

# Fact or Opinion?

## Purpose

Students will identify and trace the development of an author's argument, point of view, or perspective in text. They will assess the adequacy, accuracy, and appropriateness of the author's evidence to support claims and assertions, noting instances of bias and stereotyping.

## Materials

*For the students:* copies of Black Line Masters (BLMs) *Fact or Opinion?* and *Opinion Chart*, different issues of newspapers and magazines, pens or pencils

## Activity

### A. Pre-Activity Preparation

1. Ask students to tell you the difference between a *fact* and an *opinion* (e.g., a *fact* contains evidence and an *opinion* is how someone feels).
2. Read the following statements and have students tell you if the statement gives a fact or an opinion:
  - The U.S. is the best country in the world. [opinion]
  - The official language of Ghana is English. [fact]
  - Bologna is disgusting. [opinion]
  - Too many Americans are overweight. [opinion]
  - Fifty-eight percent of Americans are overweight. [fact]
  - The best students get five hours of sleep a night. [opinion]
3. Discuss how opinions can be made more believable when they are supported by facts. For example, "Kids who wear uniforms to school are happier," would be more believable if the writer quoted kids in uniforms who said they feel better about themselves, fight less, and make friends more easily.
4. Ask students to suggest evidence that would make the following statements of opinion more believable:
  - Dogs make the best pets.
  - Fractions are useful in the real world.
  - Pizza is the best food for breakfast.

(continued)



### MEETING INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

Help kinesthetic learners by dividing the room in half. Using the chalkboard or paper signs, label one half "Opinion" and the other "Fact." Have each student stand up and make a statement. Have the rest of the class decide if it is a fact or opinion, and direct the student to stand in the appropriate area. When all students are standing, have them switch sides one at a time by changing their statements. Have students who gave an opinion give a fact related to that opinion and have students who gave a fact give an opinion related to that fact.

**Standards Links**  
7.2.1, 7.2.2, 7.7.9

**Activity (continued)**

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**B. Identify Facts and Opinions**

1. Distribute the BLM *Fact or Opinion?* and have students work individually to complete it.
2. As a class, discuss students' decisions about the BLM items. Make sure all students recognize the unsupported opinions in the editorial at the bottom of the BLM.

**C. Analyze an Opinion Piece**

1. Form groups of two or three students.
2. Have each group look through the newspapers and magazines to find articles that appear to be mostly opinion (e.g., editorials, movie or music reviews, long letters to the editor, humor columns). Make sure the articles that the students choose are long enough to contain several opinion statements.
3. Have each group fill out the BLM *Opinion Chart* for the piece. Direct students to write the author's opinions in the left-hand column and the evidence for each opinion in the right-hand column. If the author provides no evidence for an opinion, direct students to write "NONE" in that column.

**D. Close the Activity**





1. Have the groups share their findings with the rest of the class. Ask if any group found an article in which all opinions had support and ask if any group found an article that was entirely opinion, with no evidence at all.
2. Discuss whether some unsupported opinions are beliefs that "everyone knows" and that are rarely questioned.

**Classroom Assessment**

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**Basic Concepts and Processes**

After students complete the BLMs, ask them the following questions:

-  Why is it important to distinguish between fact and opinion?
  -  How do writers make their opinions more believable?
  -  How can you tell a fact from an opinion?
  -  How would you support the opinion "Chocolate is bad for you?"
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# Fact or Opinion?

**1. In each blank, write "F" if the statement gives a fact or "O" if it gives an opinion.**

- a. \_\_\_\_ Women are better drivers than men.
- b. \_\_\_\_ When kids use calculators, they never learn how to do math.
- c. \_\_\_\_ My language arts teacher has no sense of humor.
- d. \_\_\_\_ I have never seen my language arts teacher smile.
- e. \_\_\_\_ According to satellite photos, the bear went over the mountain last Tuesday at 7:18 p.m.
- f. \_\_\_\_ Banjo playing should be illegal.
- g. \_\_\_\_ I've seen London and I've seen France.
- h. \_\_\_\_ Everyone knows that our team is the best.

**2. The author of the following editorial supports some opinions with facts, but other opinions do not have any support. Underline the opinion statements that need facts to back them up.**

## Don't Split Our School!

The newspapers say that our school is too crowded, and now some people are saying that we should split our school into separate schools for boys and girls. This is a bad idea.

First, school is supposed to prepare students for the real world. The last time I checked, the real world contained both men and women. Students will have to learn how to get along with the opposite sex at some point, but separate schools can't teach that.

Second, girls are smarter than boys. If we send girls to a separate school, boys won't have anyone to help them. They'll never get past the seventh grade.

Third, the boys' schools will have better sports. No one cares about girls' sports. All the money will go to the boys' school, and the girls will be stuck playing board games.

Finally, we'd need another building, but the school district can't afford it. The construction company says the new building would cost \$1.2 million. But at the last meeting the president of the school board said the district only had \$300,000. I don't think parents would chip in the remaining \$900,000. They're already complaining about having to spend \$150 a year on textbooks.

Pushing for separate schools is a waste of time. Instead, we should look at other ways to reduce crowding, like going to school for only half a day.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Opinion Chart

Find an article that is mostly opinion. Below, record the author's major opinions and the evidence the author uses to support each opinion. Write each opinion in the left-hand column. Write the evidence the author gives for that opinion in the right-hand column. If the author does not give any evidence for that opinion, write "NONE." The first entry is an example of one opinion. Your article will probably have several opinions.

<b>Opinion</b>	<b>Evidence</b>
<i>summer is the best time of the year</i>	<i>no school, no snow, long days</i>

# Opinion Chart

## Teacher Directions

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Form groups of two to three students and have each group find a magazine or newspaper article that contains several statements of opinion.

Distribute the BLM *Opinion Chart* and have students complete it as they read the article they found. Tell students to write each opinion in the left-hand column and the support for that opinion in the right-hand column. Encourage students to examine the supporting points carefully to see if they justify the opinion.

If an author provides no support for an opinion, have the students write “NONE” in the corresponding space in the right-hand column.

## Answer Key

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Answers will vary.