

Writing for a General Audience: The Op-Ed Assignment

Due 03/11

700-900 words

The headline reads "op-ed" piece, a term referring to the "opposite editorial" page of newspapers, a page traditionally reserved for columnists, letters to the editor, and other guest "opinionators." It operates as a complement to the newspaper's own editorial positions, usually expressed in an unsigned article and offering the official opinion of the newspaper's editorial board.

A good op-ed piece is topical, offering a perspective on a current item of interest to the readers of the publication. The writer offers a unique, focused look at the subject, often using both logical and emotional appeals to persuade readers.

The writer's tone is balanced and consistent, and his or her voice unique--humorous or cynical, angry or sorrowful, objective or contemplative, but definitely the voice of the writer. Op-ed pieces are the product of an individual, not a committee.

Also, while it may seem obvious, it bears repeating: the best op-ed pieces are lively, informative, and *good* pieces of writing.

Your assignment, then, is to write an op-ed piece on something humanities-related that you are passionate about.

Keys to the Genre (also check out the tips on our website):

- Know your publication
 - Short paragraphs
 - 700-900 words
 - Includes a visual element
- Know your audience and your subject
 - Appeal to emotion, authority, logic, or a combination?
 - What words will your audience need defined? How will you define them? (hint: dictionary definitions are boring).
 - How will you hook your audience at the beginning?
- Know your opinion
 - Are you arguing a claim of fact, a value claim, or a policy claim?
 - DON'T FLIP-FLOP ON YOUR THESIS

	High Proficiency	Proficient	Some Proficiency	No/Limited Proficiency	Points Awarded
Position: Do you have a clear and focused position, is it clearly articulated in the beginning of the essay, do you stay focused on supporting your position as you discuss your support, are the examples adequately supporting the position, is the position specific enough for you to adequately support?	27-30	24-26	20-23	0-22	
Examples for support: Are the examples sufficient to convince your audience that you are correct in your position, will the audience likely find your examples acceptable, are the examples relevant?	18-20	15-17	11-14	0-10	
Explanations of examples of support: Are the explanations sufficient to convince your audience—or do you assume your readers already think the way you think or that the examples speak for themselves; will the audience find your discussion clear and acceptable; is the discussion relevant?	13-15	10-12	7-9	0-6	
Organization: Is there a logic to the progression your paragraphs, do paragraphs stay focused on developing one piece of support or do they wander from one idea to the next, do paragraphs repeat ideas? Does your organization fit the genre?	18-20	15-17	12-14	0-11	
Surface level writing: Are there grammatical errors, are sentences too wordy, is the syntax clear, is the spelling correct? Do you follow genre conventions?	6-7	4-5	2-3	0-1	
MLA citations: Do you cite your sources accurately and consistently?	7-8	5-6	3-4	0-2	
Feeder Assignment Scores: Annotated Bibliography	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total Points					100