Lesson Skill: Identifying the purpose(s) of texts

Strand Reading--nonfiction

SOL 6.6
7.6

Materials

- Various texts from the "Get Manatee Materials" Web site,
  http://www.savethemanatee.org/manatee.materials.htm
- Copies of the attached What's the Purpose? handout

Lesson

1. Begin the lesson by reviewing some of the different purposes of texts, such as to describe, persuade, inform, tell a story, and entertain. Remind students that some texts have more than one purpose. Ask students to give some examples of a multipurpose text. (For example, an autobiography might inform about a time in the past, tell a story about the author's life, and entertain the reader.)

2. Have students read two texts from the "Get Manatee Materials" Web site listed above. Choose one whose primary purpose is to inform, such as "Manatee Facts," and one whose primary purpose is to persuade, such as "If You Love Us, Please Don't Feed Us."

3. For each text, discuss with students these two questions: "What is the primary purpose of this text? How can you tell?" Encourage students to consider titles, graphics, and other information as well as the text itself.

4. Divide students into five groups, and give each group copies of one of five different texts from the "Get Manatee Materials" Web site. Be sure these texts reflect different purposes. (Suggestions: "If You Love Me, Please Don't Touch Me"; "Which Would You Rather Catch?"; "Attention Boaters, Divers, and Swimmers;" "Manatee Anatomy Facts and Trivia;" and "Manatee Mortality" on pages 3–4 of the "Educator's Guide Insert.") Be aware that some of these brochures have pictures of injured or dead sea animals; use with discretion.

5. Give each student a copy of the What's the Purpose? handout, and instruct them to follow the instructions given. Allow approximately four to six minutes for this step.

6. At a prearranged signal, have each group pass their text on to another group and repeat the process with the new text. Again, allow four to six minutes. Circulate to assist as necessary.

7. When all groups have finished all texts, assign each group one of the texts to present to the class. Their job is to give an overview of the content of the text, tell what its purpose(s) is/are, and explain how they distinguished the purpose(s). During the presentations, encourage other groups to participate in the discussion and add information to their handouts, as needed.

8.   Close the lesson by reminding students that determining the purpose(s) of a text is an important part of understanding it.

What's the Purpose?

1. In the first chart below, write in the title of the provided text, and then skim the text.
2. Discuss the text with your group, determine its primary purpose(s), and write it/them in the appropriate space. Remember, some texts may have more than one purpose.
3. Use what you discussed to complete the chart by giving at least three reasons why your group chose the purpose(s) you listed.
4. At the signal, pass your text on to another group, and repeat the process with the new text.

TITLE:	
Purpose(s):	
Reasons:	**1.** **2.** **3.**

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Purpose(s):	
Reasons:	**1.** **2.** **3.**

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TITLE:	
Purpose(s):	
Reasons:	1. 2. 3.