The Editorial Genre

Editorial Requirements (these are things we would expect of most editorials)

- They argue something
- The topic is relevant to the newspaper's audience
- There is exigence (a social/cultural need) for the topic to be discussed
- Staff editorials tend to stay within accepted views of the community and the newspaper
- They must be concise (often no more than 750 words)

Editorialists’ Opportunities (these are things editorial writers get to do because they are writing editorials)

- Editorialists have a lot of authority over their work; they “get to be right.”
- Editorialists get to choose a tone and voice to suit their purpose
- Columnists get to establish a persona that readers come to expect
- Editorialists can choose to address some, all, or none of the opposition
- Editorialists can use pathos (sometimes a lot, depending on context and purpose)
- Editorialists choose whether to use evidence
- Editorialists get to be heard by large audiences
- Editorialists get to explicitly state their opinions
- Editorialists get to develop their own format and structure
- Editorialists get to influence public opinion
- Editorialists get to introduce the public to new issues

Editorialists’ Limitations (these are things that keep editorialists from doing just anything)

- Editorialists can’t be libelous (they should avoid knowingly defaming or damaging an individual, group, etc.)
- Editorialists can’t just rant
- Editorialists can’t be too verbose
- Editorialists probably shouldn’t demean their own readers
- Editorialists have to keep in mind that they have competition—plenty of other qualified writers to fill their spots if their writing isn’t working for the newspaper any longer
- Editorialists have to keep in mind that they have to remain credible in order for readers to listen to them
- Editorialists have to remember that they are writing for a public audience; this means that the editorialist cannot assume that the audience has any specific expert knowledge (this impacts guest columnists in particular)