

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*