

Modes of Discourse

exposition

writing that explains or informs

narration

writing that tells a story

description

***writing that appeals to or
conveys sensory experience***

persuasion (argument)

***writing that presents a position
to influence the reader
to accept an assertion***

choosing a mode of discourse

***Determine your purpose,
and select the type of
writing that fits best.***

Identify the mode of discourse of each of the following sentences:

1. Last night I took the train into the city with a couple of old friends to see Herman Overact as the lead in *The Crucible*, and we enjoyed the play and his performance.
2. Herman Overact's performance in Miller's *The Crucible* is an acting event not to be missed.
3. Herman Overact is playing the lead role in *The Crucible* for the next six weeks.
4. Last evening, the sold-out audience buzzed with excitement as it stared wide-eyed at the stage in rapt anticipation of the appearance of Overact in Miller's *The Crucible*.

important note

The most effective writing often utilizes multiple modes of discourse (but one is dominant).

Identify the mode of discourse.

My other hangout, strategically located near the front door, was under the porch, behind the blue hydrangeas. I could see the postman's hairy legs and black socks, the skirts of my mother's bridge friends, and sometimes hear bits of forbidden conversation . . .

—Frances Meyers, *Bella Tuscany*

Identify the mode of discourse.

. . . we should not be surprised to find that [certain contemporary historians] have overlooked a tremendous contribution in the distant past that was both Celtic and Catholic, a contribution without which European civilization would have been impossible.

—Thomas Cahill, *How the Irish Saved Civilization*

Identify the mode of discourse.

I, myself, was having a terrible time reading the paper, so yesterday morning, I went to Birmingham to get my eyes checked, and lo and behold, I had on Wilbur's glasses and he had on mine. We are getting different colored ones next time.

—Fannie Flagg, *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe*

Identify the mode of discourse.

So why do I write, torturing myself to put it down? Because in spite of myself I've learned some things. Without the possibility of action, all knowledge comes to one labeled "file and forget," and I can neither file nor forget.

—Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*