



OPINION EDITORIAL

INTRODUCTION

Members of a community such as a nation, city, university, school district, neighborhood, or family must communicate with each other in order to do their business, whether it's campaigning for office, discussing a zoning issue, negotiating family chores, or expressing political opinions in the newspaper. Among the ways members of a community can express themselves on various issues is the "letter to the editor," a well-known outlet for citizens to employ their powers of persuasion. This assignment will provide such an opportunity for you. You will need to thoroughly study an issue that you and your audience care about, formulate your opinion concerning it, and use rhetorical techniques to persuade readers to accept your position, perhaps even to act on it in some way.

WHAT IS AN OPINION EDITORIAL?

Since you are embarking on a new writing task, it will be useful for you to review what you learned in chapter one of *Writing and Rhetoric* before proceeding. Your instructor may ask you to respond to the questions listed in the appendix of chapter one at several points while you write your op-ed so you can improve your writing process knowledge.

As you read the following description, notice how we are using concepts you learned in *Writing and Rhetoric* about the domains of writing expertise. You'll see these concepts in each writing task description in the supplement.

THE RHETORICAL SITUATION

As with any writing task, to write a successful opinion editorial you will need to:

1. Understand the rhetorical situation (your audience, purpose, and issue),
2. Use an effective writing process (including self-regulating strategies, peer review, and reflection),
3. Use effective rhetorical strategies (claims, reasons, assumptions, appeals, organization, style, etc.).

Undoubtedly your instructor will help you with these three challenges, but below is a brief description to get you started.

There are fewer things more American than expressing an opinion. Citizens express opinions in many ways, from voting in elections to chaining themselves to the steps of government buildings. Citizens also write brief comments on blogs or letters to newspaper editors to express opinions about this or that current issue; longer versions of these letters are called *opinion editorials*.

Generally, op-eds are brief arguments about current (**kairotic**) issues about which there may be multiple opinions. To get a sense of what an opinion editorial does rhetorically, go to any opinion section of a local or national newspaper and read a few examples. What do the various examples have in common? What kinds of rhetorical situations call for an opinion editorial? How do they begin and end? How do the writers craft arguments? What do the writers assume about their audiences? Answers to these questions will help you understand the **genre** of the op-ed.

For this assignment, you will write an op-ed for the *Daily Universe*, BYU's student newspaper. Your **audience**, then, will be the BYU community. It's important to understand that this community of readers is far more diverse than we might assume, since faculty, staff, and even local citizens read the newspaper, both in the old school paper format and online. To successfully complete this assignment, you will need to study the issue and then write an effective opinion editorial that has the potential to persuade a range of readers. Use the **rhetorical strategies** you learn from your instructor to write the most effective opinion editorial you can.

Before writing, you will want to **read and analyze** other arguments and opinions on the issue so that you can demonstrate to your audience that you understand the various dimensions of the issue (i.e., **subject matter**). In addition, you may want to talk with those who disagree with you to gain further, more personal, insights into the ways others approach the issue. A final thought on subject matter: While issues directly related to BYU campus—like dress and grooming standards or parking at the Marriott—are fitting for a *Universe* op-ed, some of these issues have been talked to death. As a writer trying to capture the attention of busy readers, it's up to you to say something new, something unique and fresh, that makes your audience think more carefully about an issue. Often you'll find that issues that matter to you will matter to everyone in the community. For example, a student who studies American Sign Language might petition the administration to start an interpreting major. Even national issues (like gun control legislation) are fair game here, since those issues inevitably engage the BYU campus.

To help you better understand what makes an op-ed effective, please look carefully at the rubric in the *Supplemental Guide*.