to entertain. The Evidence box lists the clue words and details from the text that prove the purpose. The Message box states the big idea the author wants readers to understand, in a complete sentence.



Sentence stems for explaining purpose and message:

"The author wrote this text to... I know because the text says..."

"The author's message is that..."

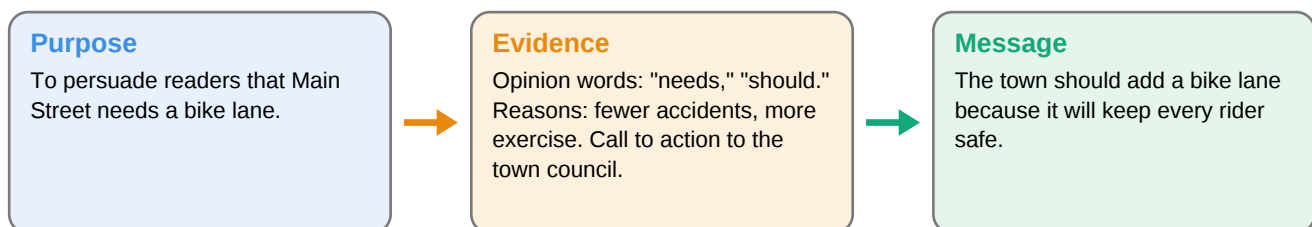
"The author wants readers to understand..."

I DO (Modeled — teacher thinks aloud)

Read this short passage aloud:

Main Street needs a bike lane. Every morning, students wobble along the edge of the busy road while cars rush past just inches away. A painted bike lane would give riders a safe space of their own. Towns with bike lanes have fewer accidents, and more kids get exercise by riding to school. Our town council should paint a bike lane this spring. A few buckets of paint could keep every rider safe.

Say: "Why did the author write this? I see opinion words — 'needs,' 'should' — and reasons, and it ends by asking the town council to act. The author is trying to convince me: the purpose is to persuade. What's the message — the big idea I should take away? The town should paint a bike lane because it will keep riders safe. Notice I didn't say 'bike lanes' — that's just the topic. The message is a complete thought."



← ***Purpose is why the author wrote; the message is the big idea stated as a complete thought***

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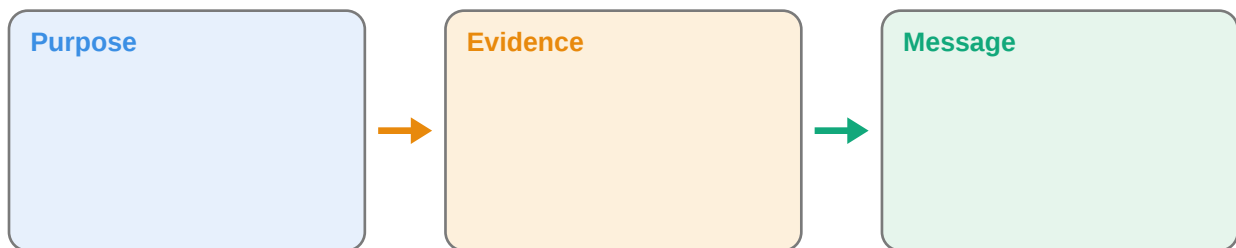


I DO

- 1 Read the passage. Then complete the map.

Main Street needs a bike lane. Every morning, students wobble along the edge of the busy road while cars rush past just inches away. A painted bike lane would give riders a safe space of their own. Towns with bike lanes have fewer accidents, and more kids get exercise by riding to school. Our town council should paint a bike lane this spring. A few buckets of paint could keep every rider safe.

Purpose & Message Map for: _____



- 2 Explain the purpose and message in complete sentences:

The author wrote this text to... _____

I know because the text says... _____

The author's message is that... _____

This message matters because... _____

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WE DO (Guided — students prompt the steps)

Read the passage below together. Then work through the three prompts — each one targets a misconception. Have students tell you each move: "Why?... What?... How do you know?"

Guided passage — "The Amazing Octopus":

An octopus might look like a simple sea creature, but scientists keep discovering how clever it really is. An octopus can unscrew a jar lid to reach the food inside. It can squeeze its soft body through a crack the size of a coin to escape danger. Some octopuses even carry coconut shells across the ocean floor and hide inside them like a suit of armor. In aquariums, octopuses have learned to recognize the faces of their keepers. The more scientists study the octopus, the more this eight-armed puzzle-solver surprises them.

Prompt 1 — Topic vs. purpose: Ask "What is the author's purpose?" Students will say "octopuses." Reply: "That's the topic — what the text is about. The purpose is why the author wrote it. Is the author trying to persuade you, inform you, or entertain you?" (Misconception 1)

Prompt 2 — Prove the purpose: When students say "to inform," ask "How do you know? What clues prove it?" Guide them to the evidence: the text is built from facts and examples — jar lids, coconut shells, recognizing faces — with no opinion words and no story characters. (Misconception 2)

Prompt 3 — Purpose vs. message: Fill in the map together. After the Purpose and Evidence boxes, point to the Message box and ask "So what does the author want us to walk away understanding about octopuses? Say it as a complete thought." Push past small facts ("octopuses can open jars") to the big idea: octopuses are far more intelligent than they appear. (Misconception 3)

Find the Error

Show students this sample response about "The Amazing Octopus" and ask: "What is wrong here? How do we fix it?"

"The author's purpose is octopuses. The message is that octopuses live in the ocean."

What to listen for: the first sentence gives the topic, not the purpose — a purpose starts with "to" (to persuade, to inform, to entertain). The second sentence states a small fact, not the big idea. A strong fix: "The author's purpose is to inform readers about octopuses. The message is that octopuses are much smarter than they look — the text proves it with examples like opening jars and using coconut shells as armor."

Exit Ticket: Assign the quick check from the teacher dashboard.

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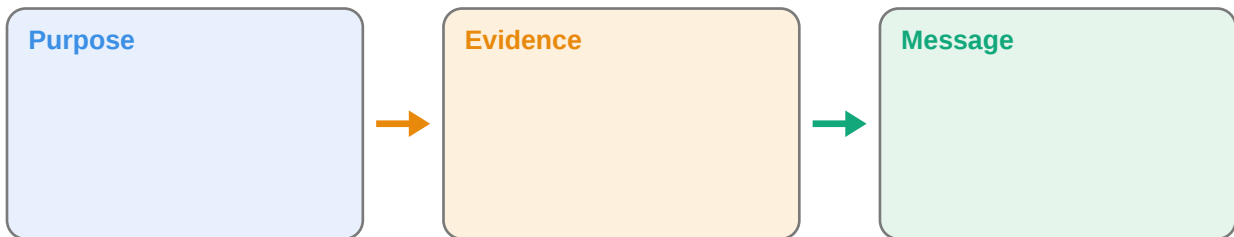


YOU DO (Independent)

Read "The Talent Show" on your own. Then complete every part below.

Priya's fingers froze above the piano keys backstage. Through the curtain, she could hear the whole school waiting. "What if I mess up?" she whispered. Her brother Dev shrugged. "Then you'll be the only one brave enough to find out." Priya took a deep breath and walked into the lights. Halfway through her song, her finger slipped and a wrong note rang out — but she kept playing, all the way to the end. The crowd cheered anyway. Walking home, Priya couldn't stop smiling. "Next year," she told Dev, "I'm signing up first."

1 Complete the Purpose & Message Map:



2 Explain the purpose and message using the sentence starters:

The author wrote this to... I know because... The author's message is that...

3 Why do you think the author chose a story — instead of facts — to share this message?

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ANSWER KEY (Teacher Reference)

Student wording will vary. Accept any purpose stated with "to...", "proven with text evidence, and any message stated as a big idea.

I DO — "The Bike Lane"

Purpose: to persuade readers (and the town council) that Main Street needs a bike lane.

Evidence: opinion words "needs" and "should"; reasons (fewer accidents, more exercise); a call to action to the town council.

Message: the town should add a bike lane because it will keep every rider safe.

Watch for: "bike lanes" alone is the topic, not the message — the message is a complete thought.

WE DO — "The Amazing Octopus"

Purpose: to inform readers about how clever octopuses are.

Evidence: facts and examples — unscrewing jar lids, squeezing through coin-sized cracks, carrying coconut shells as armor, recognizing keepers' faces; no opinion words, no characters or plot.

Message: octopuses are far more intelligent than they appear.

Circle one: Inform.

Find the Error fix: "octopuses" is the topic, not a purpose; "octopuses live in the ocean" is a small fact, not the message. Corrected: purpose = to inform; message = octopuses are much smarter than they look, proven by the text's examples.

YOU DO — "The Talent Show"

Purpose: to entertain readers with a story about performing at a talent show.

Evidence: characters (Priya, Dev), dialogue, a problem (stage fright), and a plot with a resolution — story elements, not facts or opinions.

Message: being brave enough to try matters more than being perfect. (Also accept: don't let fear of mistakes stop you.)

Question 3: A story lets readers feel Priya's fear and pride with her, so the lesson sticks — authors often use stories to share a message through what a character learns.