

Editorials

"Opinions cannot survive if no one has a chance to fight for them."

—Thomas Mann, *author*



An **editorial** is a short article that expresses opinions on a topic. By strict definition, an editorial expresses the official opinion of the newspaper. As such, an editorial doesn't have a **byline**. A byline tells who wrote a story.

The editorial board (p. 10) decides which topics to tackle and what to say about them. Topics may range from truancy laws to sexism.

Any reporter or editor may be assigned to write an editorial. Editorial writers sometimes use the pronoun *we*, or the "editorial *we*," to state opinions. Or you can use the paper's name.

Newspapers allow an individual to express personal opinions on a topic in various types of opinion articles. These articles are always bylined. They often use the first-person pronoun *I*. Readers can assume that the opinions expressed are those of the writer only.

Writing Editorials

In general, these are the steps in the process of writing an editorial:
1. The editorial board reviews possible topics for editorials at its regular meeting to plan the next issue.

2. The editorial board members discuss the topics in detail. They vote on the topics to cover and commit to a stand on each.

3. The board assigns a reporter or editor to write each editorial.

4. The writer researches the topic, consulting a variety of sources.

If the facts appear to conflict with the opinions of the editorial board, the writer informs members. The board may change its position.

5. The writer completes the editorial.

6. The editorial board reviews the editorial. The members suggest changes, if necessary. Then they approve it.

Structure for Editorials

Most editorials (and other opinion articles) have a similar structure. Use this general structure as your guide:

Introduction: State your opinion on the topic. Give brief background if necessary.

Body: Explain your position. Provide support with facts, examples, and expert opinions on the topic. Include any opposing opinions first and follow with yours.

Conclusion: Comment on solutions or restate your position.

Many editorial writers use the traditional five-paragraph essay structure. The first paragraph is your introduction. The second paragraph explains your position. The third presents opposing opinions. The fourth presents your opinions, which refute the opposing opinions. The final paragraph is your conclusion.

Writing Effective Editorials

Editorials have the potential to influence readers in profound ways. Take your responsibility *seriously*. But try to enjoy experimenting with ways to write effective editorials. Here are some tips to help you out.

TIPS

Writing Effective Editorials

- Choose topics that are interesting and relevant to the majority of your readers. Editorials on obscure topics have limited impact.
- Write about a current issue. Don't harp on something that has been decided months ago.
- Don't shy away from controversial topics. Tackle them if they're important for your readers.
- Don't begin with a question. You'll prompt readers to start thinking about their own views, not yours.
- Make your point clearly and get to it quickly. If readers are confused or bored, you're sunk. Keep it under 300 words.
- Be sincere. If you have a strong conviction in your opinion, readers will sense it.
- Research your topic thoroughly.
- Be fair. Present facts and opinions from both sides.
- Support all opinions with facts.
- Keep personalities out of it. Personal attacks are inappropriate.
- Make sure your solutions are logical and practical.
- Make your conclusion leave readers with a clear understanding of your opinion. Stimulate readers to think and feel.

Baby step at UN

ANYONE who cares about the dead children of Dar-

fur, about their raped mothers and murdered

fathers, will find only cold comfort in the United

Nations' decision to finally impose sanctions on

Sudan because of the genocide the government in

Khartoum is exercising there.

More than 200,000 people in the Darfur region of

Sudan have been killed, more than two million have

been turned into refugees in the last few years and

the UN has refused to do anything about it. This

week, the UN Security Council finally acted. It

froze the bank accounts and put travel bans on four

Sudanese officials, none of whom matter much in

the Sudan government.

Cold comfort, however, is better than no comfort

at all. Doing a bit, however meaningless it may

appear to be, is better than doing nothing. At least

the UN has finally acknowledged that something

unconscionable is happening in Darfur.

Even so, the Security Council vote to pick the

passports and freeze the assets of four minor

Sudanese officials was not unanimous. China, Rus-

sia and Qatar abstained from the vote. China and

Russia have tactical reasons for that, but what were

they thinking in Qatar, which depends on Western

powers to maintain its independence?

That even this resolution is an improvement is an

indication of how poorly the UN performs when it

comes to protecting human rights around the world

—previously, China and Russia threatened their

veto to prevent the UN from taking any action to

stop the genocide in Sudan.

The United States, which initiated the motion, has

welcomed it as a baby step towards dealing with the

problem in Sudan. So does Canada.

It is not enough, however. Canada has asked the

UN to adopt a policy of "responsibility to protect"

that would let the world intervene to prevent perse-

cution and genocide anywhere. If there ever were a

case for this policy, it is in Darfur. Ottawa should

relentlessly press this case at the UN.