

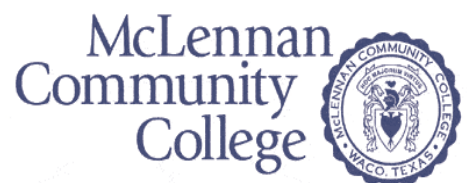
Fact and Opinion

Can It Be Proven?

MCLENNAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE - WRITING CENTER

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Writing Center (SC-222)
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Fact and Opinion

Can It Be Proven?

Fact versus Opinion

In literary analysis, a fact is something that can be proven right or wrong, and an opinion is something that cannot be proven right or wrong.

Facts provide information that can be checked, referenced, looked up, or explained. Usually, facts are used to support or describe other facts or opinions in more detail. However, facts can be verified as a true fact or a false fact.

Opinions express a subjective view of information and provide a reader with a comparative view about a topic. This information cannot be proven right or wrong. Instead, the information can be argued as an opinion supported by other opinions and facts. While some opinions seem to be logical or to be common knowledge, they are opinions if they cannot be proven.

Opinion

You are old.

(Compared to what?)

All children are messy.

(All? How messy is messy?)

My car is fast.

(Compared to what?)

My sister likes to speed.

(Does she? Prove it.)

Fact

You are 25.

(Can this be proven to be true or false?)

My son took a bath today.

(Can this be proven to be true or false?)

I got two speeding tickets.

(Can this be proven to be true or false?)

My sister drives a corvette.

(Can this be proven to be true or false?)

Often, information is presented by someone who is charismatic, making it difficult to separate the facts from the opinions. It is important to remember that all information can be presented subjectively. Look for qualifying words that change the sentence from a statement of fact to an opinion.

For example, "Tiger Woods is a golfer." This sentence expresses a fact that can be proven. However, in the sentence, "Tiger Woods is the best golfer," an opinion has been expressed by the use of the qualifier best.

Important Related Words & Concepts

Objective – A statement that is unbiased or uninfluenced by personal feelings

Subjective – A biased statement that consists of personal feelings

Qualifiers – Words that modify, limit, reduce, expand, alter, or change the meaning of a word or phrase