

Writing an Editorial

Grade 9 English ISP

What is an editorial?

- ▶ An editorial is a brief, written commentary on a specific topic.
- ▶ Editorials express opinions, beliefs or judgements and are usually written by newspaper or magazine editors.
- ▶ Good editorial writers must do more than express their opinions; they must write persuasively.
- ▶ Persuasion is the art of convincing another person to accept an opinion.
- ▶ Editorials are meant to influence public opinion, promote critical thinking and sometimes cause people to take action about an issue.
- ▶ An editorial is different from a formal essay. Whereas in a formal essay the writer presents his or her opinion almost immediately, an editorial builds up to the position throughout the paper.

Planning your editorial

- ▶ At the heart of every argument is a claim with which people may reasonably disagree.
- ▶ Some claims are not arguable because they're:
 - ▶ completely subjective, matters of taste or opinion (ex. I hate sauerkraut.)
 - ▶ a matter of fact (ex. The first *Star Wars* movie came out in 1977.)
 - ▶ based on belief or faith (ex. There is life after death.)
- ▶ To be arguable, a position must reflect one of at least two points of view, making reasoned argument necessary. In some cases, you will argue not that a position is correct, but that it is plausible—that it is reasonable, supportable, and worthy of being taken seriously.
- ▶ In most cases, you will not explicitly state your opinion until you are well into the editorial piece, although the reader should get a sense of where you are heading.

Structure of Editorial

- ▶ Your editorial should include the following components:
 - ▶ An objective explanation of the issue
 - ▶ The opposition's viewpoint
 - ▶ A refutation (where you challenge and discredit the opposition's viewpoint)
 - ▶ Reasons to defend your position
 - ▶ A conclusion

Objective Explanation

- ▶ Provide some background context to the issue. In this section you should answer the W5 + H questions
- ▶ It is necessary to provide readers some background on a topic so they can understand what is being argued.
- ▶ Use relevant facts and quotations to explain the issue itself.
- ▶ Ensure that when you use quotations (“direct” or indirect - paraphrased) you credit the material by acknowledging which source you took the info from.

Present your opposition's viewpoint

- ▶ Explain the opposing side of the issue. This is the opinion of the issue that is the *opposite* of what you believe about the issue. It is also referred to as the *counter-argument* because it counters (opposes) your argument (position).
- ▶ Every topic has two sides and a good editorial must acknowledge that both exist.
- ▶ Some positions can't be refuted, but still you need to acknowledge readers' doubts, concerns and objections to show that you've considered them.
- ▶ Rather than weakening your argument, acknowledging possible objections shows that you've thought about and researched your argument thoroughly.
- ▶ Use relevant facts and quotations to present the counter-argument objectively.

Refute the opposition's belief

- ▶ Now that you've presented the opposite viewpoint, you can challenge and discredit it. In doing so, try to point out why the opposition is mistaken in their beliefs.
- ▶ Pull in facts and quotations from sources that support your position
- ▶ State the position as clearly and as fairly as you can, and then show why you believe it is wrong. (Are the values underlying the position questionable? Is the reasoning flawed?)
- ▶ If the counter-argument has some merit but fails on some points, say so, but emphasize its shortcomings.
- ▶ Avoid the fallacy of attacking the person making the argument or bringing up a competing position that no one seriously entertains.

Defend your position

- ▶ Present reasons to defend your position.
- ▶ Your task is to persuade the reader to believe that your opinion on the issue is the most convincing.
- ▶ This is the most important part of your editorial and should have the most writing devoted to this section.
- ▶ Effective arguers try to appeal to readers' values and emotions
- ▶ Readers need to trust the person who's making the argument so it's important that you come across as trustworthy, honest and knowledgeable
- ▶ Effective arguers try to appeal to the readers' values and emotions.

Developing Support for Your Position

- ▶ There are a number of ways that you can offer support for your position:
 - ▶ Facts
 - ▶ Statistics (A national study for that X percent of)
 - ▶ Testimony by authorities and experts (According to X, ...)
 - ▶ Anecdotal evidence (This happened...)
 - ▶ Scenarios (What if...?)
 - ▶ Case studies and observations (This is what happened when...)
 - ▶ Textual evidence (direct quotations from articles)

Conclusion

- ▶ Finish off your editorial with some punch.
- ▶ Give solutions to the problem or challenge the reader to be informed.
- ▶ You want to leave the reader thinking about the importance of the issue and why they should adopt your position.
- ▶ Use strong language to create a convincing closing argument.

Historical Accuracies

- ▶ It is important to remember that you are writing from the perspective of the same time period of the novel (either the Great Depression of the 1930s or the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s)
- ▶ Remember that your editorial should contain no references to modern products, styles of language, social media platforms, etc.
- ▶ To help you get into the right mode, imagine that you are a character like the editor of *The Maycomb Tribune*, Mr. Underwood.
- ▶ Try to put yourself in the shoes of a person living in the time period and see the world through his or her eyes.

Final Reminders

- ▶ This Friday is our Peer Editing session in the Library
- ▶ Have your rough copy of the editorial ready for editing along with your annotated bibliography
- ▶ On Monday, June 10, you will submit the following:
 - ▶ Evaluation Sheet
 - ▶ Good Copy of Editorial
 - ▶ Good Copy of Annotated Bibliography
 - ▶ Edited Rough Copies
 - ▶ Editorial Planning Chart
- ▶ This ISP is worth 15% of your final mark! Make it your best work and see me if you need any help.