0:00 **Owl:** Welcome to Evaluating an Author’s Intent, an instructional video on reading comprehension brought to you by the Excelsior College Online Writing Lab.

0:12 Analyzing a text requires you to think critically about why, how, and to whom the author is speaking.

0:20 In this video, we’ll cover how to evaluate an author’s intent by paying attention to four aspects of authorial intent: point of view, purpose, intended audience, and tone.

0:36 After watching this video, be sure to visit the Online Reading Comprehension Lab of the Excelsior College Online Writing Lab for additional videos and resources on how to analyze a text, such as How to Identify Writing Patterns and Evaluating an Argument.

0:54 Point of view is the author’s position on an issue.

0:59 You can discern an author’s point of view by looking for key words, such as support, benefit, oppose, harm, and against.

1:11 With these key words in mind, let’s try to identify the point of view of the following statement:

1:17 Stricter gun control laws would benefit the public by keeping guns off the streets and out of the hands of dangerous or unstable individuals.

1:26 The key word “benefit” provides a clue to the author’s point of view on the topic of gun control.

1:32 In this case, the author is in favor of stricter gun control laws.

1:37 Purpose is the author’s reason for writing.

1:41 There are many reasons for writing.

1:44 For instance, an author may write to inform, to explain or instruct, to entertain, or to persuade.

1:55 You can identify the author’s purpose by asking yourself the following discovery questions:

2:00 Why did the author write this?

2:03 What is he or she trying to achieve?

2:07 Let’s look at some statements to identify the purpose.

2:11 “In the event of a crash landing, each passenger should ensure that their seatbelt is securely fastened and tuck their arms, legs, and head into their body.”

2:21 This statement is instructive because it’s intended to explain what to do in the event of a crash landing.
“Columbus Day is a controversial holiday because of its tacit endorsement of colonization, slavery, and the genocide of indigenous peoples.”

This statement is persuasive because it's trying to convince the reader to agree with the author's point of view about Columbus Day.

Advertisements and commercials are also persuasive since their goal is to persuade you to buy something.

“The Dow Jones Industrial dropped five hundred points today after the President announced the latest unemployment statistics.”

This statement is informative because it is trying to update the reader on what happened with the stock market today.

“The zombie horde shambled up the hill in pursuit of its prey, an injured pony whose frightened whinnies incited a virtual zombie stampede!”

This statement is trying entertain the reader by describing a fictitious zombie encounter.

The intended audience is the group of people that the author has in mind as his or her primary readers.

You can identify the author's intended audience by asking yourself the following discovery questions:

For whom is the author writing?
Where was it published and who is most likely to find it there?
What is the topic and who is generally interested in it?
What level of language does the author use? Is it simple, sophisticated, or specialized?
What assumptions does the author make about the audience’s values and beliefs?

and What is the author’s purpose for writing?

For instance, if the author writes:

“The presidential candidate is a rabid proponent of the big government, tax-the-rich, entitlement policies that have bankrupted the European Union.”

You can surmise that the author is writing for a conservative audience because he or she assumes the intended audience is familiar with and comfortable using phrases such as “big government,” “tax-the-rich,” and “entitlements” as derogatory terms.

The description of the politician as “rabid” is also a clue that the intended audience will not agree with the politician's policies.

Tone refers to the author's attitude towards the subject or audience.

For example, let’s say you come across a newspaper headline that reads: President Grinch to Steal Halloween, Too.

The author's tone is sarcastic.
You can probably guess from the tone that the author is definitely not in favor of the President.
The author’s sarcastic tone is also a good sign that he or she may be biased about the topic.
Being aware of any biases will help you to keep a critical distance as you read so that you can evaluate the truth value of what’s being said.
Tone comes in lots of different flavors.
Some words commonly used to describe tone are:
Angry, apologetic, approving, cheerful, contemptuous, critical, cynical, disapproving, doubtful, emotional, enthusiastic, friendly, formal, humorous, informal, ironic, mocking, negative, neutral, nostalgic, objective, optimistic, passionate, patriotic, pessimistic, playful, positive, righteous, sarcastic, sentimental, sensational, serious, shocked, skeptical, sympathetic, and worried.
By evaluating an author’s intent, you'll be more aware of what an author is trying to communicate and better able to formulate a critical response.
Remember to visit the Online Reading Comprehension Lab of the Excelsior College Online Writing Lab for additional videos and resources on how to analyze a text.
Thanks for listening to this instructional video on Evaluating an Author’s Intent!
Visit the Excelsior College Online Writing Lab for more support with reading and writing skills