Understanding the Task

- People don’t often read editorials critically, believing the writer may know more about the subject than they do.
  - ‘Well, if it is in print, it must be true’

- In fact, much of what is written is a SHADE of the truth. If you learn to read editorials critically, you will be able to detect BIAS and insufficient evidence.

- One way to improve your critical reading skills is to learn to distinguish between FACT and OPINION.
Getting Ready

• Think of an editorial as a prosecutor’s case. The prosecutor (writer) presents a proposition and builds a case around this proposition.

• Members of the jury (readers) decide if the evidence is sufficient to support this proposition.

Propositions

• An effective editorial contains a proposition backed up by facts and the expert opinions of others.
  • The proposition is a thesis statement: it tells the reader the writer’s position on the subject of the essay.

• It can be located anywhere in the editorial, but usually it is near the beginning.
  • Occasionally, the proposition is IMPLIED rather than stated outright.
  • Sometimes, more than one proposition can be present in the same editorial.

* Can you find a clear proposition in ‘Medical Care That’s Not Even Fit for a Horse’?
The proposition is the writer’s JUDGMENT about something.
- A judgment is an expression of belief backed up by objective evidence.

Most editorial writers do not just present the facts; they also interpret those facts. Like prosecution lawyers, they focus on the facts that support their case while tearing apart the facts which support their opposition.
- They encourage their readers/listeners to agree with their judgment.

Editorial writers use facts as evidence for their points of view.

A statement of fact can be shown to be true or false.

Unlike opinions, facts can be checked to see if they are correct.
- Critical readers will check to see if the writer is full of baloney/bologna.

Read the following sentences and decide whether they are facts or opinions:
Facts or Opinions?

- It was a perfect evening: cool, calm, and clear. **Opinion**
- Rome is the capital of France. **Opinion**
- Metropolitan Toronto has the largest population of any Canadian city. **Fact**
- The wonderful thing about e-mail is that you can save on long-distance telephone bills. **Opinion**

Opinions are sometimes easy to recognize because they use qualifier words that express values, feelings, and judgments.

Some examples of qualifier words are:
- Perfect
- Wonderful
- Best
- Most

Other words to look for which indicate opinions:
- Probably, May, Might, Would, Could
Recognizing Expert Opinions

- Expert opinions are opinions of people who are considered authorities in their fields. How do you know someone is an expert? Experts should have the following characteristics:
  - They should have authority because of their:
    - Position
    - Education
    - Experience
  - They should be knowledgeable about the topic.

Recognizing Bias

- No matter how many facts they cite to support a proposition, editorials are seldom free from bias.

- A BIAS is a tendency to look at things in one way, ignoring other points of view.
  - Like Mr. Kelly insisting (despite evidence to the contrary) that the Leafs are the NHL’s best.

- When you read an editorial, ask yourself about other points of view on the issue. Imagine what an opposing editorial would say.
  - In ‘Medical Care’, what might the health minister’s proposition be?
Recognizing Bias

- One way to recognize bias is to look for LOADED WORDS, which are words that trigger an emotional response (AKA rhetoric).

- Notice how the words in the following two sentences create different impressions. Which one is biased?
  - The lawyer cunningly avoided the reporter's questions.
  - The lawyer walked past the reporters on her way to a meeting.

- The first one makes judgments about the lawyer's behavior. The second one is unbiased since it doesn't make a judgment.

  Where are the biases in 'Medical Care'?

Distinguishing Facts from Expert Opinions

- Can the facts be shown to be true or false; that is, can they be verified?
  - If not, they are expert opinions.

- Do the opinions use qualifier words?
  - Probably, May, Might, Would, Could, Perfect, Wonderful, Best, Most

- Does this expert have authority based on position, knowledge, education, or experience?

- Would this person's authority be generally recognized in the community?
Medical Care That’s Not Even Fit for a Horse

Let’s find the following from the essay:

- Facts
- Opinions
- Expert Opinions
- Loaded Words and Phrases (Rhetoric)