

Is it “checkable”?

Educator Instructions

Summary

This lesson introduces the concepts of fact-based and opinion-based statements using a group activity called “Two Facts and a Feeling” ([comprehension check below](#)). In small groups, students examine sets of three statements and decide which two are fact-based and which one is opinion-based (a “feeling”). Use the flow chart ([below](#)) to guide students through characteristics of facts versus opinions. Then, each group composes its own set of two facts and one opinion to share. Finally, students read a grade-appropriate news article and complete a graphic organizer ([below](#)) to identify fact-based and opinion-based statements in an assigned text.

Essential questions

- How are facts and opinions different?
- What characteristics separate facts from opinions?
- How can you “prove” whether a fact-based statement is true or false?
- Why is it important to be able to distinguish between facts and opinions?

Key terms

- Fact
- Opinion

Preparation

1. Review this plan, including the graphic organizers and optional [activity slides](#), to determine how to adapt it for your classroom setting (in-person, virtual, etc.). Decide if you would like to cover parts of this lesson across several sessions (i.e., introduce definitions and the activity on Day 1 and complete the follow-up reading on Day 2) or a single class.
2. Share printed or digital copies of the “Two Facts and a Feeling” comprehension check and two other graphic organizers, which are included at the end of this lesson plan.
3. Decide whether students will have access to online searches to fact-check during the group activity.
4. For Part 2, determine if each group will pick its own topic to write about or if groups will use the same assigned subject.
5. For Part 3, find a news or opinion article for students to read, or select a text from a platform like [Newsela](#) (free account required), which adapts news reports for different reading levels. [KidsPost](#), [TIME for Kids](#), [News-O-Matic](#) and [Scholastic News](#) may also be good options (subscriptions required).

Learning objective

I can ...

- distinguish between fact-based and opinion-based statements.
- compose my own statements about a given topic.
- identify such statements in a text.
- explain why differentiating between fact-based and opinion-based statements is important.

Suggested grade level(s):

4-6

CCSS primary alignment

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.4](#)

Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

Part 1

1. Divide students into small groups. Introduce fact- and opinion-based statements by sharing a set of two facts and one opinion. Don't reveal which is which. Choose a topic that will be familiar to students. For example:
 - a. Milk has calcium.
 - b. Dairy cows produce milk.
 - c. Milk is delicious.
2. Ask the groups to discuss the three statements and note similarities and differences. Share with them that one statement expresses an opinion – or is “opinion-based” – and that the other two are fact-based.
3. Next, ask each group to come up with a list of characteristics for fact-based and opinion-based statements using the example set. Challenge them to come up with their own working definitions for each type of statement.
4. Come back together and have each group share its ideas. Record students' findings.
5. Hand out [NLP's flow chart](#) on fact-based versus opinion-based statements, comparing the characteristics with students' initial findings. Model how to use the flow chart with an example statement. Explain that fact-based statements are “checkable” – students can check to see whether such statements are true or false. Consider demonstrating how a quick web search can help “prove” a fact like “Milk has calcium.” For a web search, model how to use key terms or how to turn the statement into a question, such as, “Does milk have calcium?”
6. As a class, discuss: Why do we need to be able to distinguish between facts and opinions? Why is it important? Record students' ideas on a class board or display. Save these ideas for further consideration in Parts 2-3.

Part 2

7. Distribute the “Two Facts and a Feeling” [comprehension check](#) and complete the first set (in the box) together. You can also work through this activity using [these interactive, ready-to-use slides](#). Instruct students to complete the sets of statements in small groups. If students have internet access, remind them that they can do basic web searches to fact-check the statements. Advise students to be ready to discuss and defend their answers. (Is the statement “checkable” – could they check to see if it is true or false? What makes this statement a feeling, or opinion-based?)

Note: Teacher notes for this activity are included in the speaker notes section of the [slides](#). These notes may not be visible in presentation mode unless you are working from a split screen. Print out the [presentation](#) ahead of time with the speaker notes to view them during the activity.
8. After students finish all the example sets, ask groups to share their answers and explain their reasoning. Discuss and resolve any discrepancies. Alternatively, you can turn the activity into a game by keeping track of each group's answers before revealing the correct answers. See which group can get the most correct answers.
9. Direct each group to compose its own set of two facts and one “feeling” to see if they can stump the class. Assign a class topic or allow groups to pick from several topics, such as sports, food, popular culture, historical events, etc. Advise them to avoid obvious opinion signal phrases, such as “I think/feel/believe.”
10. Share and discuss the student examples as a class before each group reveals and explains its answers.
11. Discuss and revisit ideas from Part I: Can students add to their ideas of why we need to be able to distinguish between facts and opinions? Why are these distinctions important?

Answer key for graphic organizer:

1. Fact	2. Feeling	3. Fact
1a. Feeling	1b. Fact	1c. Fact
2a. Fact	2b. Fact	2c. Feeling
3a. Fact	3b. Feeling	3c. Fact
4a. Feeling	4b. Fact	4c. Fact
5a. Fact	5b. Feeling	5c. Fact

12. Assign students a grade-appropriate piece of journalism and instruct them to identify fact- and opinion-based statements in the text using NLP's "Fact vs. Opinion" [graphic organizer](#) (below). [Newsela](#), [KidsPost](#), [TIME for Kids](#), [News-O-Matic](#) and [Scholastic News](#) are a few places to find timely news stories. Consider completing the first few statements as a class.
13. Revisit the discussion about why it is important to distinguish between facts and opinions. How would this knowledge help in finding and interpreting articles from news organizations? Add this information to the class findings.

TIP!

An opinion piece or newspaper editorial should include opinion-based statements that are supported by fact-based statements. This type of text may work best for this activity, rather than a straight news report.

If you choose a straight news report, be sure to point out to students that straight news reports should never include reporters' personal opinions on a given issue. However, news reports often include opinions expressed by other people and organizations ("sources" in the story). For more on distinguishing news versus opinion, check out NLP's "[InfoZones](#)" lesson (NLP's Checkology® virtual classroom) and [Informable®](#) (NLP's free mobile app).

Here are a few journalism pieces that may work well:

- "[Opinion: Girls need pockets](#)" (Newsela)
 - **Note:** This article was adapted from [this Washington Post story](#).
- "[Opinion: Want a revolution? It's easy — go vote](#)" (Newsela)
 - **Note:** This article was adapted from [this Chicago Tribune story](#).
- "[Fans of gaming, comics, anime and sci-fi nerd out at FanExpo 2019](#)" (CBC Kids News)

Extend (Grade 6):

For opinion-based statements, ask students to identify evidence in the text that supports each opinion. Does the author offer reasons for the opinion? Are any of those reasons fact-based? Direct students to add these findings in the opinion section of their graphic organizer under the "How do you know?" questions.

Extend (Grade 6):

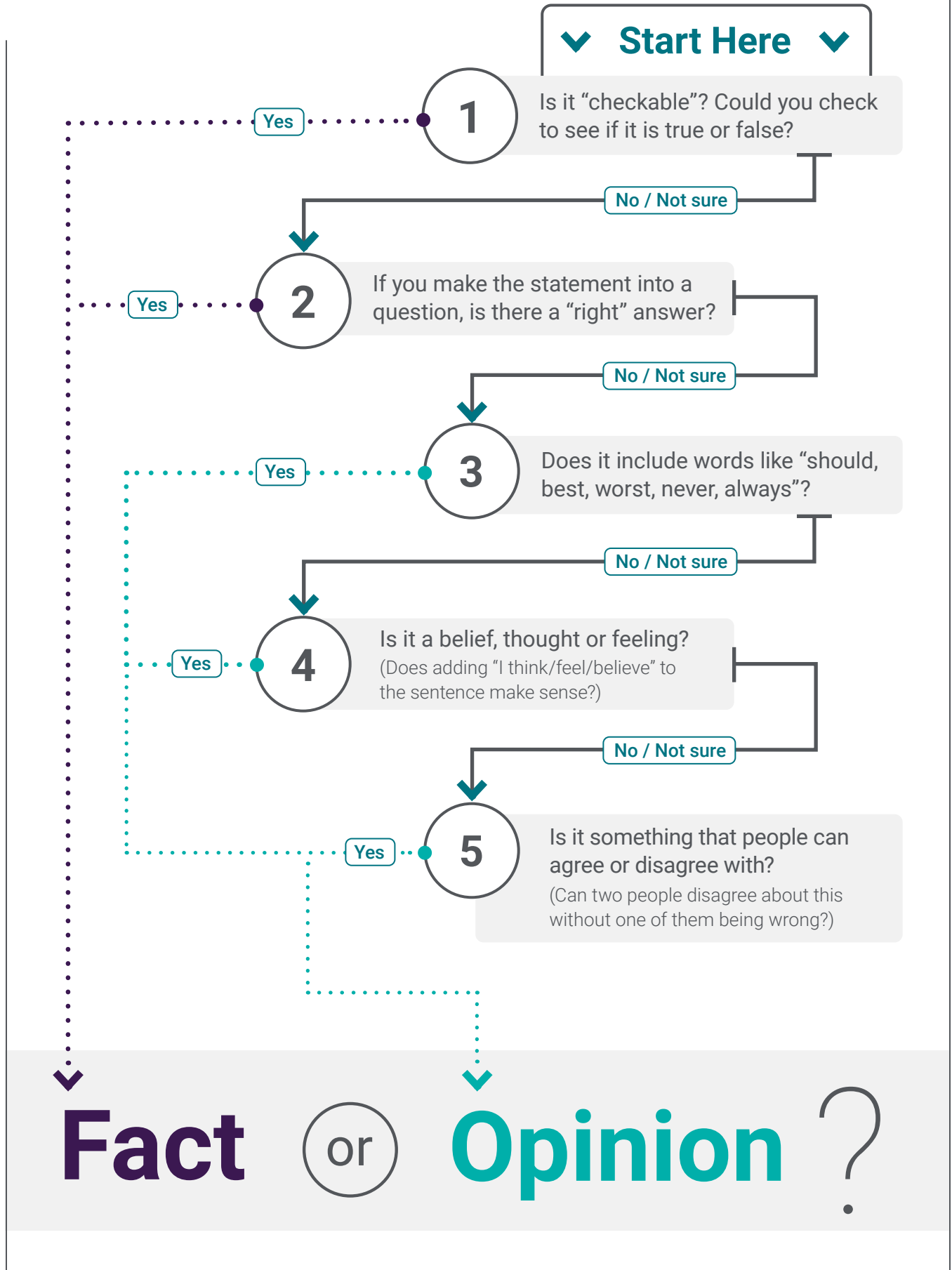
Ask students to write a short response to the article. Then, ask them to label their own statements as fact- or opinion-based.

Exit ticket:

Ask students to complete an exit ticket: Using what you've learned, why would it be important to be able to distinguish between facts and opinions? What could go wrong if people considered their opinions to be facts?

Fact, or Opinion?

FLOW CHART



Two Facts and a Feeling

Directions: Read the statements in each set and decide which two are fact-based (checkable) and which one is opinion-based (a “feeling”). Some fact-based statements may be hypothetical, but others can be verified through simple research. Use logic and web searches to check or prove your answers. Then, compose (write) your own set of two facts and one “feeling” about a given topic.

- 1. The Grand Canyon is in the United States. Fact or Feeling
- 2. Everyone should visit the Grand Canyon at least once. Fact or Feeling
- 3. The Colorado River runs through the Grand Canyon. Fact or Feeling

- 1a. LeBron James is the greatest basketball player of all time. Fact or Feeling
- b. LeBron James has played for the Cleveland Cavaliers, Miami Heat and Los Angeles Lakers. Fact or Feeling
- c. LeBron James went pro after high school instead of playing for a college team. Fact or Feeling

- 2a. TikTok is a social media app where people make and share short videos. Fact or Feeling
- b. TikTok makes filters, song clips and other tools available to users. Fact or Feeling
- c. TikTok’s “For You” feed always includes entertaining videos. Fact or Feeling

- 3a. The mayor voted two years ago against salary raises for police. Fact or Feeling
- b. The mayor is doing a great job keeping citizens informed about the new police contracts. Fact or Feeling
- c. The mayor called a special meeting in City Hall to discuss the new police contracts. Fact or Feeling

- 4a. Presidential debates are tough to watch and understand. Fact or Feeling
- b. Presidential debates are held before the general election in November. Fact or Feeling
- c. Presidential debates are covered by different news organizations. Fact or Feeling

- 5a. Human activity drives climate change and is the primary cause of the planet’s warming. Fact or Feeling
- b. Climate change is the biggest problem we face today. Fact or Feeling
- c. Climate change impacts weather patterns, including rainfall totals and the intensity of tropical storms. Fact or Feeling

Write your own

- 1. _____ Fact or Feeling
- 2. _____ Fact or Feeling
- 3. _____ Fact or Feeling

Fact vs. Opinion

Discuss: Use this chart to sort fact- and opinion-based statements in an assigned text. After each statement, explain how you arrived at your answer.

FACT	OPINION
<p>Statement:</p> <p>→ How do you know?</p>	<p>Statement:</p> <p>→ How do you know?</p>
<p>Statement:</p> <p>→ How do you know?</p>	<p>Statement:</p> <p>→ How do you know?</p>
<p>Statement:</p> <p>→ How do you know?</p>	<p>Statement:</p> <p>→ How do you know?</p>