



Digital Media Virtual Learning

Grades 9-12/Writing a Good Opinion Story

April 21, 2020



9-12/Digital and Advanced Digital Media
Lesson: April 21, 2020

Objective/Learning Target:
Students Will Be Able to Identify and Write Good Opinion
Stories

Let's Get Started:

We all have opinions and we all have things we are passionate about. We are going to first explore the things that are important to you.

1. What are some school or teen related topics you have an opinion about or are big out there right now?
2. What are some community topics do you have an opinion about or are big out there right now?
3. What are some national or world issues you have an opinion about or are big out there right now?

What is an Opinion Story?

An **opinion** piece is an article, usually published in a newspaper or magazine, that mainly reflects the author's **opinion** about a subject.

Types of Opinion Articles:

- Editorials– The written opinion of an editor, an editorial board, or of the political leanings of the entire organization
- Cartoons– Illustrations that appear in the paper poking fun at current events, often expresses the opinion of the artist
- Columns– A regularly printed series of articles of the opinions of a writer.
- Letters to the Editor– Letters written by readers that express their opinion either supporting or against that of the editorials.
- An op-ed - Short for opposite editorial, is an opinionated article submitted to a newspaper for publication. Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines them as "an essay in a newspaper or magazine that gives the opinion of the writer and that is written by someone who is not employed by the newspaper or magazine."

Writing a Good Opinion Piece

CHOOSING THE SUBJECT - Generally speaking this is probably the most important part...what to write about. Choose topics that are relevant to your school and the students. This shouldn't be hard to find, but keep things relevant.

There are four basic types of editorials:

- Clarification – This is where you give your opinion on what a school rule means or perhaps you interpret a particular action of the school board.
- Critique – This is where you become critical of something, perhaps a school policy, a teaching method, or the food served in the cafeteria.
- Convincing – This is where you try to convince and sway someone to your particular viewpoint. Generally speaking, the predominate viewpoint contradicts yours, so you are trying to explain why yours is better.
- Commendation – Here you write to put your stamp of approval on someone, something, or an idea. You explain why you agree with the person or action, defend the individual or action, and perhaps even endorse the individual or action.

Writing a Good Opinion Piece

LAYING OUT YOUR ARGUMENT - Your argument needs to be persuasive and entertaining. If your writing is not entertaining, who will want to read it? So being with arguments or a stance that might be somewhat controversial or outrageous, and then, as you get deeper into the argument, you clarify your position and why it is not so outrageous.

Make sure you have a catchy title that causes someone to pause, question, or become curious. But once you've drawn the reader in, there are several things you need to focus on:

Explain your position in one sentence. This should be right at the beginning of your piece...or very near the beginning. It can be, as mentioned, outrageous, controversial, or even humorous. It should grab the reader's attention. For example:

- Teachers should break the rules more.
- Our football team is the best team in the nation.
- The new school policy violates student's free speech rights.
- The dress code isn't strict enough!

FACTS - Your argument means nothing without facts. You can't just make things up. It needs to be clear and your arguments should interpret the facts in a way that makes sense. But without facts, you are going nowhere.

Writing a Good Opinion Piece

TELL THE OTHER SIDE'S VIEW - This gives you credibility. It says that you know what you are talking about, have listened, but have found fault with their perspective. However, conceding to at least one point of the opposition's view shows that you can be objective, fair, and balanced.

GIVE REALISTIC SOLUTIONS - This is important. Your credibility and influence may hinge on this. It is not enough to say someone or something is wrong. You need to offer a better alternative. If you just say why someone is wrong, but you never give a realistic solution to the problem, then your arguments will seem petty. What is your solution and why is it better than the opposition's? Is it realistic? I mean stating that the solution is replacing the School Board with Junior High Schoolers is probably not realistic, and unless you intend it to be a satire, will probably turn readers off.

DON'T GET TOO WORDY - You want to aim for 500 words or less. Make every word matter and you will be more convincing.

Some writers recommend saving your best arguments for last because what a person reads last will stick in their minds longer. But if you do that, then your other arguments need to be engaging or you may lose readers.

Conclude with a reiteration of your argument and why you hold to the particular solution you presented.

OPINIONS

You're not racist? Then stop using the N-word.

By Noura Jabir

I am angry, and I am black. I know that makes me a stereotype.

I know that I'm "overreacting." I know that I need to see the positives in the incremental progress that we have made.

I also know the pain African-American students have endured at SJS this month, and that pain has been unspeakable.

As one of only 50 black students in the Upper School, I'd like to make a request on behalf of the African-American Affinity Group.

This request is not meant for every non-black student, many of whom are supportive allies of the African-American community. But it needs to be asked, and because I can't say it specifically to the people that most need to hear it, everyone needs to hear.

But first, let's consider the context.

A few weeks ago, after a student decided to post a racist comment on Snapchat, black students could not bear the thought of walking back onto campus. We were devastated that anyone would have the audacity to share anything so openly racist and deeply hurtful.

The words stung. The irony is that the AAAG had worked for months to make sure that our assembly would entertain without making everyone feel uncomfortable. Sadly, it was not enough. Likening our

dancers to slaves in an auction was like a slap to the face, but we were not totally surprised. This is but one of several racially charged incidents to occur on campus in the past several years — that we know of.

Then there are the unrelenting daily microaggressions that are sometimes hard to identify and even harder to prevent, and while they're not excusable people of color are conditioned to deal with them. What we should not have to deal with is the usage of racial slurs, particularly the N-word.

The N-word carries tremendous weight and is rooted in America's complicated history with race, and I know you know this — because you've been told time and again not to say it — so why do you still say it?

You sing along — loudly — in songs.

You shout it to each other at parties.

You say it "as a joke."

So here is my request: Stop using the N-word.

I sometimes wonder how one six-letter word can have such a profound impact on the psyche of me and other African-Americans. For many, hearing the word spoken aloud by a non-black person is traumatizing.

If that isn't enough reason for you to behave like a compassionate human

being and practice some self-control, then at least try to understand that casually throwing around a racial slur is not inconsequential.

It promotes a schoolwide culture of ignorance — whether you experience it or not. It normalizes racial insensitivity and establishes a climate in which people feel comfortable enough to make racist comments in the first place, just like the one made about the assembly. It paves the way for these catastrophic, explosive incidents that plague our school's history. And it really shouldn't matter whether you're around a black person or not, or if you're around anyone at all — no matter their race.

Singing songs with racial slurs while in your car may seem harmless, but it desensitizes you to the word. Using it in front of other people not only desensitizes you but also desensitizes everyone who hears you. And pretty soon, we have a school full of people who either say the N-word or hear it being said and do nothing about it. Maybe they don't realize how harmful it is, but more likely they are afraid to speak out. I understand their concern; when it feels as though everyone around you has chosen to ignore social norms, speaking out is a daunting task. It's a burden that no student, regardless of race, should carry. Because a few of you don't care, the rest of us have to. For those of you saying the N-word: Please, please, please stop.

Just don't say it.

You can watch others get punished for being racist and think to yourself that you are nothing like them, but if you keep saying the N-word — no matter the context or frequency — you are a part of the problem.



ILLUSTRATION / MIA FARES

Check Out
These
Opinion
Articles By
High School
Journalists

Check Out A Few of These Opinion Articles By High School Journalists

1. What is the opinion they are trying to get across?
2. Do they do a good job?
3. Are there supporting facts?
4. Do they touch on the other side's view and then rebut it?

<https://bmgator.org/2017/12/05/op-ed-speak-truth-to-power-amid-sexual-abuse-claims/>

<https://phsnews.com/5634/opinions/allowing-girls-boy-scouts-harm-good-new-rules-reinforce-age-old-sexism/>

http://studentpress.org/nsipa/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2018/10/6E_Staff_StJohnsSchool_1.pdf

<https://slpecho.com/opinion/staff-editorials/2018/10/11/discrimination-lawsuit-needs-more-attention-student-input/>

<https://theredledger.net/2018/10/03/editorial-praising-security-changes/>

<https://prospectiveonline.com/12460/opinion/a-girl-i-knew/>

<https://cen10news.com/5310/editorial-opinion/emoji-mania/>

http://studentpress.org/nsipa/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2017/09/Category19-MoreThanAHashtag-Pitc_hfork-PeytonWilson.pdf

http://studentpress.org/nsipa/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2017/09/opinion_etana.pdf

Resources/Other Important Articles on the Subject

[10 Rules For Writing a Strong Opinion Piece](#)

[NSPA High School Journalism Awards - Stories of All Types](#)