



Term Limits - Write an Opinion Editorial

Lesson Overview:

Traditionally, newspaper editors write a timely opinion piece to take a stance on a current issue. They would often publish another opinion *opposite* their *editorial*, which is how the term Op-Ed entered our language. Democracies require a well-informed public who discuss issues and then vote. These discussions happen in town halls, around dinner tables, and in newspapers on the Editorial Opinion pages. In this lesson, students will get a chance to study Op-Eds, then explore and weigh evidence on a particular topic to incorporate into their own Op-Ed. Students will write a polished Op-Ed as a culminating activity urging for or against term limits.

Duration of the Lesson:

1–5 class periods, depending on how teachers decide to approach this topic

Materials List:

- Newspapers (printed or digital)
- Classroom projector and screen
- Internet access
- Copies of handouts : K-W-L Chart, Template for drafting, Peer feedback form

Oregon Social Sciences Academic Content Standards & Social Science Analysis Standards

- 3.3 Explain how a community relies on active civic participation and identify opportunities for student participation in local and regional issues.
- 5.28 Propose a response or solution to an issue or problem, utilizing research, to support the position.
- 5.29 Use a range of collaborative procedures to make decisions about and act on civic issues or problems.
- 6.28 Construct arguments using claims and evidence from multiple sources while acknowledging the strengths and limitations of these arguments.
- 7.30 Construct arguments using claims and evidence from multiple sources and diverse media while acknowledging the strengths and limitations of the arguments
- HS.9 Analyze political parties, interest and community groups, and mass media and how they influence the beliefs and behaviors of individuals, and local, state, and national constituencies.
- HS.71 Construct arguments using precise claims, integrating and evaluating information provided by multiple sources, diverse media, and formats, while acknowledging counterclaims and evidentiary strengths and weaknesses.

Learning Objectives:

Students will be able to... (SWBAT)

- Distinguish between a news article and an opinion piece

- Identify language choices and persuasive devices used in Op-Eds from different sources and perspectives
- Distinguish between the role of the press in a democracy vs. autocracy.
- Identify an important current issue and research advantages and disadvantages
- Defend a claim using evidence and reasoning to produce an argumentative piece on term limits

Essential Questions:

- How do written opinion pieces contribute to the free press in a democratic society?
- Are term limits appropriate for elected officials?

| Audience | Procedures |
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| <p>Directions for Teachers</p> | <p>Introduction to Opinion Sections</p> <p>Show students where the Editors publish their opinion pieces in newspapers (both print and digital versions) and how they also include a variety of opinions from readers and experts. Point out the difference between the <i>Opinion-Editorials</i> and <i>Letters to the Editor</i> in response to something in the newspaper.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Opinion-Editorials</i> are usually longer and written by experts, but <i>Letters to the Editor</i> are usually short and written by readers of the paper. • Show how different this part of the paper is from the news articles. <p>Teachers should explain the difference between summary writing and persuasive/argumentative writing and discuss as a class the importance of both in a democratic society. Students may think their voices don't matter until they are old enough to vote. But, they can be heard through a guest Op-Ed or Letter to the Editor.</p> <p>Discuss with your class how liberty to share and publish opinions works in autocracies vs. democracies. Take a look at this Reporters Without Borders world tally of how free the press is by country: https://rsf.org/en/index and look at the methodology here: https://rsf.org/en/methodology-used-compiling-world-press-freedom-index-2023?year=2023&data_type=general</p> <p>Exploring Elements of Op-Eds and Letters to the Editor</p> <p>Show this brief animation video (“Writing an op-ed or letter to the editor,” published by AGU, an affiliate of the National Academy of Sciences in 2020) about the key elements of Op-Eds and Letters to the Editor: https://youtu.be/oxNpt5eQd00</p> <p>Read some examples of pieces written by guest contributors. Look at the Letters to the Editors too. The best examples would be from your local community newspapers. Next best would be topics your students are interested in and that are very current.</p> |

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| | <p>Review the format of the written piece using the Template for Writing an Op-Ed. There is a nice overview of the structure of a good opinion piece at The Op-Ed Project's website and there is a blank worksheet in this document for students to use. For a simplified format depicted in a prompt form, visit this Harvard Kennedy School Communications program Webpage</p> <p>Teachers can offer that students support or oppose term limits in general, or for a particular office like President of the US, Member of The House or Senate. The CLP Current Event provides an overview, background information, current articles and editorials as well as lesson plans on term limits for you to teach the background information necessary for your students to form an educated opinion.</p> |
| <p>Directions for the Students:</p> | <p>Selecting a Topic For this lesson, we are exploring term limits for elected officials. CLP's Current Event on term limits has an overview and lots of sources to look at before you form an opinion on the issue. You may choose to support or oppose term limits in general or you can select a particular role like President of the US House or Senate and argue for or against term limits. If you are pro term limits, make sure to specify how many years you think the term should be.</p> <p>Pre-Writing Use a K-W-L chart to identify what you <u>Know</u> about the topic, what you <u>Want to Know</u> about term limits for elected officials and then take notes as you research what you <u>Learned</u> about the topic after reading through the sources.</p> <p>Research Select relevant, credible sources for the evidence to support your argument. Use data, expert opinions, and recent studies to bolster your point. Ensure you have explored multiple perspectives on the issue so you are aware of the complexity and can address opposing arguments with an excellent counterpoint.</p> <p>Drafting Follow models given for writing pieces: The OpEd Project or The Harvard Kennedy School Communications Program or use the template provided by your teacher.</p> <p>What's your point of view on this issue? What specific actions would you like to see taken that aren't currently being taken? What personal experiences have you had with this issue? What unique perspective do you bring to the conversation?</p> <p>If you are writing a Letter to the Editor (LTE), make sure to reference the original piece or issue you are responding to and follow the publication's word limit. LTEs are usually quite short so you'll have to get the point right away.</p> |

If you are submitting a full guest Opinion Editorial (Op-Ed), there will likely be a longer allowance for the word count. You can give a more robust introduction to give context to your point of view.

Peer Input

Trade drafts with someone in your class. After reading each other's drafts use these sentence stems to debrief with your partner. See the handout.

I like how you _____.
 While I was reading your piece I wondered _____.
 Have you considered _____?
 Overall, I would suggest _____.

Revision

Repeat the peer feedback with other students or even your teacher if you want more input. Then make the changes you think would improve your piece. Spell check and grammar check before you turn it in.

Submission

In addition to submitting this to your teacher, you could submit to the publication too!
 How exciting!

Assessment(s):

- Formative - K-W-L and Peer review of drafts
- Summative - Final drafts of OpEds submitted

Modifications/Variations:

- Differentiate by topic to allow students to write on something they are interested in
- To make the inquiry part easy, teacher could provide some vetted sources for students to draw evidence
- Creating a classroom culture of having writers' workshop will make the peer editing much more productive.

Lesson Recommendations:

- This could be embedded in a unit of study so the writing is linked thematically to something very familiar to students
- Give ample models for them to follow



K-W-L PreWriting Chart

Students: Once you have picked a topic, write down everything you already know about it in the K column. Then brainstorm questions to research in the W column. After your research process, fill out the L column.

| K: What I Already Know | W: What I Want to Know | L: What I Learned |
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Template for Drafting an Opinion-Editorial

Context (what's going on, what's the problem, why people should care):

Examples and Evidence:

Acknowledgments of what's working and good ideas on the other side:

What you think should be done to address the situation:

What you want others to think/do about the issue (call to action):



Peer Feedback on Draft Opinion-Editorials

My name:

My partner:

I like how you...

While I was reading your piece I wondered...

Have you considered...

Overall, I would suggest...



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