Focus on the Ohio Academic Content Standards

Lesson 26 Understand Author's Purpose

LA-C-D-7.7 Identify an author's purpose for writing and explain an author's argument, perspective or viewpoint in text.

Writers may have different reasons, or **purposes,** for writing. A writer may write to:

- **inform** the reader about something, such as the day's news, or an event in history, or a scientific discovery;
- **explain** an issue or a process, such as how plants create food from sunlight;
- **instruct** or tell how to do something, such as how to assemble a computer from a kit;
- **describe** something, such as a delicious meal or the smell of a summer day after the rain;
- **entertain** the reader, such as by telling an exciting story or a humorous anecdote;
- **persuade** the reader to form an opinion or take an action, such as voting for a particular candidate for mayor.

Different authors may have different ways of thinking about the topics they choose to write about. One author's **perspective,** or viewpoint, concerning a topic may be very different from another author's perspective on the same topic. For example, one author might think skateboarding is a wonderful sport, another might think skateboarding is too dangerous, and a third might think skateboarding is safe only if protective pads and helmets are worn. Each author's attitude will be reflected in his or her writing on the subject. An author's attitude toward the topic affects how the ideas are shaped and developed. Authors generally choose words, details, events, and images that encourage readers to agree with their particular viewpoint.

Tone is the writer's attitude toward the subject. Just as you hear tone in a person's voice, tone in literature is created by the author's choice of words and the way the author presents those words. For example, the tone of a literary work might be described as angry or playful or sad or respectful. Tone is affected by the author's perspective. An author who is deeply concerned about the destruction of the rain forest, for example, might use an emotional or argumentative tone to persuade readers to raise money or join an environmental organization. An author who wants to present several contrasting views on the same subject, however, might use a more even and unemotional tone.

The author's perspective also affects **style.** Style is the way in which the author writes. Style develops from the author's word choice and the general flow of his or her writing. For instance, a writer may choose to write very short and simple sentences or sentences that are long and full of description.

Organization is also affected by the author's purpose for writing. For example, a writer who aims to write an informative and entertaining biography of Abraham Lincoln would probably use time order to tell Lincoln's life story. A writer whose purpose is to explore the impact of Lincoln's presidency on United States history might organize the article by showing causes and effects. A writer whose purpose is to persuade readers that Lincoln was the greatest president might organize the details to compare and contrast Lincoln with other presidents.

Guided Reading Instruction

Directions: Read the passage below. Use the questions in the margin to guide your reading. Then answer the questions that follow.

Goaltending

by Janae J. Carter

1 Do you know what you'll be doing in 25 years? I do! I want to be a writer, a ballerina, an inventor, a social worker, and mayor of New York City. My future is no great mystery to me, and yours doesn't have to be a mystery either! All it takes is a goal, a little planning, and a lot of self-confidence.

2 I get excited when I think about what I can do, and so should you. Every dream can become a reality if you work at it. You don't have to limit yourself to doing just one thing. I want to do lots of things, like Benjamin Franklin. He was a writer, an inventor, a politician, and a scientist.

Having a goal, something you really want to do, is a good place to start in solving the mystery of your future. It gives you something to work toward. Your goal may seem impossible at first, but if you break it down, it won't seem so hard. Remember, a goal is something you really want to do, not what someone else wants you to do.

3 One of my goals is to write books. My favorite author is Phyllis Wheatley. She was sold into slavery from her home in West Africa when she was 8 years old. She refused to give up her dream

Guided Questions

1 What is the topic of this paragraph? Underline the sentence in this paragraph that expresses the writer's viewpoint.

2 Why does the writer mention Benjamin Franklin in this paragraph?

3 Why does the writer include information about Phyllis Wheatley in this paragraph?

of writing. When I read about her and how she achieved her writing success, I was amazed at what you can do if you try. I made a small goal to write every day, even when I'm tired. I feel great when I achieve this goal because it prepares me for my bigger goal—to write books.

Some of your goals might be more personal. I like to write those kinds of goals in my diary. Writing them down keeps them more private, and nobody can talk me out of them. Sometimes I write a plan that shows me what I need to do step-by-step to accomplish my goals.

4 Other people can help you figure out your future, too. People who do what you want to do are your greatest resources. To find out what they do, you can volunteer to help them. For instance, if you want to be a doctor, talk to a doctor about her goals as a child and how she prepared to become a doctor. She may be able to tell you things you hadn't considered. Visiting your parents' jobs, going to career fairs, and participating in after-school programs are other good options. The Internet and the library are great places to research organizations and programs for young people. You can also read biographies of people who inspire you, which can help you see how other people reached their goals. If you're not certain about your future, explore different careers by asking yourself what you really like to do.

5 Be realistic when you make your goals, but allow a little room for dreaming. Remember, it's OK for your future to be mysterious. That's what makes it so exciting. Someday you may be an astronaut, a carpenter, an ambassador, a writer, a ballet dancer, or whatever else interests you. You may even do it all!

Guided Questio

4 In your own words, t the main point the writer makes in this paragraph.

5 How would you desc the writer's tone?

1. Why do you think the author wrote this article?

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2. If you were writing an article on the same topic, would your perspective be the same as Janae Carter's or different? Explain.

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Apply the Ohio Standards

Directions: Read the following passage, written by the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Then answer the questions that follow.

Black Dots and Earmuffs

by Kofi Annan

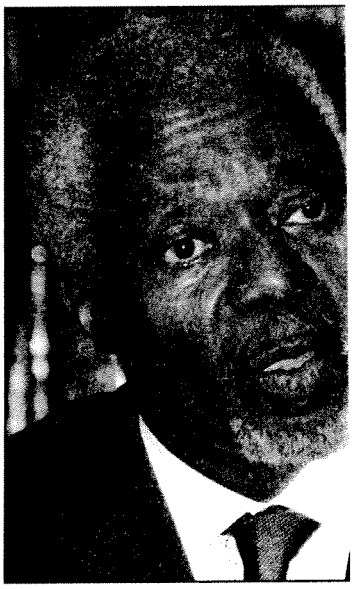
1 At times in life, it's not other people or events beyond your control that hold you back or get in the way. Your own attitude can be just as big a problem.

2 At school in Ghana, Africa, I was one of a group of boys who sat on the floor of our professor's office for weekly lessons in spoken English. One day, the professor put a large sheet of white paper on the wall. The paper had a little black dot in one corner. The professor asked, Boys, what do you see?

3 We all shouted: A black dot!

4 The professor stepped back and said, So, not a single one of you saw the white sheet of paper. You only saw the black dot. This is the awful thing about human nature. People never see the goodness of things and the broader picture. Don't go through life with that attitude.

5 Today, I am naturally concerned about the many terrible problems that plague our world, such as war, poverty, hatred, and greed. But there is also great beauty, and many people are doing heroic work to improve the lives of their fellow human beings. If I were to forget these good things, it would be difficult to sustain hope of overcoming the bad.



6 Several years after the black-dot lesson, I came to the United States as an exchange student and lived in St. Paul, Minnesota. The winters there were far colder than any weather I had ever experienced in Africa. As a child of the tropics, I found it very hard to put on layer after layer of warm clothing. I did so anyway, but there was one item I was determined not to use: earmuffs.

7 I thought they looked silly and that they probably wouldn't offer much protection. Well, I was wrong, as I found out on one bitterly cold and snowy day. While my friends were having fun, I was suffering—until I went out and bought the biggest pair of earmuffs that I could find.

8 I realized that you shouldn't walk into a situation and pretend you know better than the locals. In my job, I often have to deal with new issues, unfamiliar settings and people from many different cultures with many different beliefs. I always remember to look around and listen to those who know the environment better than I do. Only then do I begin the work of getting people to set aside their differences and join hands for the common good.

9 Life teaches you lessons in surprising ways and when you least expect it. Two of the most important lessons I ever learned come from a black dot and a pair of earmuffs. They may seem like small things, but they were enough to prompt big changes in my outlook on life.

1. Look at the first paragraph. What is the author's viewpoint about being successful?

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2. What did the author learn from the lesson about the little black dot? Write the statement from the article that expresses this lesson.

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3. According to the author, why is the lesson of the little black dot particularly important to him?

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4. What did the author learn from the earmuffs? Write the statement from the article that expresses this lesson.

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Ohio Achievement Practice

Use the passage to answer questions 1 – 6.

1. Why did the author probably write this article?

   A. entertain readers with amusing stories from his youth

   B. prove that everyone makes mistakes

   C. inform readers about what it is like to be an exchange student

   D. persuade readers to look at the big picture and listen to others

2. Which statement would the author most likely agree with?

   A. You can be your biggest enemy if you have a bad attitude.

   B. Stay firm in your opinion even when people tell you differently.

   C. Concentrate on the problems in life.

   D. Everyone should wear earmuffs no matter where they live.

3. Which of these most closely reflects the author's viewpoint?

   A. Human nature sees only the good side of life.

   B. There is no solution to the problems that plague us.

   C. Small things can cause big changes in your outlook on life.

   D. You should not try to adapt to the customs of a new place.

4. Which sentence best expresses th author's perspective?

   A. "At times in life, it's not other people or events beyond you control that hold you back or in the way."

   B. "One day, the professor put c large sheet of white paper or the wall."

   C. "Several years after the black dog lesson, I came to the Uni States as an exchange studer and lived in St. Paul, Minnesot

   D. "In my job, I often have to deal with new issues, unfamili settings, and people from ma different cultures with many different beliefs."

5. According to the author, what wc happen if he forgot the positive things in life?

   A. He would concentrate more c solving problems.

   B. He wouldn't be able to do his as well.

   C. He would be more cautious ir new situations.

   D. He would have a less negativ attitude than he has now.

6. Why do you think Kofi Annan calle his composition "Black Dots and Earmuffs"? Do you think this was c good title? Explain your answer usi examples from the selection and y own ideas.

2 POINTS Write your answer on a separate sheet of paper.