Facts, Opinions, Reasoned Judgment

**Purpose:** Upon completion of this activity, students will understand and be able to identify facts, opinions, and reasoned judgment. *This DLA should take approximately 30 to 45 minutes to complete.*

1. Read the attached information by author Ruth Sunda about the differences between facts, opinions, and reasoned judgments:

2. Next, read this passage from the short story “Why I Live at the P.O.” by Eudora Welty.

   I was getting along fine with Mama, Papa-Daddy and Uncle Rondo until my sister Stella-Rondo just separated from her husband and came back home again. Mr. Whitaker! Of course I went with Mr. Whitaker first, when he first appeared here in China Grove, taking "Pose Yourself" photos, and Stella-Rondo broke us up. Told him I was one-sided. Bigger on one side than the other, which is a deliberate, calculated falsehood: I’m the same. Stella-Rondo is exactly twelve months to the day younger than I am and for that reason she’s spoiled.

   She’s always had anything in the world she wanted and then she’d throw it away. Papa-Daddy gave her this gorgeous Add-a-Pearl necklace when she was eight years old and she threw it away playing baseball when she was nine, with only two pearls.

   So as soon as she got married and moved away from home the first thing she did was separate! From Mr. Whitaker! This photographer with the popeyes she said she trusted. Came home from one of those towns up in Illinois and to our complete surprise brought this child of two.

   Mama said she like to made her drop dead for a second. “Here you had this marvelous blonde child and never so much as wrote your mother a word about it,” says Mama. "I'm thoroughly ashamed of you." But of course she wasn’t.

3. Answer the following questions:

   a. What are some facts from this passage?

   b. What are some opinions?

   c. What attempts does the speaker make toward reasoned judgments? Does she succeed? Why or Why not?

4. Finally, meet with an instructor or tutor to review your responses to the above questions and to discuss any questions you have about facts, opinions, and reasoned judgments.

**Attach a confirmation sheet or get a signature below:**

Instructor Signature: __________________________ Date: ______________________
Distinguishing between matters of Fact, matters of Opinion and matters of Reasoned Judgment

**Matter of fact:** issues about which reasonable people either all agree or all disagree; there is a well-established method for settling the issue between people. Examples:

- Diet soda contains less sugar than regular soda contains.
- Elvis is alive and living in Pittsburgh.

Notice that saying something is a "matter of fact" does not necessarily mean that it is true, only that it is something that we could all agree is true or false using some established method.

**Matter of opinion:** issues that cannot be settled definitively between people using any method. When a claim is just a matter of opinion, it is equally reasonable for one person to believe a claim and another person to reject it. Example:

- The water in the shower is uncomfortably cold.
- Diet soda tastes bland compared to regular soda.

**Matter of reasoned judgment:** issues for which there is more than one standard* of judgment. Although these are issues about which two people could reasonably disagree, settling matters of reasoned judgment between people is often necessary in everyday life. This is done by debating the different pros and cons of different relevant standards of judgment.

- The new sewage treatment plant is a waste of money.
- Joe is too short to play football.

*Standard: a law or rule agreed upon by a group of people. Example:

No one can play football on our team unless he's at least 6 feet tall.
Other examples of issues that can be called matters of reasoned judgment:

- We must guarantee health care to everyone.
- We should reinstate the death penalty.
- Cloning research should not be pursued.
- I don't think I'm going to buy a new computer.

There are better and worse reasons for agreeing to a matter of reasoned judgment even if those reasons don't settle the issue clearly and absolutely. When someone provides reasons for a matter of reasoned judgment, they are giving an argument.