

Lesson Plan: Reading Between the Lines: Decoding Purpose and Audience

Materials Needed:

- Access to the internet or pre-selected printed texts
- Examples of different types of media (e.g., a product advertisement, a scientific article abstract, a blog post, an excerpt from a technical manual, a political speech)
- Whiteboard, large paper, or a digital document for brainstorming
- "Decoding the Message" Worksheet (template provided below)
- Timer (optional)

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

1. Define "author's purpose," "target audience," and "inference."
2. Analyze various texts to infer the author's purpose and intended audience using textual clues.
3. Differentiate between audience types, such as experts vs. laypeople.
4. Formulate a sound judgment on whether a text is effective for its intended audience.

Lesson Activities

I. Introduction (10 minutes)

Hook: The Two Ads Scenario

Let's start with a quick thought experiment. Imagine a company is releasing a brand-new, high-tech smartphone.

- They create a 30-second video for social media. It has upbeat music, flashy visuals, and shows cool, young people using the phone to take amazing photos and play games.
- They also publish a 5-page article on a tech review website. It's filled with charts, processor speeds, camera sensor specifications, and battery life test results.

Discussion Question: Why would the same company create two completely different messages for the same product? Who are they trying to reach with each one?

(Guide the student to the idea that the video is for a general audience, while the article is for tech enthusiasts or experts. This introduces the core concepts of purpose and audience.)

Stating the Objectives

"Today, we're going to become media detectives. Your mission is to learn how to look at any piece of writing or media and figure out two key things: **WHY** it was made (the purpose) and **WHO** it was made for (the audience). This skill helps you become a smarter reader and thinker, so you can understand the

true message behind what you see every day."

II. Body: Content & Practice (30-35 minutes)

Part 1: The Detective's Toolkit - Key Concepts ('I Do' - 10 mins)

The instructor will explain the core concepts. Use the whiteboard or document to jot down key terms and definitions.

Talking Points:

- **Inference:** "This is your main detective skill. It's reading between the lines. You take clues from the text plus what you already know about the world to figure out something the author doesn't say directly. If your friend texts you 'My mom just grounded me for life :(', you can infer they're upset and got in trouble, even though they didn't write those exact words."
- **Author's Purpose (The WHY):** "This is the reason the author created the text. It's easy to remember with the acronym **P.I.E.**"
 - **P - To Persuade:** They want you to do or believe something. (e.g., Ads, opinion pieces, political speeches). *Clues: Strong opinions, emotional language, a call to action like 'Buy Now!' or 'Vote for Me!'.*
 - **I - To Inform:** They want to give you facts and information. (e.g., News articles, textbooks, encyclopedias, how-to manuals). *Clues: Facts, statistics, neutral language, step-by-step instructions.*
 - **E - To Entertain:** They want to give you an enjoyable experience. (e.g., Novels, poems, movie scripts, comics). *Clues: Humor, drama, suspense, interesting characters.*
- **Target Audience (The WHO):** "This is the specific group of people the author is trying to reach. You wouldn't explain a meme to your grandma the same way you'd explain it to your friend. The language, tone, and details all change depending on the audience."
 - **Experts vs. Laypeople:** An 'expert' already knows a lot about a subject. A 'layperson' is the general public. A car mechanic (expert) can read a complex repair diagram, but a car owner (layperson) needs a simple manual that says 'Turn key to start engine.' *Clue: Look for jargon (technical words) vs. simple explanations.*
 - **Managerial vs. Rank-and-File:** "Think about a business. A manager needs a summary of a project's budget and timeline (the big picture). A team member (rank-and-file) needs detailed instructions on their specific task. The level of detail changes."
 - **Hypothetical vs. Real:** A 'real' audience is who actually ends up reading it. A 'hypothetical' or 'intended' audience is the ideal person the author pictured in their head while writing. We're focused on figuring out that intended audience.

Part 2: Case File #1 - Analyzing Together ('We Do' - 10 mins)

Let's analyze a short text together. We'll use a real product advertisement (e.g., a print ad for a sports drink or a luxury car).

1. Display or read the ad.
2. Fill out the "Decoding the Message" worksheet together as a team.
3. **Guiding Questions:**
 - "What is this ad trying to make us want to do? Is that Persuade, Inform, or Entertain?"
 - "What specific words or images give you that clue?" (e.g., "The ad shows a famous athlete, which makes me think they want to persuade me the drink will make me athletic.")

- "Who do you think is supposed to see this? Teenagers? Parents? Business executives? How can you tell?"
- "Is this for an expert or a layperson? How do you know?" (e.g., "Definitely a layperson. It doesn't talk about the chemical ingredients; it just shows someone having fun.")
- "Based on that, do you think this ad does a good job of reaching its target? Is it effective?"

Part 3: The Solo Mission - Independent Practice ('You Do' - 10-15 mins)

Now it's your turn to be the lead detective. I have 3 different "case files" (short texts) for you to analyze on your own. For each one, fill out a "Decoding the Message" worksheet.

Suggested Texts:

1. **Case File A:** An excerpt from an instruction manual for setting up a new WiFi router.
2. **Case File B:** A movie review from a popular entertainment blog.
3. **Case File C:** The abstract (summary) from a scientific paper about climate change.

Instructions: "Take about 5 minutes for each text. Read it carefully, look for clues, and fill out your worksheet. Focus on backing up your inferences with evidence from the text. When you're done, we'll discuss your findings."

III. Conclusion (5-10 minutes)

Debrief and Recap

The student will share their findings from the 'You Do' activity.

Discussion Prompts:

- "Walk me through your analysis of Case File C (the scientific abstract). Who was the audience, and what was the big clue?"
- "Which text was the easiest to decode? Which was the hardest? Why do you think that is?"
- "In your own words, why is it important to think about the author's purpose and audience when you read something?"

Reinforce Takeaways

"Great work today. You've shown you can look past the surface of a text and understand its deeper context. This is a critical thinking superpower. It helps you evaluate information, understand different perspectives, and not be so easily swayed by messages. From now on, whenever you read an article, watch a video, or see an ad, you can ask yourself: 'Why was this made, and who was it made for?' That question alone makes you a much more critical and aware consumer of information."

IV. Assessment

- **Formative (During Lesson):** Observe and listen during the 'We Do' activity and the concluding discussion to check for understanding.
 - **Summative (End of Lesson):** The completed "Decoding the Message" worksheets from the 'You Do' activity will serve as the primary assessment.
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- **Success Criteria:** A successful analysis will correctly identify the author's purpose and a logical target audience, and most importantly, will cite specific, relevant clues from the text to support both inferences. The final judgment of effectiveness should be logical and clearly connected to the purpose and audience.

V. Differentiation & Extension

- **For Scaffolding/Support:**

- Provide a "Clue Bank" with examples of words and phrases associated with each purpose (e.g., Persuade: "should," "best," "must-have"; Inform: "first," "next," "as a result").
- Use texts with very obvious purposes and audiences (e.g., a children's story, a political campaign flyer).

- **For Extension/Challenge:**

- **The Re-Write Challenge:** Ask the student to choose one of the texts and rewrite a short portion of it for a completely different audience. For example, "Rewrite the technical WiFi instructions for your 8-year-old cousin," or "Rewrite the movie review for a college film professor." This requires a deep application of the concepts.
- **Find Your Own Example:** Have the student find an article, social media post, or video online and conduct a full analysis using the worksheet, presenting their findings back to you.

Worksheet Template

Decoding the Message

Text Title/Source: _____

1. Textual Clues: (List 3-5 specific words, phrases, or features you see)

2. Author's Purpose (The WHY): (Circle one and explain your reasoning)

PERSUADE INFORM ENTERTAIN

My evidence for this is: _____

3. Target Audience (The WHO): (Be as specific as possible)

This was written for: _____

Audience Type: (Circle what applies)

Expert / Layperson (General Public) Managerial / Rank-and-File Other: _____

My evidence for this is: _____

4. My Judgment: Is this message effective? (Write one sentence explaining if the text successfully achieves its purpose for its target audience.)
