

1 Learn the Skill

Authors write for different **purposes**, or reasons: to describe, inform, persuade, entertain, or tell a story. In fact, authors often write for more than one purpose. For example, in a persuasive article encouraging regular exercise, an author may tell a funny story about trying to keep up in an aerobics class. The main purpose of this article may be to persuade, but the author does so by entertaining. Sometimes authors directly state their purpose. Other times they have implicit, or unstated, purposes.

Authors keep their readers, or **audience**, in mind. Audiences may be general—anyone who chooses to read the work. Or they may be specific according to age, political view, income, education, technical background, interest, or profession. Authors try to appeal to their audiences and use appropriate language.

2 Practice the Skill

By practicing the skills of determining author's purpose and identifying audience, you will improve your study and test-taking abilities, especially as they relate to the GED® Reasoning Through Language Arts Test. Read the passage below. Then answer the question that follows.

GETTING A FLU SHOT

a The author's stated purpose often appears early in a passage. The authors of this passage want to persuade readers to get a flu shot. This sentence makes the claim that the flu shot is "worth getting."

b The CDC is a government agency that studies and advises about health issues. Authors refer to reliable sources to make their arguments more persuasive.

Getting a flu shot often protects you from coming down with the flu. And although the flu shot doesn't always provide total protection, it's worth getting.

This year's annual flu shot will offer protection against H1N1 flu (swine flu) virus, in addition to two other influenza viruses that are expected to be in circulation this fall and winter.

Influenza is a respiratory infection that can cause serious complications, particularly to young children and to older adults. Flu shots are the most effective way to prevent influenza and its complications. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) now recommends that everyone 6 months of age or older be vaccinated annually against influenza.

From the MayoClinic.com article FLU SHOT: YOUR BEST BET FOR AVOIDING INFLUENZA, accessed 2013

MAKING ASSUMPTIONS

Knowing an author's reputation may give you information about the purpose of the passage. The Mayo Clinic is a respected medical facility. You can assume that staff members are reliable sources of medical information.

- Which statement **best** supports the purpose of persuading readers to get a flu shot?
 - The flu shot does not always provide total protection.
 - The flu shot will offer protection against H1N1 flu (swine flu) virus.
 - Influenza is a respiratory infection.
 - Flu shots are the most effective way to prevent influenza.

DIRECTIONS: Read the passage, read each question, and choose the **best** answer.

THE IMPACT OF EDUCATION ON POVERTY

1 For decades, America has wrestled with poverty but with little success. In 1964, President Lyndon Johnson famously declared "war on poverty." A 2012 study by the Cato Institute estimates that the United States has spent roughly \$15 trillion since then, and yet the poverty rate is close to where it was more than 40 years ago. Cato reports that the United States spends nearly \$1 trillion a year between federal and state programs to fight poverty.

2 That amounts to more than \$20,000 per poor person and more than \$60,000 for a family of three. And yet, the problem has not improved.

3 Both liberals and conservatives recognize this reality. However ... some on the left think the problem is that the government has not gone far enough. They call for more government intervention, like living wages and expanded social services. Granted, the government has a role in aiding the poor, particularly the disabled, handicapped and those who are poor largely at no fault of their own.

4 But if history is any indicator, government transactions and services don't seem to be the key drivers of upward mobility. In fact, they can have the opposite effect and insulate lower classes from upward mobility.

5 Instead, conservatives would argue that education, earned success and the all-important mediating institutions—families, churches, communities, private and philanthropic enterprises, associations of coaches, teachers, parents, doctors, civil servants and religious and non-religious volunteers ... are the pillars of upward mobility.

6 The evidence seems to support that. In a landmark study, the Brookings Institution found that young adults who finish high school, get a full-time job and wait until age 21 to get married and have children have just a 2% chance of falling into poverty and a 74% chance of ending up in the middle class.

From the cnn.com article REDUCE POVERTY BY PROMOTING SCHOOLS, FAMILIES by William J. Bennett, © 2013

2. What is the author's main purpose in writing this passage?
 - A. to persuade readers to support expanded social services
 - B. to inform readers about how much the U.S. government spends to fight poverty
 - C. to inform readers about high-school graduation rates
 - D. to persuade readers that education is a key factor in overcoming poverty
3. Which statement **best** explains the author's view about social services and other government programs that aid the poor?
 - A. Government programs are not the solution to fighting poverty.
 - B. Government programs should be expanded until poverty is largely eliminated.
 - C. Graduation rates improve when social services are available.
 - D. The government should not spend any more money on social services.
4. The author assumes that his audience will include liberals as well as conservatives. Which statement **best** supports this assumption?
 - A. He says that both liberals and conservatives agree about reality.
 - B. He provides facts about the amounts of money spent on fighting poverty.
 - C. He presents the liberal viewpoint and counters it with the conservative one.
 - D. He mentions historical viewpoints other than those of liberals and conservatives.
5. How does paragraph 6 relate to the author's purpose?
 - A. It explains the details of the Brookings Institution study.
 - B. It supports the author's viewpoint stated in paragraph 5.
 - C. It confirms the findings of the Cato Institute study mentioned in paragraph 1.
 - D. It contradicts the figures the author presents in paragraph 2.