

WHAT YOU NEED:

- access to *PrimeTime Politics – The Letters* (cpac.ca/en/cpac-in-focus/letters-access-information/)
- Fact, Commentary, and Opinion task card, one per person

WHAT'S UP:

- When it comes to media literacy, many think only provable facts should be used in the media and opinions should be avoided because they can be biased and potentially unreliable. However, sometimes an opinion — particularly if it's an informed opinion, or the opinion of someone closely connected to the event — can help bring context or relevancy to an issue. Additionally, many media sources have editorials or expert panelists who bring commentary and insight to an issue, which the average person might not have been aware of, or would need more time and resources to learn on their own. Facts are important, but isn't it just as important to listen to commentary and opinion from different sides when developing an informed opinion of your own?

WHAT YOU DO:

- While watching a feature story from *PrimeTime Politics – The Letters*, each member of the group should complete their own Fact, Commentary, and Opinion task card by categorizing statements made by the narrator, interview subjects, and guests, as well as recording observations and ideas on the role of the news anchor, Peter Van Dusen.

WHAT NOW:

- Consolidate your learning as a group and prepare to present your findings to the class as follows:
 - ▷ Suggest a working definition for each of the following terms: fact, commentary, and opinion. Support your ideas with examples from this task.
 - ▷ Describe the role of the news anchor and determine whether or not it is important to the process. Support your ideas using examples from this task.
 - ▷ Describe and evaluate the commentary and opinions from the interviewees. To what extent were diverse viewpoints heard? Is that important in relaying the news? Support your ideas using examples from this task.
 - ▷ Determine to what extent, if any, news commentary influences opinions. Support your ideas using examples from this task.
 - ▷ Determine whether or not news commentary and opinion have a role in the democratic process. Support your ideas using examples from this task.

PROGRAM: PrimeTime Politics – The Letters

FEATURE STORY: _____

PART A: JUST THE FACTS

While watching the feature story, jot down statements you think are important to understanding the issue and write down who said them. In the Category column write **F**, **C**, or **O** if you think the person is sharing a **Fact**, **Commentary**, or an **Opinion**.

I think this statement is important to understanding the issue	It was said by	Category

PART B: COMPARE AND CONTRAST

1. Check off statements considered to be important by everyone in the group that appear on everyone’s chart. Did everyone agree on the category of each statement (fact, commentary, opinion)? Why, or why not?

2. Compare statements considered important by some, but not all members of the group. In which category did most of these statements appear (fact, commentary, opinion)? What might that mean in terms of the impact of that type of statement on public opinion?

PART C: THOUGHT SPOT

1. Suggest a working definition for the following categories of statements:
fact _____
commentary _____
opinion _____
2. Is the news anchor important to the process? Why or why not? Use examples from the program to support your ideas.

3. Did the background of the people being interviewed influence their viewpoints? Why or why not?

4. Are commentary and opinions that reflect diverse views an important part of relaying news? Why or why not? Support your ideas with examples.

5. Do news commentary and opinion have a role in the democratic process? If not, why not? If so, to what extent? Use examples to support your ideas.
