

NAME _____

DATE _____

CLASS _____

TEACHER _____

CHOOSING AN EDITORIAL TOPIC

Most editorial topics fall into one of four categories: (1) state, national, and international affairs; (2) community problems; (3) school problems; or (4) problems of young people in general. The topics listed below fall into one of these categories. In the space provided next to each topic, rate it as follows:

(A) you think it is very important and should be printed as an editorial in your student newspaper

(B) you think it is mildly important and might be considered

(C) you think it is not of general interest to your student body and therefore should not be printed

_____ The deteriorating political conditions in emerging nations.

_____ Necessity for stricter federal laws protecting the environment.

_____ Need for more counselors at your school.

_____ Need for additional state aid to schools in your area.

_____ Problems created by student smokers.

_____ Need for more elective courses in your school.

_____ Lack of school spirit and suggestions for improving it.

_____ Need for tax reform in your state.

_____ Opposition to opening of "adult bookstore" near your school.

_____ Suggestions for combating increased student boredom in school.

_____ Growing use of alcohol by young people.

_____ Programs to find jobs for students.

_____ Dropping the A-B-C-D-F grading in favor of pass-fail grading.

_____ Lack of town parks and other recreational facilities.

_____ United States should improve relations with Canada and Mexico.

_____ How parents can better relate to their kids.

_____ Banning the sale of "junk food" (candy, soda pop) on school grounds.

_____ Open Campus: should students be allowed to come and go on and off school grounds as they please?

_____ Graffiti on school grounds.

_____ The rising crime rate in your community.

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SAMPLE EDITORIAL

Below, you will find a sample editorial. The margins have purposely been made wide, so you can make notes to the left and right of the text, as directed by your teacher.

NEEDED: A SMOKING ROOM AT OAK HIGH

Like it or not a fair percentage of our students smoke. And, regardless of school rules against smoking, many of our student smokers pursue their habit during school hours. This results in dirty, smelly bathrooms; increased security problems; ditching of classes; and a loss of community goodwill caused by negative publicity given to the smoking problem. What we need is an official smoking area, so our student smokers can peacefully do their thing while the non-smokers can likewise do theirs.

Our proposed smoking area would be open before and after school, and also during lunch and brunch. Students would not be able to use it any other time, such as in between classes. Those who did use it would be on their honor to keep it clean. Under our proposed system, there would be severe penalties if a student misused the smoking area, or if a student smoked anywhere else on school grounds.

Whenever this idea has been mentioned before, opponents have argued that it would somehow legitimize smoking, and encourage more students to take up the habit. We think this is nonsense. Non-smokers are that way by choice, and are not about to become chain smokers merely because some of their friends smoke at school.

A smoking room is not an ideal situation, but we believe it will solve more problems than it creates. Legislation should be passed by the state legislature and the Oakdale Board of Education so that Oak High can give the idea of a smoking room a try.

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THE EDITORIAL—A DYNAMIC BEGINNING

The effectiveness of an editorial is often determined by the effectiveness of its first paragraph. In a typical persuasion editorial, the first paragraph should tell what the problem is, and what solution is proposed. Weak beginnings either (a) don't give a solution; (b) rely on gossip instead of facts; (c) make generalizations—that is, say that something is *always* true, based on only a few examples; (d) make demands or offer solutions that are unreasonable; (e) insult the intelligence of readers in some way; (f) deal with a topic that is too broad, too overused (cliche) or of little general interest to the readers; or (g) use the word "I" or "Me." Since an editorial expresses the opinion of an editorial board, it should refer to its writers in plural ("we" or "us"). This is called the "editorial we." Each of the editorial beginnings below is weak. Choose one or more of the above reasons and write the letter of that reason in the space provided at the right.

- (1) Something must be done about the condition of the bathrooms at our school! 1) _____
- (2) Every student here should join the fight against pollution! 2) _____
- (3) We should be required to go to school six days a week instead of the present five days. 3) _____
- (4) There just isn't enough spirit at this school. 4) _____
- (5) Recent prison riots show that our state must appoint a commission to suggest specific reforms in those institutions. 5) _____
- (6) Counselors are rude and never seem to help students who come in for much-needed assistance. 6) _____
- (7) Students should be allowed to select all of their courses. There should be no required courses at all. 7) _____
- (8) Those idiots who vote "no" on school tax overrides are just doing their own kids a disservice. 8) _____
- (9) It has come to our attention that P.E. teacher John Smith slugged senior Kent Regent last week. 9) _____
- (10) I think food prices in our school cafeteria are too high. A faculty-student committee should study the problem. 10) _____
- (11) We're not prisoners! We should be allowed to leave school grounds whenever we please, without worrying about gate guards or passes. 11) _____
- (12) School is boring. The classes are boring. The teachers are boring. Why can't it be more fun? 12) _____
- (13) Student government in our school is a big joke. It accomplishes nothing and should be abolished. 13) _____