



## Enrichment Activity – Secondary Schools Component

### Opinion and Information

Teacher's Sheet

In the course of this activity, the young people will be asked to read journalistic information and opinion pieces and differentiate them by identifying some of their characteristics.

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#### Link with the Québec Education Program

Languages area – English, language of instruction

#### Objective

- ✓ To distinguish information pieces from opinion pieces that appear during an election campaign

#### Length

45 minutes

#### Material required

- ✓ Board
  - ✓ Extracts from articles (opinion and information) found by the teacher in the media (daily newspapers, magazines, weekly papers, news websites, etc.) related to the election campaign
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#### Icebreaker activity

Ask students what, in their opinion, are the differences between information and opinion. Record the answers on the board.

#### A bit of theory

The media have two main functions: to inform and to take a stand. Therefore, the first step when it comes using media wisely is to differentiate information from opinion.

Many elements can help determine if a journalistic piece is objective, that is to say, if it accurately and fully relates the facts in a neutral manner, or if it is subjective, that is to say, if it presents the author's opinion or point of view. The choice of topics and the angle taken

in some information pieces may also reveal a position, just as some opinion pieces may relate some important facts.

### How to tell them apart

First, where newspapers are concerned, the placement of the text gives us good indications. Information pieces are usually found on one of the pages dedicated to updates and news. Opinion pieces are presented on the editorial page (newspaper's opinion), the ideas pages (opinions of experts and readers), or in columns (opinions of journalists).

Here are some tips to analyze the content of any text to determine what journalistic genre (objective or subjective) it belongs to.

These two journalistic types are important and contribute to our knowledge of the issues in our society, and they help shape our opinion on various subjects. Logically, it is of course important to be informed before taking a position. In fact, it is impossible to participate in a debate without first knowing the facts.

Notice that the partisan press is not useless or dangerous. Having access to the subjectivity of others often helps us clarify our own opinions. And a democracy's strength is based on the diversity of opinions expressed.

Information Piece: Objective	Opinion Piece: Subjective
Article written in an impersonal manner	Article written as <i>I</i> or <i>we</i>
Gives answers to these questions: Who? What? Where? How? Why?	Few details about the event concerned: readers are considered to already know what it is about
Neutral vocabulary and serious tone	Expressive vocabulary and use of superlatives, descriptive adjectives and a humorous or ironic tone
Neutral punctuation	Expressive punctuation: ! or ?
Article written by a press agency: QMI Agency, Canadian Press (CP), Agence France-Presse (AFP), Reuters, Associated Press	Article accompanied by a photo of the author

### Suggested steps

1. Present the various articles you found to the voters in training and ask them whether, in their opinion, they are opinion pieces or information pieces.
2. Help them find the clues that enable them to identify them as an opinion piece or an information piece. Refer as needed to the theory presented in "A Bit of Theory" to give students more information.
3. Open the discussion:
  - Why must we be able to distinguish between opinion and information when informing ourselves?



# Voters in training

- Is it good to find these two types of articles in newspapers? Why?
- Which do you feel provides the best information? Why?
- Can you be well informed by reading only opinion pieces?