

## Creating an Op-Ed News Project

### Assignment

Your assignment is to plan, develop, write, revise, and present an editorial on a timely and debatable issue of significance to your school community, local community, or national audience.

<b>Planning and Prewriting:</b> Take time to plan all the texts that you will include.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ How can you build a list of potential issues that are both interesting to you as well as debatable and timely?</li><li>■ What format will your opinion pieces take (e.g., editorials by newspaper staff, letters to the editor, editorial cartoon)?</li></ul>
<b>Drafting: Decide how you will incorporate support and organize texts.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ How will you gather evidence to support your positions?</li><li>■ How can you use models of argumentative writing from this unit to help you add rhetorical elements that will appeal to your audience?</li><li>■ What sort of organizational patterns do the kinds of pieces you are writing tend to follow? How can you emulate these so that your pieces read like a real informational or editorial publication?</li></ul>
<b>Evaluating and Revising:</b> Create opportunities to review and revise.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ What sort of strategies can you use to provide feedback to each other on the quality of your pieces (e.g., SMELL, SOAPSTone)?</li><li>■ What kinds of feedback from peers and the Scoring Guide can help guide your revision?</li><li>■ How will you assure that your product as a whole represents multiple perspectives on your topic?</li></ul>
<b>Checking and Editing for Publication: Be sure your work is the best it can be.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ How can you use examples of either print or online newspapers to create a realistic layout for your articles?</li><li>■ How will you check your own or each others' work for grammatical and technical accuracy? What references will you consult?</li></ul>

Scoring Criteria	Exemplary The editorial:	Proficient The editorial:	Emerging The editorial:	Incomplete The editorial:
<b>Ideas</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-explicitly represents an editorial perspective</li> <li>-is extremely persuasive throughout, demonstrating a thorough understanding of persuasive techniques</li> <li>-provides evidence of thorough and original research throughout; each piece demonstrates appropriate and ample evidence to support the thesis.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-represents a perspective that are implied throughout the work as a whole</li> <li>-demonstrates a clear intention to persuade, showing an adequate understanding of persuasive techniques</li> <li>-demonstrates that research has been conducted to support the positions; the majority of pieces demonstrate sufficient evidence supporting the thesis.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-represents a limited perspective</li> <li>-demonstrates an intention to persuade; some of the pieces may be descriptive or expository rather than persuasive</li> <li>-demonstrates that some research has been conducted to support the positions with lapses in completeness to adequately support the thesis.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-lacks a perspective</li> <li>-offers a perspective that may be descriptive or expository rather than persuasive</li> <li>-does not demonstrate adequate research; the majority of the pieces demonstrate insufficient evidence to adequately support the thesis and/or opinions remain unsupported.</li> </ul>
<b>Structure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-is organized exceptionally, so that ideas move smoothly and comfortably</li> <li>-accurately follows the organizational pattern of the article type, whether informational or editorial.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-is organized in a way that is clear and easy to follow</li> <li>-largely follows the organizational pattern of the article type, whether informational or editorial.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-is unevenly organized with lapses in coherence</li> <li>-attempts to follow the organizational pattern of the article type, whether informational or editorial, with some lapses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-is difficult to follow and may jump too rapidly between ideas</li> <li>-struggles to follow the organizational pattern of the article type, whether informational or editorial.</li> </ul>
<b>Use of Language</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-demonstrates purposeful use of rhetoric designed to appeal to the target audience(s)</li> <li>-contains few or no errors in grammar or conventions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-demonstrates functional use of rhetoric but may not directly appeal to the target audience</li> <li>-may include minor errors in grammar and conventions that do not interfere with understanding.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-attempts to use rhetoric with limited appeal to the target audience</li> <li>-includes some errors in grammar and conventions that interfere with the meaning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-inconsistently demonstrates rhetoric</li> <li>-includes many errors in grammar and conventions that seriously interfere with the meaning.</li> </ul>

## How to Write an Editorial

### Learning Targets

- Compare and contrast the persuasive elements of two editorials.
- Craft an editorial of your own, carefully considering audience and context.

### Learning Strategies

[RAFT](#), [Drafting](#), [Sharing and Responding](#), [SOAPStone](#)

**Note:** You have now had the opportunity to read and analyze a couple of editorials. Now you will walk through the steps of writing your own editorial.

### Before You Write

*Brainstorm for topics:* Choose topics in which you have a genuine interest and some prior knowledge. Be sure the topics are issues that are debatable. Do not, for example, argue for school violence because it would be difficult to find anyone in favor of such a thing. Many editorials are written as responses to news articles or other editorials, so be alert for interesting ideas while reading your news source each day.

*Research your topic:* Ask opinions, conduct interviews, and locate facts. While editorials are opinion pieces, those opinions must still be supported with evidence.

*Get both sides:* In addition to having support for your position, be certain that you have information about the other side of the issue. You will need this soon.

*Consider your audience:* Use SOAPStone as a prewriting strategy to consider details of your audience. What does your audience currently believe about this issue? Why? How will they respond to you? Why? What can you do to persuade them to change their minds? How will using slanted language affect your credibility and persuasiveness with them?

*Write a thesis:* Before writing your draft, you must have a clearly stated position on this issue with a strongly worded reason for your position.

*Write out your topic sentences and/or main ideas:* This preparation will help you organize your thoughts as you draft your editorial.

### Writing a Draft

*Get to the point:* Your first paragraph should immediately bring the reader's attention to the seriousness of the issue. Create a "hook" that will sell the piece to the reader: a current event or imminent danger, for example. You should then provide a concise summary of what you're going to tell the reader and include your thesis statement.

*Provide context:* Give your readers important background information about the issue. This background should not be common knowledge (e.g., "drugs are dangerous") but should frame the issue and define any key terms that your reader will need in order to understand your argument.

*Make your point:* Give your strongest two or three reasons why the reader should agree with you. Use relevant and appropriate evidence to support your reasons. State the source of your information, and be sure that your argument is clear and organized.

*Address your opposition:* Reasonable people may think differently than you do on the subject. State at least one or two of the most credible reasons why someone might object to your point of view. Then refute their positions by explaining why their assumptions, claims, logic, and/or evidence are wrong.

*Wrap it up:* Briefly summarize the main points of your argument and think of a powerful way to end your piece. Often this means giving your reader one last thought to consider.

### Revising Your Draft

**Note:** Don't rely too heavily on your computer; sometimes even your computer mistakes frequently confused words. The spell-check feature may correct your spelling, but make sure it's correcting your word to the one you want. The same is true of the grammar check feature. For example, you may have spelled "every day" correctly, but if you intend to use the adjective meaning "occurring daily," you need "everyday."

*Check your evidence:* As you look back through your draft, consider whether you have included enough evidence to convince someone who thinks differently than you. Also, is that evidence relevant to your position?

*Check your rhetoric:* Where is your language slanted? What words or phrases could you modify to "tone down" your voice and appeal to more people?

*Check your grammar:* Nothing will make dismissing your ideas easier than misspelled or misused words or phrases. Triple-check your editorial for mistakes.

### Argument Writing Prompt

With a partner, co-write a brief editorial on the subject of the Eden Prairie suspensions or another contemporary issue of your choice. Use the steps outlined in "How to Write an Editorial" to guide your writing. Be sure to:

- Introduce and establish the significance of your claim.
- Use language and varied sentence structures to establish relationships among reasons and evidence.
- Make use of rhetorical devices, such as appeals to emotion, logic, or ethics, to support your argument.
- Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone.