

# CUSMA: Guide to Critical Analysis

This guide is intended to help you evaluate the topics presented in EBSCO Information Services' *Points of View Reference Centre*™. Using this analysis will enhance your ability to read critically, develop your own perspective on the issue of CUSMA, and make an effective argument on the topic, in writing or in a debate.

## Before You Read

- In a single sentence, state what you currently think is/are the argument(s) in the CUSMA debate.
- On the Points of View home page, under Browse by Category, go to “Economy,” and then click on “CUSMA.”
- Each topic in *Points of View Reference Centre*™ has three main Points of View sections. While there may be many opinions on the issue, these sections are designed to provide a base from which you may engage in further analysis. The Overview provides general background information on the issue. The Point and Counterpoint present opposing perspectives on the issue, with talking points that support those positions.

## As You Read

- **Read the Overview, Point, and Counterpoint sections.** Reading all three will enable you to better understand the controversy, providing a foundation from which you can broaden your knowledge of the topic.
- **Take notes** on the main ideas. Use the online Notes tool to make notes about the article and save them for later. To find it, see the Tools column to the right of the article on your screen. Look for the Create Note icon on the list. Or, print out the essay and highlight the main ideas. Circle key words.
- **Review the terms** in the Understanding the Discussion section of the Overview.
- **Organize your ideas.** Go to the Research Guide “Visual Ways to Organize Your Ideas.” You can access it from the Research Guides link in the Reference Shelf section on the home page. Use one of the graphic organizer templates provided to break the essay down into its main points. Bottom line: use the approach that suits you best.

## Judge Fact and Opinion

Review the Research Guide article titled “Judging Fact vs. Opinion.”

## FACTS

- Facts are statements that can be proved true or false.
- Facts tell what actually happened.
- Facts tell what is happening now.
- Facts state something that can be observed or verified.

## OPINIONS

- Opinions are statements that cannot be proved true or false because they express a person's thoughts, beliefs, feelings, or estimates.
- Opinions express worth or value.
- Opinions express what the author or speaker thinks should or should not be thought or done.
- Opinions are based on what seems true or probable.

### Example 1:

**Fact:** President of Dairy Farmers of Canada Pierre Lampron released a statement to media saying that without detailed measures in place to offset the concessions made on their behalf, dairy farmers' concerns could not be addressed.

**Opinion:** Trudeau's concessions allowing increased American access to the Canadian dairy industry will cause serious harm to dairy farmers in Canada.

- In this example, the opinion predicts a future outcome and expresses the speaker's belief without supporting evidence.

### Example 2:

**Fact:** Trudeau told CBC News in the fall of 2018 that Canada required the dispute resolution process outlined in chapter 19 of NAFTA to remain intact because Trump "does not always follow the rules."

**Opinion:** President Donald Trump cannot be trusted to act in Canada's best interest, and his whims will lead to damage to the Canadian economy.

- In this example, the fact attributes an opinion to a specific person with a quote that can be confirmed to have been said, while the opinion expresses personal belief without supporting evidence and predicts a future outcome. The word "whims" indicates a subjective evaluation.

### Example 3:

**Fact:** A study by Lorenzo Caliendo and Fernando Parro published in 2015 measured the welfare of the US, Canada, and Mexico after NAFTA by comparing the gain in trade with other member countries to the loss in trade with non-member countries. They found that while Mexico and the US gained by this measure, Canada's welfare declined slightly.

**Opinion:** NAFTA did not benefit Canada in any way.

- This opinion is a generalization that cannot be proved.

## Example 4:

**Fact:** The Canadian government has been criticized for inking the deal without winning exemptions from tariffs on aluminum and steel imports.

**Opinion:** The Canadian government should not have agreed to sign CUSMA without negotiating an end to the aluminum and steel tariffs.

- In this example, the opinion expresses the speaker's feelings about what should or should not be done.

Based on the criteria listed above, select:

- Three fact statements from the Overview, Point, or Counterpoint sections, or one of the bibliographic sources within the essay on CUSMA.
- Three opinion statements from the Overview, Point, or Counterpoint sections, or one of the bibliographic sources within the essay on CUSMA.

## In Depth

Use the “Search” box at the top of the page to look up articles about your topic. The Result List you get will offer many kinds of related information from various sources, such as magazines, journals, blogs, newspapers, reference books, and images.

Select one or two to explore.

- What source did you use and what is one benefit of using this type of source?
- What is one drawback?
- What new information did you learn from reading this article?

## You Decide

Based on the readings and review of the Related Items offered, consider the Point and Counterpoint commentary in light of your own set of personal values and understanding of the topic.

- Reflect on which arguments about CUSMA you accept, those outlined in the Point, Counterpoint, or a completely different argument. For you, what is the single most compelling argument regarding CUSMA, and why?

Write an 800- to 1,000-word essay response to the question above; include a thesis statement and two or three supporting arguments. See “Writing a Thesis Statement” and “Writing a Persuasive Essay” Research Guides for tips on how to write your essay.

- Use facts from other resources found in *Points of View Reference Centre*™, other than the Overview, Point, and Counterpoint information. See “Judging Fact vs. Opinion” in the Research Guide section to help determine the value of the information you find.
- Investigate some of the sources cited in the Bibliography at the end of each Point of View essay to review the kinds of sources those authors consulted.
- For website information, first review the Research Guide article titled “Evaluating a Website.” Use the information you find there to guide your decisions on which sites provide the most credible information and would add value to your essay.
- Suggest ways in which the controversy surrounding CUSMA could be resolved.

See these other *Points of View Reference Centre*™ “how to” topics for additional help. They can be found using the Research Guides link on the home page.

- Writing a Topic Sentence
- Taking Good Notes
- From Notes to Outline
- Visual Ways to Organize Your Ideas
- Writing a Conclusion
- Citing Sources
- Creating a Bibliography
- Writing a Research Paper

## Debate It

- Debate the issue. To create an effective debate, refer to the tips offered in the Research Guides—“Debate Strategies,” “Giving an Oral Presentation,” and “Starting a Debate Club.”
- Select someone else to read an excerpt from a bibliographic source in either the Point of View essay or a related article. The excerpt should clearly support an argument for one side or the other of the discussion. As you listen, make note of the points (contentions) you would make to oppose the arguments.
- Respond to the arguments presented with opposing arguments (rebuttals), pointing out any contradictions you have heard.
- Create a video or slide presentation that illustrates the essence of the debate. Include the issue at hand, your viewpoint, and evidence to support it.

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