Fact or Opinion? Spotting the Difference in Year 2 Non-Fiction

Learning to spot the difference between facts and opinions is an important skill that Year 2 pupils develop as they read non-fiction. A fact is something that can be checked or proven true; an opinion is what someone thinks or feels. This guide explains what this looks like in the classroom, why it matters, and how you can chat about it at home with any book or story.

What it is

By Year 2, children are reading and discussing a range of non-fiction texts about animals, places and people. Part of understanding these texts is learning to tell apart a fact from an opinion.

A fact is something that can be checked. For example, "Penguins live in cold places" is a fact—you can look it up. An opinion is what someone thinks or feels. For example, "Penguins are the best animals" is an opinion because not everyone will agree.

Year 2 pupils don't need to use these words perfectly, but they're beginning to notice that some sentences tell us true things, while others tell us what the writer likes or believes. The National Curriculum expects children to understand these differences as part of becoming thoughtful readers.

What happens in class

A teacher might use a simple activity to help this click. They might read short sentences aloud from a non-fiction book about animals—"Lions are big" and "Lions are scary"—and ask children to sort them into two piles: things we can check, and things someone thinks.

Children learn to spot clue words too. Opinions often have words like "best", "worst", "I think", "I like", or "should". Facts often have words like "is", "are", "have" or "live".

They might even check a fact by looking at a picture in the book or asking, "How do we know that's true?" This helps them become active, curious readers who ask questions instead of just taking everything on trust.

What it means for your child

This is the beginning of critical reading—learning to think about what you read, not just follow the words. It seems small, but it's a skill that will help your child right through their education, from reading tests later on to evaluating news and information as a teenager and adult.

Right now, it's playful and concrete. Your child isn't being asked to write essays about bias or analyse media. They're simply starting to notice that writers have feelings and views, and that some sentences tell us about the world while others tell us about opinions.

This builds confidence too. When a child realises they can spot the difference, they feel more in control of what they're reading. They move from being a passive reader to an active one.

How you can help at home

You don't need special worksheets. Use any book your child enjoys.

When you're reading together, pause occasionally and ask, "Is that a true thing, or what the writer thinks?" Use the clue words your child might notice in class: "Do you hear a word like 'best' or 'I think'?"

Try a simple game: take turns reading sentences and sorting them into two piles (even if it's just two pieces of paper) marked "We can check this" and "This is what someone thinks".

Chat about opinions too: "Do you agree with that? Why or why not?" This shows your child that opinions can be different, and that's fine.

Keep it short and light. A few minutes a few times a week is better than a long lesson. The goal is to help your child feel curious about the difference, not to test them.

Questions parents often ask

Do I need to teach this formally? No. The idea is simple enough that a few conversations while reading will help. Your child's teacher is leading this in class.

Won't it confuse them to learn two ways of reading? Not at all. Children are clever and flexible. They're simply adding a new lens to the way they think about texts.

Is this tested? Year 2 pupils are not formally assessed on this, but the skill is part of the National Curriculum for reading. It becomes more important in Key Stage 2 reading tests.

What if my child finds it tricky? That's normal. Some children spot the difference straightaway, others take longer. Keep it playful. The more your child reads, the more natural it will become.

Sources

- Department for Education, 'National Curriculum in England: English Programmes of Study (Key Stage 1)'
- GOV.UK, 'Primary School Education in England'