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LESSON
26

Explaining an Author's Purpose

PART
1

Introduction

THEME: >>> Finding the Facts

An **author's purpose** in writing a text is to express information to a reader. To persuade readers to believe the information, the author includes reasons and evidence that support it. **Reasons** might include ideas about why the main idea is positive or negative, or why it should be put into practice. **Evidence** might include facts or details from studies, experts, or other sources that back up the main idea.

Read the paragraph.

Sometimes, it's the simple habits that keep us healthy and happy. For example, reading a book for just 30 minutes a day can be extremely good for you. Studies have shown that reading regularly helps you concentrate better. It also increases your ability to understand matters, especially complicated topics. Reading regularly may also make you a better friend, because reading improves your listening skills. A book may seem less interesting than a computer or a video game, but don't let its outward appearance fool you. Reading regularly reduces stress levels, which is great for your heart and mind, and it increases your vocabulary, making it easier for you to express yourself!

Complete the table with information about the author's main point and the reasons and evidence that support the idea.

| Author's Main Point | Reasons | Evidence |
|---------------------|--|----------|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increases comprehension • improves listening skills • • | |

Read the first part of the speech. Then answer the questions.

excerpt from **President Obama's “Back to School” Event**

In 2009, President Obama spoke at Wakefield High School in Arlington, Virginia. Here is part of his speech.

- 1 I know that for many of you, today is the first day of school. And for those of you in kindergarten, or starting middle or high school, it's your first day in a new school, so it's understandable if you're a little nervous. I imagine there are some seniors out there who are feeling pretty good right now, with just one more year to go. And no matter what grade you're in, some of you are probably wishing it were still summer, and you could've stayed in bed just a little longer this morning.
- 2 I know that feeling. When I was young my mother decided to teach me extra lessons herself, Monday through Friday—at 4:30 in the morning.
- 3 Now, I wasn't too happy about getting up that early. A lot of times, I'd fall asleep right there at the kitchen table. But whenever I'd complain, my mother would just give me one of those looks and say, “This is no picnic for me either, buster...”
- 4 Now, I've given a lot of speeches about education. And I've talked a lot about responsibility.
- 5 I've talked about your teachers' responsibility for inspiring you, and pushing you to learn.
- 6 I've talked about your parents' responsibility for making sure you stay on track, and get your homework done, and don't spend every waking hour in front of the TV or with that Xbox.
- 7 I've talked a lot about your government's responsibility for setting high standards, supporting teachers and principals, and turning around schools that aren't working...
- 8 And that's what I want to focus on today: the responsibility each of you has for your education. I want to start with the responsibility you have to yourself.

Think About It 

What point is the president trying to make in this speech? The question asks you to analyze the speech to determine the author's main point.

To whom is President Obama delivering the speech? _____

On what day is President Obama making the speech? _____

What memory does President Obama share during his speech? _____

After discussing his childhood memory, President Obama explains that he has given many speeches about education and responsibility. Whose responsibility has he talked about in the past? _____

Whose responsibility does he want to focus on in this speech? _____

What point is President Obama trying to make in this speech? _____

A CLOSER LOOK

Why does the author believe that students must take responsibility for themselves? Underline the reasons and evidence the author provides to support his point.

Continue reading the speech. Then answer the question.

- 9 Every single one of you has something you're good at. Every single one of you has something to offer. And you have a responsibility to yourself to discover what that is. That's the opportunity an education can provide.
- 10 Where you are right now doesn't have to determine where you'll end up. No one's written your destiny for you. Here in America, you write your own destiny. You make your own future....
- 11 The story of America isn't about people who quit when things got tough. It's about people who kept going, who tried harder, who loved their country too much to do anything less than their best.
- 12 It's the story of students who sat where you sit 250 years ago, and went on to wage a revolution and found this nation. Students who sat where you sit 75 years ago who overcame a Depression and won a world war; who fought for civil rights and put a man on the moon. Students who sat where you sit 20 years ago who founded Google, Twitter, and Facebook and changed the way we communicate with each other....
- 13 So I expect you to get serious this year. I expect you to put your best effort into everything you do. I expect great things from each of you. So don't let us down—don't let your family or your country or yourself down. Make us all proud. I know you can do it.

What is the author's motivation for giving this speech?

The author discusses the history of the United States in order to _____.

- A convince students to study United States history
- B give a reason for why it's important to make your country proud
- C explain the principals the United States was founded upon
- D provide evidence that hard work pays off

DISCUSS IT

Think about the reasons the author gives to support the main point. Talk with another student about these reasons. Which reasons do you find most convincing? Why?

A CLOSER LOOK

Several main topics related to caring for a pet turtle are included in the passage. In the margin, note the main topic presented in each paragraph.

Read the passage. Then answer the questions.

Caring for a Pet Turtle

- 1 Turtles are beloved by many people. But when you decide to make a turtle your pet, you're making a commitment for a very long time. Some turtles live longer than humans do! Therefore, it's important to know the specific care a pet turtle needs.
- 2 To care for a pet turtle, you need the proper equipment. Small turtles can be kept indoors in tanks or outdoors in closed off areas that have a pond. Large turtles can be kept indoors in large tanks or outdoors. However, turtles kept outdoors often need to hibernate during the winter. They can also be kept inside until the weather gets warmer.
- 3 A turtle needs a place to swim, a place to dry off, and a place to soak up sunlight. Turtles that live indoors must have access to artificial lighting that gives off UVB radiation, like the sun does naturally. To set up a tank or pond for a turtle, you need gravel, logs, or islands so the turtle can get out of the water, a water filter, and a water heater. A gravel vacuum cleaner makes cleaning a turtle's tank much easier.
- 4 Turtles need a good deal of exercise. Therefore, you need to provide a pet turtle with a place to move around. Most turtles appear to move awkwardly on land, but they are actually fast runners and good climbers. A turtle's tank or outdoor area needs to have enough room for them to swim and climb. If it doesn't, you should take them to a wading pool a few times every week.
- 5 Turtles need a variety of options when it comes to food. Young turtles eat meat only. Older turtles eat meat and vegetables. Experts recommend having at least six different kinds of food for a pet turtle. They agree that turtle pellets can be the main food, but it should be supplemented with other types of food. Strawberries, vegetables, fish, and crickets are some good options.
- 6 Caring for a pet turtle is a serious responsibility. Consider all the advice given here before getting a pet turtle. In addition, develop a relationship with a veterinarian who specializes in caring for these special reptiles.

How does the title of the passage relate to the author's main point for writing?

In caring for a pet turtle, what should a pet owner supply?

What are the differences between a main point, a reason, and evidence?

Often, the topic sentence of a paragraph summarizes the main idea of the paragraph.

1 Part A

Which answer *best* describes the author's main reason for writing the passage?

- A to convince readers to become owners of a pet turtle
- B to inform readers about the dangers of caring for a pet turtle
- C to teach readers that caring for a pet turtle can be fun
- D to explain to readers the proper care a pet turtle requires

Part B

Which of the following from the passage *best* supports the answer to Part A?

- A "Most turtles appear to move awkwardly on land, but they are actually fast runners and good climbers."
- B "But when you decide to make a turtle your pet, you're making a commitment for a very long time."
- C "A turtle needs a place to swim, a place to dry off, and a place to soak up sunlight."
- D "Some turtles live longer than humans do!"

2 What evidence does the author provide to support the point about feeding turtles?

- A "Turtles need a variety of options when it comes to food."
- B "Experts recommend having at least six different kinds of food."
- C "Young turtles eat meat only."
- D "Older turtles eat meat and vegetables."

3 What is the author's main point in paragraph 4?

Read the passage. Then answer the questions.

Solving the Problems of America's Roads



- 1 The problems with America's roads were not easy to solve. The country needed strong leadership. Solving these problems took time, money, and hard work.
- 2 The first step was taken by the police of New York City. They created "rules of the road." Slow vehicles had to keep to the right. Faster vehicles could pass on the left. Drivers must use hand signals when they turned, stopped, or slowed down.
- 3 Another problem was the many accidents that happened at intersections. The first electric traffic signals were installed in the city of Cleveland, Ohio. A red light meant *stop*, and a green light meant *go*. Other cities added traffic signals that had a third color light. This yellow light signaled *caution* or *slow down*.
- 4 In the early years of the automobile, there were no drivers' licenses. There were no age limits for drivers. There was no auto insurance. This soon changed. Automobile owners had to register their cars. New York was the first state to give drivers' licenses to certain drivers. Then New Jersey drivers had to have a license to drive. They had to pass an exam to get a license.

5 The US needed a road system. The Bureau of Public Roads was created in Washington, DC, in 1915. It worked with the states to take care of and organize the roads. Old roads were repaired, and new, paved ones were built. Lines were painted on the roads to mark traffic lanes. Speed limits were established. The limits were posted on signs. Roads were given route numbers. Major highways received US highway numbers. Routes that ran north to south were given odd numbers. Routes that ran east to west were given even numbers.

6 President Eisenhower knew there was a need for wide, smooth, well-marked highways. These highways must connect state-to-state and coast-to-coast. He was sure that this type of highway system would improve safety. It could help businesses and small towns grow.

7 The government created the US Interstate Highway System in 1956. Engineers began working on these Interstate highways. They tested road materials. They studied bridge and road plans. They built roads that were the same all across the country.

8 The US Interstate Highway System was to be the largest project in US history. It would take 40 years to build. It would have 54,000 bridges and 100 tunnels. More than 46,500 miles of Interstates would cross America. The roads would pass through every state in the nation.

1 Part A

What is the author's main point in paragraph 5?

- A to describe the road system that was put into place
- B to explain why the US needed a road system
- C to explain how to read a map
- D to describe the leader of the Bureau of Public Roads

Part B

Which of the following from the passage *best* supports the answer to Part A?

- A "The Bureau of Public Roads was created in Washington, DC, in 1915."
- B "Roads were given route numbers."
- C "The US needed a road system."
- D "It worked with the states to take care of and organize the roads."

2 In paragraph 6, which of the following reasons does the author give for why President Eisenhower thought highways were needed?

- A to make driving safer
- B to create a more beautiful driving experience
- C to help people learn how to drive
- D to keep people from getting lost

3 What are two pieces of evidence that support the point that some changes regarding roads began in New York?

4 What is the author's main point in paragraph 1, and what detail in the final paragraph supports that point?
