

For example, you may read a statement like the following in the newspaper: "The Dow Jones average dropped sharply from its all-time high in heavy trading on Friday." The statement contains some fact because you can verify a drop from an "all-time high" by checking Dow Jones records. But clearly terms such as *sharply* and *heavy* indicate judgment. How sharp is *sharply*? What is *heavy* trading? While stock brokers and investors may use these terms freely and intuitively understand a range for *sharp drops* and *heavy trading*, those terms are subjective and open to interpretation. Thus, this apparently factual report is laden with opinion.

As a good reader, you should be aware when writers are using a mixture of fact and opinion and be able to distinguish the two—even if combined in one statement.

SUMMARY	
FACT STATEMENT	<p>DEALS WITH PERSONS, PLACES, OBJECTS, OCCURRENCES OR PROCESSES THAT DO OR DID EXIST.</p> <p>CAN BE PROVED TRUE OR FALSE BY OBJECTIVE MEANS: ASK</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Can it be seen, heard, touched, smelled, or tasted? ♦ Can it be measured, weighed, or counted? ♦ Is it recorded in historical or current documents? ♦ Can the proof be repeated or replicated in an experiment?
OPINION STATEMENT	<p>DEALS WITH EVALUATIONS, ATTITUDES, POSSIBILITIES, OR PROBABILITIES: ASK</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Does it express subjective values or judgments? ♦ Could someone disagree with this statement? ♦ Does it refer to something that might have happened? ♦ Does it refer to something that might happen in the future? <p>CANNOT BE PROVED TRUE OR FALSE BY OBJECTIVE MEANS.</p>

5. The author's statement that "For Floridians, the legacy of that March storm is a renewed respect for the tremendous destructive power of nature and for the warnings of weather forecasters" (in lines 16-18) is a statement of
- A. fact.
 - B. opinion.

5 Just north of Venezuela, tucked in the Gulf of Paria, across "The Serpent's Mouth," lie the islands that comprise the single country of Trinidad and Tobago. The two primary islands and a number of tiny islands make up this Caribbean nation. The country, with its tropical climate averaging between 70 and 87 degrees, has been a haven for both business and pleasure since its discovery by Columbus in 1498. The beautiful beaches, the deep natural port at Port of Spain and the location outside the normal hurricane track made Trinidad and Tobago a favorite spot for French, Dutch, Spanish, and English privateers. The varied terrain--including mangrove swamps, rolling hills and 10 three mountain ranges--offers something for everyone. The islands, with separate identities until joined by Great Britain in 1889, became independent in 1962.

15 Trinidad and Tobago boasts one of the strongest economies in the Caribbean. Its proximity to Venezuela is a key, as the rich subterranean oil fields extend into Trinidad. And while heavily reliant on this black gold, Trinidad and Tobago was forced to diversify its economic base after oil prices plunged in the 1970s. Once the primary exports before oil was discovered, sugar and cacao regained economic favor after the oil crisis. The islands' variable soil allows a wide range of agricultural commodities, such as citrus, 20 to be grown for export. According to local economists, manufacturing is also important as Trinidad and Tobago now exports 95% of the items it makes. Unwilling to take its economic health for granted, the country provides tax incentives and actively recruits business prospects from around the world.

25 Trinidad and Tobago also offers a diverse populace and an international culture. The population is comprised largely of descendants of East India and Africa, with some Chinese and whites included. Such diversity is a direct result of the abolition of slavery in 1834 and the subsequent importation of indentured workers from India, Portugal and China. The natives primarily speak English, as well as French and Spanish. Art galleries reflect the 30 international tastes of the islands and their visitors. Music, featuring the calypso sound that originated there, can be heard on street corners in the capital, Port of Spain. Thus, economic, cultural, and ethnic diversity combine to create Trinidad and Tobago's unique appeal to natives and tourists alike.

ANSWER KEY: SAMPLE PASSAGES

1. FACT This statement can be objectively verified by checking public records, such as newspapers, to determine if the storm came through the eastern United States in March 1993.
2. FACT This statement can be proved true or false from weather data for wind gusts at that time in the Daytona Beach area.
3. FACT This statement can be proved true or false by checking records of tide height (whether at record level or not) and examining insurance damage reports to see if boats were crushed by the tides. Newspaper reports also can confirm the truth or falsity of the claims in this statement.
4. OPINION This statement relies on probability and therefore is opinion. What will or will not "haunt" weather forecasters is a matter of speculation and cannot now be proved true or false by objective means.
5. OPINION This statement combines both probability and an element of judgment. While Floridians *probably* have a "renewed respect" for storms, this general statement cannot be objectively proved. The term *tremendous* signifies a judgment that cannot be proved true or false. While you may intuitively understand and accept that the storm was "tremendous," that term is open to interpretation. It cannot be proved objectively either true or false.
6. OPINION The author's statement that the varied terrain "offers something for everyone" is a statement of opinion because it cannot be objectively proven true or false. The part of the statement that refers to the terrain itself has fact elements because the terrain can be checked for types of soil and mountainous conditions. However, the statement becomes predominately opinion with the addition "something for everyone."
7. FACT This fact statement can be proved true or false by checking maps and atlases for the geographical placement of Trinidad and Tobago and the names of the surrounding waters.
8. FACT The percentage cited is clearly a fact because it can be objectively verified. And while the term *important* is a one of judgment and therefore opinion, the key here is "According to local economists." This statement reflects the opinion of sources that can be verified. Thus the statement is a fact reflecting the information provided by local economists.
9. FACT The statement can be verified objectively by going to Port of Spain and hearing the music. The origin of calypso can be verified by researching the origins of this musical form.
10. OPINION The key here is "unique appeal," a term of judgment indicating the author's opinion.