

## Reading non-fiction and media: 4. Purposes of a text

This audio bite is about purposes of a text.

ELIOT: If you remember, Alix talked about G – A – P, or ‘Gap’. This is a way of remembering genre, audience, and purpose. We covered the first two of these, so now we’re going to deal with purpose. Basically purpose is what the passage is trying to do, so if we have a text like this:

ALIX: Cows are usually milked two or three times a day. On average they produce 30 litres of milk a day, but they also produce about 200 litres of gas.

ELIOT: You know that it’s giving us information – the purpose is to tell us things we probably didn’t know. A lot of texts inform. For instance, you can find out what’s on TV by looking in most newspapers. But texts also do other things, like this:

ALIX: So there’s these three cows, one from Germany, one from France, and one from England, and they all go into this bar...

ELIOT: We’re not really listening to this for information – it’s part of a joke, so its purpose is to entertain. Can you think of any udders – sorry, any others?

ALIX: Well a lot of texts are written to persuade people. For instance, adverts in magazines are there to sell things like perfume, shampoo or cars. And there’s no reason why we can’t use persuasion to write about milk too, like this:

ELIOT: Growing children need calcium, they need energy, and they need vitamins. So what better than a full glass of fresh dairy milk to start each and every day?

ALIX: You can also write a text to instruct – to tell someone what to do. And things like recipes are obvious examples of telling people exactly what they should do, like this:

ELIOT: Now pour half a pint of milk into a saucepan. Heat it up slowly, stirring all the time.

ALIX: You can also find texts which advise people – the passage might have a few instructions but it mainly gives suggestions, like this:

ELIOT: If you are planning to get a tan, go carefully at first. You should use a sun cream right from the start. If there’s no shade, you ought to wear a hat as well.

ALIX: And you can find texts which explain, which tell you why. So if someone asked me why I liked EastEnders, I’d say something

## Reading non-fiction and media: 4. Purposes of a text

like ... the storylines are good. They seem to be about normal stuff that could happen to anyone, but then there's something that's so different, you can't wait for the next programme to find out what happens.

ELIOT: So there are all sorts of purposes. And to make matters more difficult, a lot of texts have more than one purpose. So a newspaper story called 'Football Star Spat in My Pint' is more than just giving information. It seems to be entertaining more than anything else. And it might contain persuasion as well, trying to make us believe how some of the stars behave badly

ALIX: Your job is to spot the 'Gap' – sort out what the genre, audience and purposes are, and then show how these are tied to the language the writer uses.

ELIOT: So remember 'Gap' – genre, audience and purpose. The passages you get can have different purposes. You might have something that informs, or entertains, or persuades, or instructs, or explains. And you can have a passage which has more than one purpose.

Give reasons for deciding on the Gap, and try to show how the Gap affects features of the text, like the presentation and language.