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ACTIVATING LESSON SCENARIO
developed as part of the project

‘INNOVATIONS IN SCHOOL EDUCATION’

TOPIC

**Fact or opinion? How to distinguish information from
commentary**

**(Developing the ability to analyse informational and
opinion/journalistic texts)**

1. Lesson objectives

The student:

- understands the difference between a fact (information) and an opinion (commentary),
- can identify factual and subjective elements in a text,
- knows the features of good, reliable informational material,
- knows that commentaries in the media reflect the author’s point of view, not objective truth,
- learns to critically analyse texts by comparing different sources and forms of communication.

2. Target group

Primary school students

3. Teaching methods

- Brainstorming
- Mini-lecture with examples
- Group work – text analysis
- Guided discussion
- Individual reflection



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4. Teaching aids / sources

- Board / projector / flipchart
- Set of short texts:
 - 2–3 informational materials (e.g., short news items about an event)
 - 2–3 commentaries / opinion pieces / social media posts on the same topic
- Worksheets: “Fact or Opinion?” table
- Coloured markers (for highlighting text fragments)
- Fact-checking and educational websites:
 - Poland: <https://demagog.org.pl>
 - Czech Republic: <https://demagog.cz>, <https://manipulatori.cz>
 - Slovakia: <https://demagog.sk>
 - Ukraine: <https://www.stopfake.org/en/news/>
 - EU: <https://edmo.eu>, <https://euvsdisinfo.eu>

5. Lesson procedure (45 min)

1. Introduction – Is every piece of news a fact? (5–7 min)

1. Brainstorming (1–2 min)

- The teacher writes two words on the board: FACT and OPINION.
- Students give their first associations with these concepts (e.g., “truth,” “data,” “view,” “emotions,” “commentary”).
- All answers are written down – this shows that students already have some preliminary knowledge and intuition on the subject.

2. Guiding questions (2–3 min)

- Is every piece of news on the internet true?
- Can a famous person’s comment on social media be a fact?
- Is “my favourite band is the best in the world” a fact or an opinion?
- Why can two people write about the same event in completely different ways?
- Do facts and opinions sometimes mix in the news? How does that affect the audience?

3. Teacher’s commentary – extended substantive information (3–4 min)

- **Fact:**
 - Information consistent with reality, which can be checked and confirmed in reliable sources.
 - A fact does not depend on the emotions or beliefs of the author – it remains true regardless of who describes it.
 - Facts are the basis of reliable news, but even they can be presented in a misleading way, e.g., by taking them out of context.
- **Opinion:**



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- Someone's point of view, interpretation, or assessment of an event or phenomenon.
- An opinion may be consistent with facts, but it is subjective and may differ between individuals.
- The author of an opinion often uses emotional language (e.g., “outrageous decision,” “the best film in history”), which influences our feelings but does not prove the truth of the statement.
- **Why is it easy to get confused?**
 - In the media, facts and opinions are often mixed – e.g., one article may contain both numerical data (facts) and the journalist's comments (opinions).
 - Social media additionally amplify emotions – a celebrity's or friend's comment may seem like the truth because someone “famous” or “close” wrote it.
 - Fake news is often constructed to look like facts, while in reality being only opinions or manipulations.

4. Conclusion for students

- Each of us receives hundreds of pieces of information daily, but not all of them are facts.
- If we learn to distinguish what is verifiable and true from someone's evaluations and commentaries, we will understand the world better and be less likely to be manipulated.

2. Mini-lecture: How to recognise a fact and an opinion? (10 min)

Teaching objective

- To teach students to consciously distinguish between objective information and a subjective assessment in the media and on the internet.
- To make students aware that opinions are not bad, but they cannot be treated as facts.
- To show how fake news often combines facts with opinions to influence audiences.

1. What is a fact? (3–4 min)

- **Definition:**

A fact is an event or piece of information consistent with reality, which can be checked and confirmed in several independent, reliable sources.
- **Characteristics of a fact:**
 - It can be verified (e.g., in reports, statistics, official documents),
 - It is based on data, numbers, quotes, events, observations,
 - It is independent of the person who provides it – if something is a fact, it remains so regardless of the text's author.



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- **Examples:**
 - “In 2022, about 1.8 million people lived in Warsaw.”
 - “Yesterday at 2:00 p.m., a City Council meeting took place.”
(The teacher may provide 2–3 additional short facts, encouraging students to indicate how they could be verified.)

2. What is an opinion? (3–4 min)

- **Definition:**

An opinion is a subjective statement, assessment, or interpretation of a fact that reflects the author’s point of view rather than objective reality.
- **Characteristics of an opinion:**
 - Contains emotional language, value-laden words (“good,” “bad,” “outrageous,” “unfair”),
 - Based on the author’s beliefs, not always supported by evidence,
 - May differ between individuals, even when referring to the same event.
- **Examples:**
 - “Warsaw is the most beautiful city in Poland.”
 - “The city council’s decision was outrageous and harmful to residents.”
(The teacher may ask students to give their own examples of opinions on any topic – e.g., “the best movie,” “the best sports team.”)

3. Why is distinguishing facts from opinions important? (2–3 min)

- Facts help us understand what really happened and build knowledge about the world based on verifiable information.
- Opinions show different points of view, but they cannot be treated as objective truth – they are the author’s personal perspective.
- Fake news often mixes facts with opinions in order to:
 - Create an impression of truth (“based on facts”) and gain credibility,
 - Manipulate the audience’s emotions, provoking outrage, anger, or delight,
 - Influence people’s decisions or beliefs without providing reliable data.
- **Example of manipulation:**
 - Fact: “A new park of 5 hectares was built in the city.”
 - Opinion-manipulation: “The new park is yet another proof of the authorities’ incompetence – we need parking lots, not parks!”
(This example can be discussed with the class by asking: “What is the fact and what is the opinion?”)



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4. Tips for students – how to recognise a fact and an opinion?

- Ask questions:
 - Can this information be verified in other sources?
 - Are there emotional words or value judgments in the sentence?
 - Could this event be documented (e.g., photos, report, quotes)?
 - Does the author provide evidence or only express their opinion?
- If the answer is “cannot be verified” or “it’s only a judgment,” it is most likely an opinion, not a fact.

Proposed mini-exercise during the lecture (1–2 min)

The teacher displays 3 example sentences and asks for a quick hand-raise: “fact” or “opinion.”

- “In 2023, about 38 million people lived in Poland.” (fact)
- “Poland is the most beautiful country in Europe.” (opinion)
- “Yesterday in the city centre, a new shopping mall was opened – it’s another unnecessary investment.” (first part – fact, second part – opinion)

This shows that sometimes a single sentence may contain both a fact and an opinion, so one needs to be a careful reader.

3. Group exercise – “Fact or opinion?” (15–20 min)

Exercise objective

- To make students aware that in many news texts, facts and opinions are mixed, which may make it difficult to objectively assess a situation.
- To develop the skill of critically analysing texts and distinguishing what is verifiable information from what is the author’s comment or assessment.
- To practise arguing one’s own position, rather than just guessing.

Step-by-step exercise procedure

1. **Division into groups** – the class is divided into 3–5 teams of 3–4 people.
2. **Distribution of materials** – each group receives 2 short texts on the same topic:
 - **Text A** – news item (e.g., “Yesterday in Warsaw, a new city park was opened. The investment cost 3 million PLN and took 12 months to complete. The park covers 5 hectares and is open to residents daily from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.”)



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- **Text B** – comment/opinion (e.g., “Another pointless investment! Residents need parking lots, not parks, which only generate maintenance costs. Once again, the authorities don’t ask citizens for their opinion.”)

3. Instructions for groups:

- Underline in each text the **facts** (verifiable information).
- Underline the **opinions** (subjective assessments, emotional language).
- If both a fact and an opinion occur in one sentence – mark both parts.
- Fill in the table:

| Text excerpt | Fact or opinion? | How can this be verified? |

4. Work time: 8–10 minutes.

5. Presentation of conclusions: each group presents its analysis (2–3 minutes).

- The teacher writes on the board the most common difficulties, for example:
 - Opinions presented as facts (“everyone knows that...”, “it’s obvious that...”),
 - Facts without a source (“huge sums of money were spent” – without giving the exact amount),
 - Mixing facts and emotions in one sentence.

Example text sets for the exercise:

- **Set 1: City investment**
 - Text A: “Yesterday in Warsaw, a new city park was opened. The investment cost 3 million PLN and took 12 months to complete.”
 - Text B: “Another pointless investment – instead of parks, they should have built parking lots!”
- **Set 2: Sporting event**
 - Text A: “On Sunday, a football match took place between team X and team Y. The final score was 3:2 for team X.”
 - Text B: “It was the worst referee decision in history – he clearly favoured team X!”
- **Set 3: New law**
 - Text A: “Parliament passed a law increasing the minimum wage by 500 PLN per month starting in January next year.”
 - Text B: “This law will ruin the economy – politicians have no idea what they’re doing!”

Follow-up questions for discussion after the exercise

- Which fragments were the hardest to classify as fact or opinion? Why?



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- Are opinions always bad? Can they be useful if clearly separated from facts?
- How can you check whether a given piece of information is a fact? (e.g., other sources, reports, documents, quotes)
- How can fake news use the mixing of facts and opinions to manipulate audiences?

Options for extending the exercise

- **Advanced version:** Add texts containing subtle manipulation, e.g., headlines with hidden opinions (“Government’s controversial decision – another blow to citizens”) to show more difficult cases for analysis.
- **Creating neutral versions of texts:** Students rewrite an opinion so that the message is purely factual.
- **Homework:** Find an online article in which the author mixes facts and opinions, and highlight them in the text.

4. Discussion: Are opinions needed in the media? (8–10 min)

Discussion objectives

- To help students understand the role of opinions in media messages – both the positive role (diversity of viewpoints) and the negative role (risk of manipulation).
- To make students aware that not every opinion is reliable or objective.
- To show that the ability to separate facts from commentary protects against wrong decisions and misinformation.

1. Introduction (1–2 min)

The teacher says:

“Every day we read articles, listen to news, and watch comments on TV or in social media. Sometimes these are plain facts, and sometimes they are opinions from experts or ordinary internet users. Let’s discuss whether opinions are needed in the media at all, and how they influence our view of the world.”

2. Questions for discussion (extended list)

- Can an event be described completely without adding one’s own opinion?
 - Should a journalist be completely objective, or can they express emotions?

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- Would a bare fact without commentary be enough to understand something?
- Are expert comments always objective?
 - Can an expert be wrong or biased?
 - How can you tell when an expert is stating a fact and when they are giving their interpretation?
- Why do we sometimes confuse opinions with facts?
 - Can the writing style (emotional language, lack of sources) be misleading?
 - Does the popularity of the author (celebrity, influencer, well-known brand) make us more likely to believe their opinion?
- What dangers come from treating opinions as facts?
 - Can this lead to wrong decisions (e.g., political, health-related, financial)?
 - Can fake news be more believable when presented as the opinions of famous people?
- How can you check whether something is a fact?
 - Can you find this information in official sources, reports, statistics?
 - Do more than one reliable media outlet report it?
 - Is the statement based on evidence or just on emotions?
- (*Optional*) Do opinions in the media help us better understand the world, or do they create more confusion?

3. Examples for discussion (*optional – to display or read aloud*)

- Example 1 – Fact: “A new park covering 5 hectares was built in the city.”
- Example 2 – Opinion: “The new park is a waste of taxpayers’ money.”
- Example 3 – Mixed: “The new 5-hectare park is yet another proof that the authorities do not listen to citizens.”

Question to students: “Which sentence is a fact, which is an opinion? How might our view change if we treat an opinion as a fact?”

4. Teacher’s tips

- Encourage students to give real-life examples – e.g., news from social media they have recently read.
- If controversial topics arise (e.g., politics, religion), remind them that you are practising *analysing the form of the text*, not evaluating specific views.
- If the discussion becomes emotional, return to the question: “Is this a fact or an opinion? How can we check it?”
- When needed, write answers on the board, creating two columns: “Positive sides of opinions” and “Risks when we confuse opinions with facts.”



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5. Summary and reflection (7 min)

Students complete the sentences:

- “Today I learned that a fact is...”
- “It is hardest to tell an opinion from a fact when...”
- “From now on, when reading the news, I will check...”

On the board, a shared list is created: **“How to tell a fact from an opinion?”** (e.g., check the source, look for data, avoid emotional judgments, compare information in several media).

The teacher emphasises that an informed information consumer can separate what is verifiable from what is just someone’s interpretation.

Opinions are needed because they show different perspectives, help understand people’s emotions, and allow public debate.

However, decisions – especially important ones (e.g., about elections, health, safety) – should be based on facts, not on someone else’s beliefs or emotional comments.

Key rules:

1. Separate facts from opinions.
2. Check whether an opinion is supported by evidence.
3. Remember that even experts can be wrong or biased.

6. Glossary of terms

Term	Definition
Fact	Verifiable information, consistent with reality, confirmed by reliable sources.
Opinion	A subjective statement, interpretation, or assessment of an event, dependent on the author.
Commentary	A statement (written or spoken) in which the author presents their own opinion about a fact.
Objectivity	Presenting events without personal judgments, emotions, or biases, relying solely on facts.
Bias	Presenting information in a way that favours one side of a dispute, without maintaining neutrality.
Manipulation	Deliberately combining facts with opinions or omitting parts of information to influence the audience.

7. Teacher’s methodological guide – extended version

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1. Preparing the lesson

- **Selection of materials:**
 - Choose thematically safe texts that do not trigger strong local political emotions or concern current disputes in the country or school.
 - Materials about sports events, municipal investments, culture, science, nature, and technology work well.
 - If you want to use political materials, use historical or foreign examples to maintain neutrality and avoid unnecessary tension.
- **Varied formats:**
 - Prepare informational texts, opinion pieces, press headlines, short posts from social media.
 - For exercises, it is worth adding mixed examples where a fact and an opinion appear in the same sentence – this teaches attentiveness.

2. Introduction and maintaining interest

- Begin the lesson with the question: “Is every piece of news on the Internet a fact?” to spark curiosity.
- You can use a short warm-up game: read 3 sentences and ask for a quick indication of fact or opinion (e.g., by raising cards in two colours).
- Encourage students to give examples from their own life (e.g., opinions from social media comments), but do not judge their content – focus on the form.

3. Moderating the discussion

- Always ask probing questions:
 - “Why do you think this is a fact/opinion?”
 - “How can it be verified?”
 - “Can the same thing be said using neutral language?”
- If students have conflicting opinions, emphasise that this is normal, because opinions are subjective.
- Show that the line between a fact and an opinion can be difficult to spot, especially when a text is emotional or selective.

4. Creating a safe atmosphere

- From the start of the lesson, establish rules:
 - We do not judge other people’s views,
 - We do not use the lesson for political discussions or personal disputes,
 - We respect all answers – what matters is the argumentation, not “who is right.”
- If tensions arise (e.g., different views in the class), pause the conversation and return to analysing the form of the message, not its content.



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5. Active teaching methods

- Encourage group work – joint analysis allows comparing how different students understand a text.
- Use tables, coloured markers, and underlining so that students visually separate facts from opinions.
- You can ask students to create their own news headline and opinion about the same event – this exercise shows how easily the tone of a message can be changed.

6. Educational goal of the lesson

- Developing critical reading – students learn to ask questions, check sources, and not take every piece of information as truth.
- Responsible use of media: understanding that opinions can influence emotions and decisions, but sound choices should be based on facts.
- Building an attitude of openness to different points of view while simultaneously seeking evidence for the truthfulness of information.

7. Lesson extension ideas

- **Classroom poster:** “5 questions to ask to tell a fact from an opinion.”
- **Homework:** find one article on the internet and mark facts and opinions in it.
- **Class debate:** “Should the media present only facts without commentary?”
- **Comparative exercise:** analysing the same event in two different media – which elements are facts and which are commentaries?

8. Educational and fact-checking sources

- **European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO)**
<https://edmo.eu> – reports on disinformation, educational materials.
- **EUvsDisinfo – European External Action Service**
<https://euvsdisinfo.eu> – examples of fake news and analyses of fact manipulation.
- **UNESCO – Media and Information Literacy Curriculum for Teachers**
<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000192971> – modules on recognising facts and opinions.
- **Demagog.org.pl (Poland)**
<https://demagog.org.pl> – verification of politicians’ statements, analysis of facts and opinions.
- **Demagog.cz (Czech Republic)**
<https://demagog.cz> – analysis of facts and opinions in the Czech public sphere.
- **Demagog.sk (Slovakia)**
<https://demagog.sk> – examples of false opinions in public debate.
- **Manipulátoři.cz (Czech Republic)**
<https://manipulatori.cz> – education on distinguishing facts from commentary.



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- **StopFake.org (Ukraine)**
<https://www.stopfake.org/en/news/> – examples of mixing facts and opinions in fake news.

