

Grade 7: Reading Benchmark

Purpose and Perspective

7.R.2.3: Explain how an author establishes and achieves purpose(s) through diction and syntax.



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Benchmark Introduction



Benchmark:

Explain how an author establishes and achieves purpose(s) through word choice (diction) and the way those words are arranged into sentences (syntax).



Definition of Author’s Purpose

The author’s purpose is the reason an author writes a text. Authors may have more than one purpose for writing.



Author’s Purpose

There are three main reasons why an author writes a text:

- To inform
- To persuade
- To entertain



Author’s Purpose

If the author’s purpose is **to inform**, they may do the following:

- Include factual information or statistics
- Provide quotes from experts
- Explain the steps in a process or procedure

Example of Author's Purpose

Inventing Ourselves: The Secret Life of the Teenage Brain **informs** readers of findings in the study of the anatomy of the teenage brain and how the brain influences adolescent behavior. Author Sarah-Jayne Blakemore includes facts gathered from scientific studies, details about experiments, and quotes from scientists.



Author’s Purpose

If the author’s purpose is **to persuade**, they may do the following:

- Present their opinion or perspective on a topic
- Use reason and logic to convince the reader
- Use powerful language that inspires emotion or other reactions

Example of Author’s Purpose

In her “Letter to Ella and Bertram Wolfe,” Frida Kahlo seeks **to persuade** her friends to support her choice to separate from Diego Rivera. In the letter, Kahlo presents her perspective, expresses her worries and emotions, and asks directly for understanding and continued contact.



Author’s Purpose

If the author’s purpose is **to entertain**, they may do the following:

- Tell a story that captivates the reader
- Include interesting details that engage the reader
- Write in a humorous or suspenseful style

Example of Author’s Purpose

Edgar Allan Poe’s story “The Cask of the Amontillado” **entertains** readers with carefully crafted mystery and suspenseful language. Poe uses vivid and creepy descriptions of the catacomb setting and strong storytelling that builds the tension as the story nears its murderous conclusion.



Definition of Diction

Diction is an author's choice of words.

> "Heaven and earth are **great**, but **greater** still is the **kindness** of the Communist Party; father and mother are **dear**, but **dearer** still is Chairman Mao." (*Red Scarf Girl)*

This credo (a saying Ji-li was taught during the Cultural Revolution) uses **diction** to elicit positive feelings and ideas in readers.



Definition of Syntax

Syntax is how an author arranges the words, including sentence length, sentence type, and punctuation.

> “Heaven and earth **are great, but greater still** is the kindness of the Communist Party; father and mother **are dear, but dearer still** is Chairman Mao.” (*Red Scarf Girl)*

The credo uses **syntax** that includes repetitive phrasing to emphasize the larger importance of each of the second items.



Diction, Syntax, and Purpose

The author's purpose influences their decisions about diction and syntax.

> “Heaven and earth are great, but greater still is the kindness of the Communist Party; father and mother are dear, but dearer still is Chairman Mao.” (*Red Scarf Girl*)

This credo uses diction and syntax to achieve the Communist Party’s purpose—**to persuade** children to value Mao and Communism above all else.

Benchmark Skill Routine



How to explain an author's use of diction and syntax to achieve a purpose

Read closely, highlight, and annotate the author’s use of diction and syntax.

Notice diction:

- Words that evoke feelings or ideas
- Words with opposite or similar meanings

Notice syntax:

- Long or short sentences
- Repetition of words or phrases
- Rhythms or patterns and where these patterns are broken

How to explain an author's use of diction and syntax to achieve a purpose

Ask yourself: How are the author’s choices likely to impact readers? What does the author want readers...

- to picture?
- to feel?
- to think about?

How to explain an author's use of diction and syntax to achieve a purpose

Draw a conclusion about how the author achieves their purpose:

- What is the author’s purpose?
- How does the author’s use of diction and syntax achieve that purpose?

Remember

1. Read closely, highlight, and annotate the author’s use of diction and syntax.
2. Consider how the author’s choices are likely to impact readers.
3. Draw a conclusion about how the author achieves their purpose: What is the author’s purpose and how does the author’s use of diction and syntax achieve that purpose?

Benchmark in Action: Example of how to explain an author's use of diction and syntax to achieve a purpose



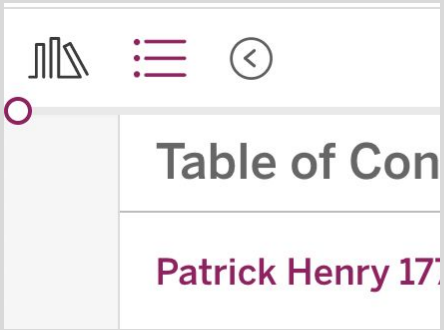
Get ready to read two passages in “Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death” by Patrick Henry.



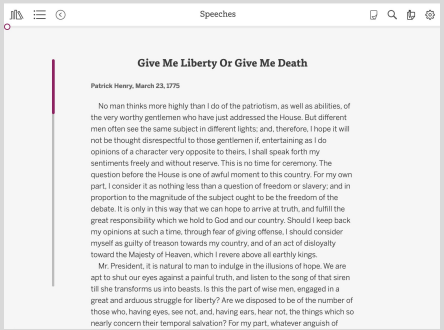
1. Open the Library app.



2. Type “Great Speeches from US History” into the search bar. Click on the title of the book to open it.



3. Click on the Table of Contents. Find and click on “Patrick Henry 1775.”



4. Read from line 32 in paragraph 3 to the end of paragraph 3 in “Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death.”

“Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death”

Context for Passage 1

As British warships and armies gathered in the American colonies to keep order, Patrick Henry delivered this impassioned speech at the Second Virginia Convention in 1775. He called upon colonists to rally behind the pursuit of freedom and rise up in response to Britain’s aggression and unwillingness to compromise.

Read from line 32 in paragraph 3 to the end of paragraph 3 in “Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death.”

As you read, look for…

- examples of the author’s use of diction.
- examples of the author’s use of syntax.
- details that help you understand what the author wants the reader to picture, feel, or think about.

Practice Step 1

Read closely, highlight, and annotate the author's use of diction and syntax.

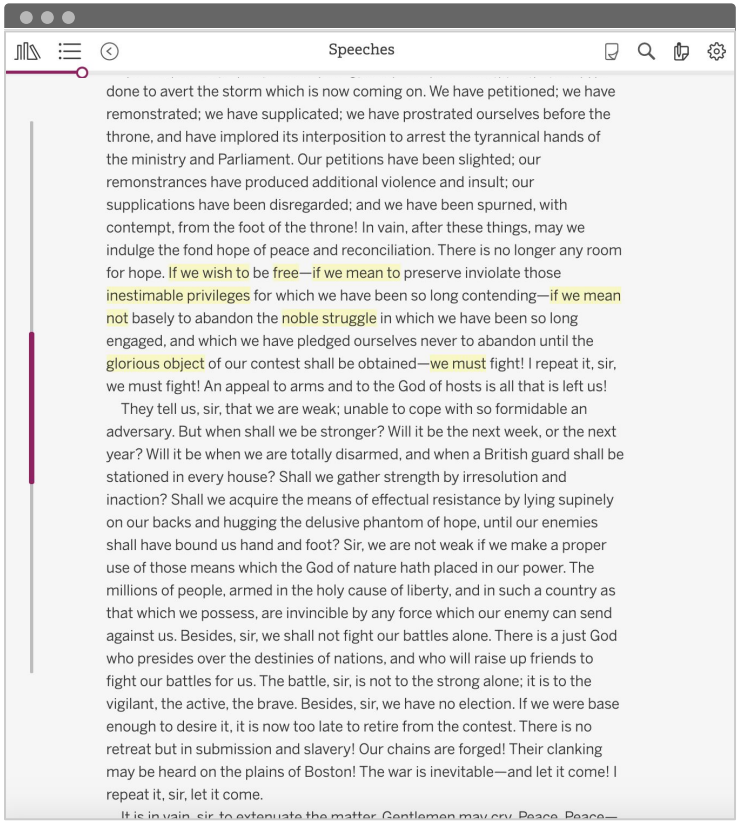
Notice diction:

- Words that evoke feelings or ideas
- Words with opposite or similar meanings

Notice syntax:

- Long or short sentences
- Repetition of words or phrases
- Rhythms or patterns and where these patterns are broken

Practice Step 1



Highlight the author's use of diction and syntax.

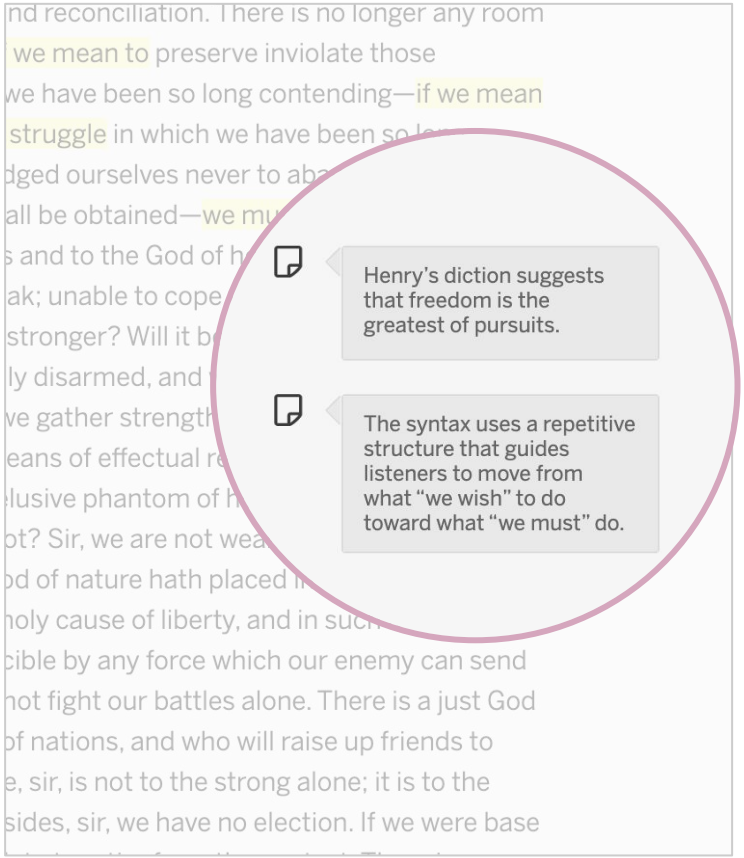
Diction:

"Free"
"Inestimable privileges"
"Noble struggle"
"Glorious object"

Syntax:

"If we wish to..."
"If we mean to..."
"If we mean not..."
"We must..."

Practice Step 1



Annotate to explain the author's use of diction or syntax.

- Henry's diction suggests that freedom is the greatest of pursuits.
- The syntax uses a repetitive structure that guides listeners to move from what "we wish" to do toward what "we must" do.

Practice Step 2

Ask yourself: How are the author's choices likely to impact readers? What does the author want readers...

- to picture?
- to feel?
- to think about?

Practice Step 2 Example:

Henry's words and the structure of his speech were intended to make his audience feel like freedom was something precious that they needed to fight for because they could lose it forever.

Practice Step 3

Draw a conclusion about how the author achieves their purpose:

- What is the author’s purpose?
- How does the author’s use of diction and syntax achieve that purpose?

Practice Step 3 Examples:

- Henry's purpose is **to persuade.**
- Henry's diction includes phrases like "inestimable privileges," "noble struggle," and "glorious object" to convey how important it is to fight for freedom because it's one of the most important things in life. With his syntax, Henry uses the repetition and progression of the phrases "if we wish" to "if we mean" to "we must" to emphasize the urgency of the situation and prompt his audience to take immediate action against Britain.

Remember

1. Read closely, highlight, and annotate the author’s use of diction and syntax.
2. Consider how the author’s choices are likely to impact readers.
3. Draw a conclusion about how the author achieves their purpose: What is the author’s purpose and how does the author’s use of diction and syntax achieve that purpose?

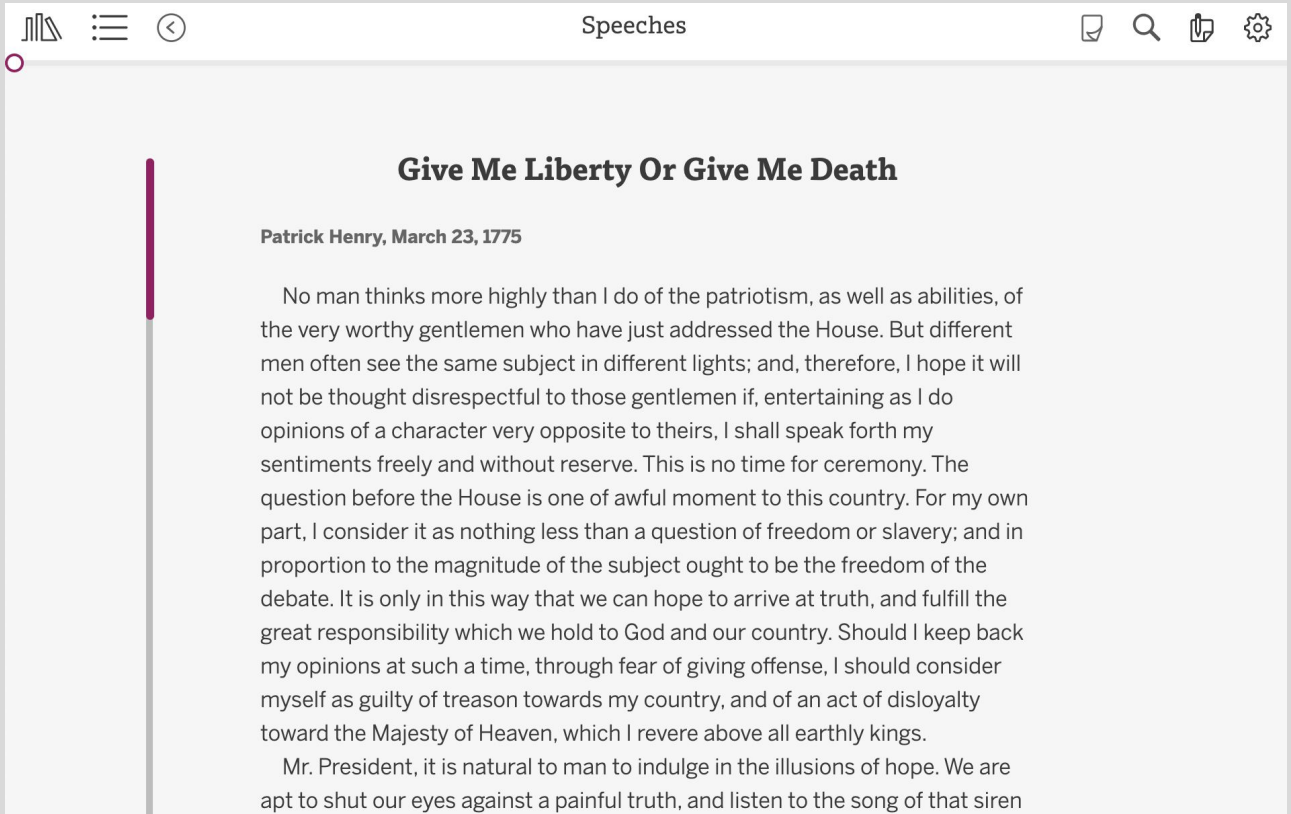
Independent Practice



Benchmark:

Explain how an author establishes and achieves purpose(s) through word choice (diction) and the way those words are arranged into sentences (syntax).

Now read paragraph 5 in “Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death.”



“Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death”

Context for Passage 2

While some colonists wished to give in to the British and find a peaceful compromise, Henry argues that Britain has pushed the situation so that the only option left is to fight for freedom.

Practice reading to explain how an author uses diction and syntax to achieve a purpose

Step 1
Read closely, highlight, and annotate the author's use of diction and syntax.

Step 2
Ask yourself: How are the author's choices likely to impact readers?

Step 3
Draw a conclusion about how the author achieves their purpose(s): What is the author's purpose and how does the author's use of diction and syntax achieve that purpose?

Check for Understanding



Share and Discuss

1. What are three or four key details that show the author’s use of diction and syntax?

Share and Discuss

2. How are the author’s choices likely to impact readers?

Share and Discuss

3. What is the author’s purpose? How does the author’s use of diction and syntax achieve that purpose?