

Determining Fact, Opinion, and Bias Foundation Lesson

Read the definitions below:

Fact: a piece of information presented as having an objective reality; knowledge or information based on real occurrences

Opinion: a view, judgment, or appraisal formed in the mind about a particular matter; a belief or judgment that rests on grounds insufficient to produce complete certainty

Bias: an inclination of temperament or outlook, *especially* a personal and sometimes unreasoned judgment

Ways that bias may be created:

- the writer has incomplete information
- the writer is deliberately trying to persuade the audience
- the writer's experience is influencing the writer's attitude

Determining fact, opinion, and bias in a nonfiction article

1. Underline the facts in the article. Can they be validated?
2. Circle the opinions.
3. Looking at the opinions, what is the prevailing tone? Is it positive or negative?
4. What do you know about the writer of the article?
5. How might experiences or objectives "color" this writer's opinions?
6. Do you think the writer intentionally uses bias to persuade, or it is unintentional?
7. How biased is the article? Can the writer be trusted, or is the bias too strong for a clear understanding of the topic?

Activity One

Read the following paragraphs, and then try to determine whether there is bias, using the information, questions, and suggestions from above. If so, what might be creating the bias?

Reading for pleasure is a waste of time. People who spend hour upon hour reading don't get to live in the real world. They don't really learn anything that is useful about how to deal with everyday people and problems. Plus, teachers always make us read things that are boring.

Parents always talk about how if schools had uniforms, everything would be so much easier. You wouldn't get caught up on looks and would learn the skills you need. I disagree with this, I think that school uniforms would put a restriction on our creativity. We dress the way we do for a certain reason. Clothes give us expression and the ability to use color and patterns. The first impression we get of people is usually clothes, facial expression and language. If we all wear the same thing we don't get to really see what people are like on the inside. Usually girly girls wear pink and frilly things. Skaters wear baggy pants and Goths usually wear black. Clothes don't distract us from learning the studies we need to, it simply lets us inspire our imaginations and lights up our worlds.—Anonymous writer on TeenInk.com

Read the next two examples. Is there bias in both? Is it perceived in the same way? Why or why not?

Eating tomatoes is one of the best things you can do. These beautiful, red fruit not only thrill your taste buds and brighten your plate, they help fight disease. Studies show that people who eat tomatoes, and lots of them, lower their risks of cancer because tomatoes contain lycopene, a powerful antioxidant.—Tomato Farmers of America

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Activity Two

Read the articles “Cell Phones Don't Contribute to Learning” and “Reading and the Cell Phone: An Up and Coming Romance.”

Complete the bias activity for those two pieces and then answer the following question.

Which article is more **reliable**?