ENGLISH, LITERACY, AND COMMUNICATION

Fact versus opinion

Difficulty level: Easy

English, Literacy, and Communication

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Overview of the concept

This is how you tell the difference between something that can be proved and something someone just thinks. A news story might state a fact and then add an opinion as if it were the same thing, and an online review mixes the two constantly. Spotting the difference lets you judge what is solid and what is just someone's view. It is the first step in reading anything critically.



Rule

Fact versus opinion: a fact is something that can be tested or proved, and an opinion is what someone thinks or feels.

If it can be checked, it is a fact.

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Worked examples

EXAMPLE 1

Q Classify: 'Water boils at 100 degrees Celsius at sea level.'

SOLUTION

Ask: can this be tested or proved? Yes, by heating water and measuring.

It does not depend on feelings.

So it is a fact.

EXAMPLE 2

Q Classify: 'Chocolate ice cream is the best flavour.'

SOLUTION

Ask: can this be proved? No, it depends on taste.

It expresses a personal judgment.

So it is an opinion.

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Practice questions

1 Classify: 'Paris is the capital of France.'

A Fact

B Opinion

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2 Classify: 'Dogs are better pets than cats.'

A Fact

B Opinion

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3 Which of these is a fact?

A 'The Earth orbits the Sun.'

B 'Dogs are better pets than cats.'

C 'Summer is the nicest season.'

D 'Pizza is delicious.'

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4 Which of these is an opinion?

A 'Paris is the capital of France.'

B 'There are seven days in a week.'

C 'This book is boring.'

D 'Toronto is in Canada.'

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5 What makes 'Water boils at 100 degrees Celsius at sea level' a fact?

- A It can be tested
- B Everyone agrees with it
- C It is about science
- D It is written in a book

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6 Why is 'Chocolate ice cream is the best flavour' an opinion?

- A It cannot be proved; it depends on taste
- B It is about food
- C It is a short sentence
- D It has no numbers

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7 A news story says: 'The new library opened on Monday. It is the best building in town.' Which part is the opinion?

- **A** 'The new library opened on Monday.'
- **B** 'It is the best building in town.'
- **C** 'The new library'
- **D** 'on Monday'

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8 Which sentence would belong in a factual report?

- **A** 'That film was amazing.'
- **B** 'The film lasts two hours.'
- **C** 'The film is the best ever.'
- **D** 'Everyone should watch the film.'

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9

Sam says 'Humans need water to live.' Lee says 'Water is boring to drink.' Who stated a fact?

A Sam

B Lee

C Both

D Neither

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10

Which of these can be checked to see if it is true?

A 'Pizza is delicious.'

B 'Summer is the nicest season.'

C 'There are seven days in a week.'

D 'That film was amazing.'

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ANSWER KEY

1. Fact

2. Opinion

3. 'The Earth orbits the Sun.'

4. 'This book is boring.'

5. It can be tested

6. It cannot be proved; it depends on taste

7. 'It is the best building in town.'

8. 'The film lasts two hours.'

9. Sam

10. 'There are seven days in a week.'

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