



# Lesson Plans

created by Fiona Kirwan



**NewsBrands**  
Ireland

An Initiative from NewsBrands Ireland.



## Comment

Pages:

28 29 30 31



40-80 mins+

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Handout for  
analysing an  
Opinion Piece.  
PDF to print/  
photocopy

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Handout for  
comparing  
broadsheet and  
tabloid opinion.  
PDF to print/  
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## Material to be used

Read pages 28 to 31 in the workbook.

There are **three optional activities** suggested here:

1. All students **individually analyse an opinion piece** from one of the newspapers **using prompts provided**.
2. Some students could analyse **broadsheet** comment pieces while others look at **tabloid**. They could then be put into pairs or groups to see the different ways they handle comment using the **compare and contrast handout** as guidance.
3. Students could read the Letters to the editor pages and write their own response to one of the letters. Alternatively their letter to the editor could be in response to an opinion piece they've read.

Depending on time constraints and class ability and interest, any or all of these activities can be done.



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## Analysing an Opinion Piece

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**1. Write down the name of your paper and the date of publication.**

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**2. Identify an opinion piece** in your paper.

**3. Write down the **headline**/ sub head and name of the columnist (if they are all there)**

**Headline:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Sub Head:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Columnist's name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Analyse the article using the following prompts:**

• Why did you choose this opinion piece?

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• Can you summarise what the central opinion of the writer is on the topic they are discussing?

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• What words or phrases indicated to you that you were reading someone's opinion on an issue rather than just information?

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• How did the writer validate their opinion? Did they have quotes from other sources?

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• Did the article use language that appealed to you? (Did you feel like they were speaking directly to you?) Explain your answer.

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• Do you agree or disagree with opinions voiced in this piece? Why or why not?

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• Pretend that you have read this article online and you can send an e-mail to the columnist whose opinion piece you have just read. Write the e-mail you would send responding to their piece.

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# Broadsheets and Tabloids: similarities and differences in their opinion pieces

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**In pairs or small groups decide the following after sharing the feedback from each other's individual articles:**

- Decide which opinion piece you think had the best opening and explain why.

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- Choose which piece you preferred overall. Why is this your preference?

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- Decide which piece contained the most factual information.

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- What type of extra information was given or who was quoted?

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- Which of the pieces contained the most emotional language? (e.g. did the writer use words like you/me/we/us, did they asked questions or did it seem almost as if they were speaking directly to you?) Quote any examples of emotional language you found.

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• In all the pieces an opinion or point of view was expressed. Which one did you find the most credible or convincing? (e.g. did they prove their points with specific examples or were they making mostly general statements?)

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• Which piece contained the opinion or argument that was easiest to follow? (Do you think this has anything to do with the type of language they used in the piece?)

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• Did you spot any examples of bias or one-sidedness in any of the pieces that you read? If so make reference to your example here.

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**In conclusion::**

• Did your group prefer the opinion pieces from tabloids or broadsheets? Can you identify what features of style made that your preference? (You might refer to layout, font, use of colour as well as the content and language which you have discussed above.)

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## Comment is free, but never easy



MARTIN'S FAREWELL  
by Mark Marlow

Facts are sacred, comment is free. So said the fabled editor of the Manchester Guardian, CP Scott, around the start of the last century.

This dictum has been handed down through generations of newspapers, usually interpreted as a shot across the bows of those who would comment rather than report.

In the near century since Scott's heyday, comment has been elevated within the pages of newspapers, but today, in the internet age, his dictum has more relevance than ever. The web is choc-a-bloc with comment, much of it little more than top of the head opinion, the kind of stuff that would have Scott spinning in his grave.

For those of us who do write opinion

pieces in newspapers, there is a lot more required than just the capacity to have an opinion.

The first tool of the opinion writer should be the ability to write. You may have a subject that is difficult to sustain.

On these days, the reader might derive enjoyment from reading something that is well written.

Our old friends the facts are sacred in comment. For opinion to hold any water it must be based on fact. For example, if you are arguing that the Government is doing a terrible job, then facts require that you back up such a contention.

Opinion poll results, policies that have had a devastating impact on some people, the performance of leading politicians, all of

these must be analysed in furthering such an argument, and facts must be sprinkled throughout the offering. Never, ever rely on the web for your facts, for if you do, you will fail, if not today, then certainly in the near future.

Experience is a good ally for the opinion writer. In order to garner opinions you must have some knowledge of the way things work, such as politics, the courts, areas like planning or education. If you have a reasonably good knowledge then you are aware when something is not right, and your passion is ready to be fired up.

Comment may indeed be free, but when it's done properly, it certainly isn't easy.



# There is a difference between fact and opinion

**N**ews is fact - opinion is your point of view. If teachers vote to go on strike, news is the account of what they did. Opinion is your view on their decision - good or bad. The views expressed are your own. They may not be shared by everyone, but they are how you feel about the teachers going on strike, whether you think they are right or wrong, the effects the strike may have on you and other students.

But the key is to say something only if you have something to say. There is no point sitting on the fence. Be provocative, stir a few emotions, ruffle a few feathers. There is nothing better than a good rant, once you can back up your argument. Never try to be controversial for the sake of it.





## Over to you...

- Newspapers are as much about views as news. Can you distinguish between the two? Select some examples.
- Choose an opinion piece from one of the papers supplied. What interests you? Write your own version.
- Look at the letters page in one of the papers supplied. Choose one that you agree/disagree with? Outline why.
- Compare and contrast how broadsheet and tabloid papers handle comment. Which do you prefer? Why?
- Write a letter to the editor in not more than 400 words.

### 6 Eighth Amendment

Liberalism has won in a mature, functioning democracy

**Colin Murphy** The pro-life movement has struggled to find liberal Ireland would do well to respect, but its high communal standards are harsh on individuals

The pro-life movement has struggled to find liberal Ireland would do well to respect, but its high communal standards are harsh on individuals

### Clergy's silence on Eighth speaks volumes

The Catholic hierarchy's reticence in the referendum debate would have been unthinkable in the 1980s

**Michael Sheehy** *Profile of Editor*



“The Catholic Church is in a state of very rapid decline”

**WE MANY**  
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MARC O'DWYER | CEO - BIG RED CLOUD

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**JENNIFER O'CONNELL**

Mother's Day cards turn women with children into bland one-dimensional figures

I'm looking at Mother's Day cards for my mother. I'm not exactly inspired. Mothers, in the world of Hallmark, are nurturing, self-sacrificing, unthreatening. They love bunny rabbits, lavender and bouquets of flowers in unlikely, lurid hues. They exist only as a reflection of their greatest creation, and that, of course, is the person whose signature is scrawled across the inside. You were always there, they read. You give so much.

"Happy Mother's Day," exclaims one I found in the internet, "You're Greatest Teacher, my Best Friend and my Cheapest Therapist."

None of them apply to my own mother. She is nurturing and kind, and yes, she offers free therapy on occasion. But these aren't the most interesting things about her. She's adventurous, strong, feminist. Impeccably stylish. Whip-smart. A baker of scones and bread. She used to coax deaf children out of their silent worlds. She still has a Sherlock Holmes-like ability to read human behaviour.

None of them apply to me, not unless cooking skills, unconquered laundry mountains and excellent bedtime stories. None of them apply to any mother I know. Mother's Day cards do one thing well: they reflect the way we sanitise motherhood, turning women who have children into bland, one-dimensional figures, whose worth is measured in a currency of sacrifice and self-immolation.

That is the most shocking thing about becoming a mother, the violent evisceration of your previous identity. No one warns you about this until it happens because we're not supposed to mind. We choose this. It's a gift, they say, the subtlety being that you don't mean about a gift.

Motherhood, the same people gush, is the most important job in the universe. And yet there are no university degrees leading to the transmission from that life to this, no night classes, not even a real handbook. Instead there are books with titles that suggest children are animals to be subjugated and bent to our will. *Zoology Forcing, Baby Whisperer, The Contentment Little Baby Book*. I read, much too late, that Gina Ford never had chil-

the rest of me.

In the chemist one day, perhaps just a few days into my motherhood career, the baby was strapped to me, screaming like she alone had been sent to warn humanity of the imminent apocalypse. Does she have colic, an older woman wondered, sending me into a salient of panic. Why was she asking me? Did I look like some kind of expert? Clearly, I didn't know what I was doing - the evidence was straggled to me, following I went home and googled 'colic' and cried again. I was crying for the child who might or might not have colic (it turned out she just didn't like straps), and who certainly had a hopelessly inept mother. But I was also crying for myself, for the identity that had been forcibly retired the second the kindly midwife in the labour ward handed me a cup of tea, and called me "Mummy".

Here's the good news: it gets easier. Either that, or you find a way for the two parts of your life to peacefully co-exist. In the almost 12 years since, I've noticed that some of the best, happiest mothers are the ones who were the most resistant in the beginning, the most affronted by the cleaving of their lives in two.

Time winds down, and the long days spool into their years. It passes in a blur of hot checks against yours and sterilising and late-night dashes to the pharmacy and wiping and glitter-covered Mother's Day cards and rows over hairbrushing and small hands over your knee.

“That is the most shocking thing about becoming a mother, the violent evisceration of your previous identity”

It passes in no countless tiny triumphs only you notice - the first time you get through a supermarket and no-one ends up lying on the floor. The first time you get to watch a movie the whole way through. The first time they say "I love you" before you're it. Then one day you're a drunk and the angry little baby in the carrier is tall enough to wear your clothes and sling

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“The views expressed are your own. They may not be shared by everyone, but they are how you feel.”

**PAT FLANAGAN**

Roof falls in on homeless figures scam

It's sorry State of affairs in this so-called Republic

Are we past caring about our heritage?

THIS FAILS TO MAKE CENTS

Ed to the bank as guitar icon folds

**Moira Hannon**

TELLING IT STRAIGHT EVERY FRIDAY

**GAEILGE MUST BE SET FREE ...**

Time to teach pupils Irish culture instead

He's no loo-sar!

Mother of all claims by Kelly

Spoil your dad

Time to fight LONELINESS

DON'T MISS TOMORROW'S FREE GLOSSY *Chic* MAG

**AOIFE BANNON**

Changes don't give feminism a sporting chance

PIERS BUTTERS UP OLD PAL DON

MAURA'S TROLLS NEED TO GROW UP

**THE SUNDAY TIMES**

Spain turns a Catalan drama into a crisis

Larissa Nolan: The gig is up for tragically hip Leo

True cost of tracker scandal is price paid in human misery

Conor Brady: Halawa had to be saved but he was reckless

Damning verdict on TV trial

Real music fan don't feel the need to seek approval for something as natural as going to a concert

If all Irish citizens lined up with extremist abroad, we'd

It's not internet knowledge in the way of Steve Dwyer



# ME TOO!

By Alisha Shanagher  
Our Lady's School, Terenure

I am writing this for the girl in front of me on the bus, who edges away from the old man beside her when his hand slides along her thigh. I see your head lower in shame as everyone watches, but no one speaks up to defend you. I silently plead with you to crush his creeping fingers between your legs. Give him a mark so shameful that he can never lay those hands on anybody else.

For my friends trying to hold their heads high when the boys hurl insults like stones from across the road. I know that sometimes these names are more familiar than our own, and we all wish we could fade into the brick walls behind us. But you are so much more than blind catcalls at four o'clock on a Tuesday afternoon. You are vibrant, and loud. Your sharp tongue is the most powerful weapon in your arsenal. Do not be afraid to open fire.

For the girls I see at every party and disco I have ever been to. It doesn't matter how short your skirt was, or how much you had to drink. What matters is that

## Learn from last year's winner



this night was supposed to be your movie moment, a snapshot of your teenage years to look back on when everything else fades away. Instead you spend it with a feeling in the pit of your stomach that none of this is right, but he is so overpowering that sometimes it seems he fills the whole room. You forget how to say stop. Do not let this be the end. Don't build a tower to lock yourself away. You were brought into this world kicking and screaming. Never stop.

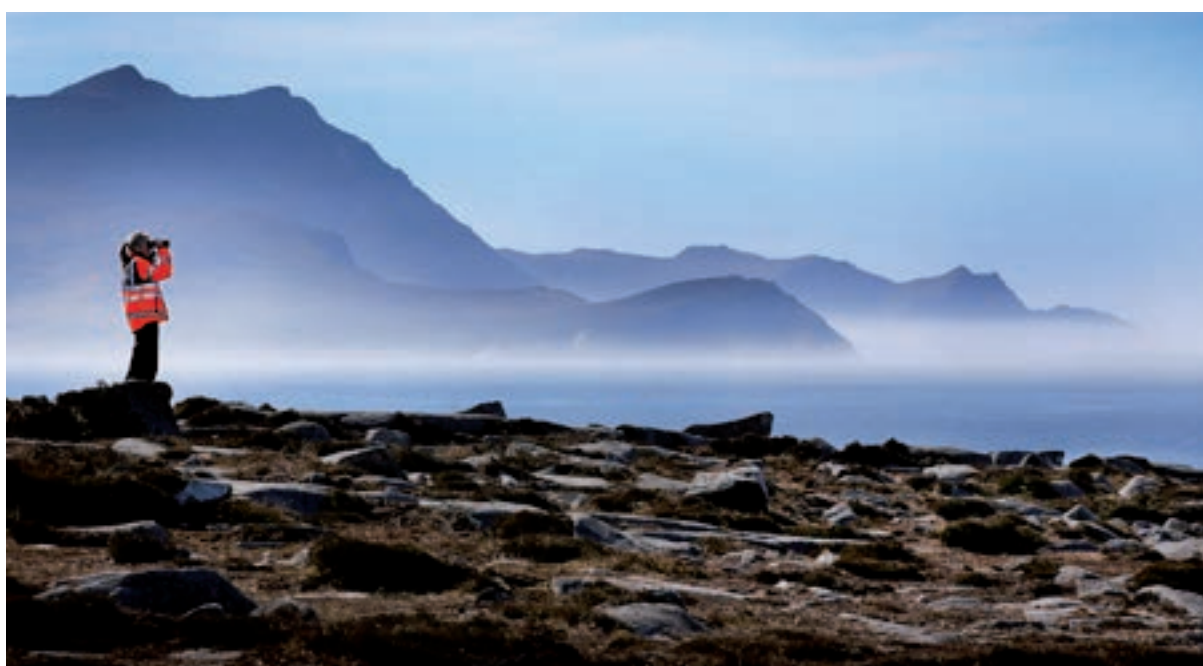
For the men that eyed us up like women when we were barely girls, and the songs they write about the damage they will do when we finally turn 18. For the boys outside the frat house chanting "No means Yes". For the President who will get elected no matter where we want to grab me. I hope the next woman you look at carries a switchblade in her bra, just for you. I hope she carves that smile you tormented her for into your side so you never forget her name.

For house keys wedged between my fingers when I walk alone at night. For my headphones, my clenched fists, the streetlights on a main road. Thank you for being my oldest and dearest friends, for making sure I always get home safely.

For the boy who stands in the shadows, too afraid of what everyone will think to make his voice heard, I see you. You matter. For the people desperately dusting their skin to figure out who has left all of these fingerprints. Your silence was not consent. For the women who will never get to read this, because their stories ended in the darkest part of the club, behind the bins, or in their own homes. I am still searching for you in everybody that passes me on the street.

For everyone who has had 'no' erased from their vocabulary, who has been made to feel like their body was no longer theirs to own,

Me too



The Sunday Times, October 2013

**...shoppers if the women read back**

**...ed.**

**...this one of resonance**