Go down River Street and turn right onto Culver Road. Go over the bridge and keep going for five more blocks. You will find the store at the corner of Murphy Avenue and Baylor Street.

The author of the paragraph above had one purpose for writing — to give information. In this case, the information is a set of directions. Everything you read is written for a purpose. It is up to you to determine the author’s purpose.

Authors usually write to:
1. give information
2. persuade the reader to a certain point of view
3. entertain the reader

Read the following paragraph. Try to decide what purpose the author had in mind when writing it.

Environmental conservation officers oversee the trapping of fur-bearing animals. In order to do this well, they have to know all the laws that regulate trapping. When demand and the price of furs go up, regulation becomes especially important because laws are broken more often. Generally, the officer who also has a complete knowledge of trapping methods is best equipped to deal with people who break the trapping laws.

This paragraph is clearly intended to give you information about the work of an environmental conservation officer. You can tell this because the paragraph gives facts. It does not try to make you think in a certain way. It does not try to amuse you or make you laugh.

Now read the following paragraph on the same topic. As you read, decide on the author’s purpose.

The job of an environmental conservation officer can be an exciting and satisfying career for the young man or woman who measures up to the challenge. It becomes more of a challenge every day. New and different environmental problems are developing constantly. For this reason, the job of the environmental conservation officer is likely to become even more important in the future. Across the nation, conservation officers fight to stop pollution, protect endangered species, save other animals from becoming endangered, and protect our environment.

This paragraph gives information, but its main purpose is to persuade you to accept the author’s point of view: The job of an environmental conservation officer is an important and challenging one that a young person would find exciting.

Deciding on an author’s purpose will give you a better understanding of what you read.
Read the following paragraphs. On the line provided after each paragraph, describe the author’s purpose by writing I if the author’s purpose is to inform, E if it is to entertain, or P if it is to persuade.

1. If you want to be healthy, the best thing you can do is eat properly and get plenty of exercise. A great exercise is bicycle riding because it builds your muscles, gets you outdoors in the fresh air, and it is fun! The very best bicycle you can ride is the new Exer-bike, a specially designed bicycle for people who need exercise. So everyone, get an Exer-bike and be healthy! ______

2. Compare the path of light and the path of sound by looking through a straight tube of cardboard. Look through the tube. You can see what is at the other end because light is traveling through the tube to your eye. Have someone else speak softly into the tube. You can hear the sound. Both light and sound can travel through this tube. Now stuff a crumpled piece of paper into the tube. You cannot see through the tube any longer. You can still hear through it, however. Sound can get through the crumpled paper, but light cannot. One difference between light and sound, then, is that sound can pass through some things that light cannot. ______

3. Jane clicked the buttons on the computer program. She expected to hear beeps and buzzing as usual, and then see a computer printout come rolling out. Instead, she heard a sneeze. “Bless you,” said Jane, out of habit. Then her eyes opened wide. Where the computer had been, there suddenly appeared a strange looking metal man. “Thank you,” he answered her. ______

4. Our scientists must devote more time to developing ways for using and storing solar energy. Gas and oil are becoming harder to obtain all the time, and the cost continues to rise. Only solar energy can solve the nation’s energy problems. ______

5. An important leader in all Native American tribes was the shaman, or medicine man. Shamans were respected for their magic power. As leaders they had many roles to play, such as calling meetings, giving advice, and curing the sick. Members of a tribe often asked shamans to foretell future events, help change the weather, and influence the outcome of war. Throughout North America, shamans wore masks during ceremonies. Some masks took the form of animals. ______