

Name: _____ Class: _____

How the News Media Works

By Jessica McBirney
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Society is affected by how people access their news and the quality of the news that they receive. In this informational text, Jessica McBirney explores what “news media” means today, and how people acquire the information that shapes their views of the world. As you read, take notes on how news media affects society.

What is News Media?

- [1] When people talk about “news media,” they are referring to a wide variety of sources that write or talk about current events. The news media includes newspapers, magazines, television news shows, radio news shows, and Internet sources such as online newspapers and independent blogs. The Internet has radically changed how news sources communicate with their audience, and it has made it harder to define “news media” exactly.



"Press conference in WlilP" by Artur Czachowski is licensed under CC BY 2.0.

Some news organizations are larger than others. Most towns have their own local newspaper and TV station that focus on community issues and events. There are also regional news outlets; for example, the Los Angeles Times is based in Los Angeles, California, but reports on issues relevant to the whole state and sometimes the whole country. Finally, national news organizations report on national and foreign issues. These organizations include big media companies such as The New York Times, CNN, Fox News, ABC News, and others.

How Are News Stories Written?

The first step in writing a news story is for a reporter, or journalist, to have an idea. Sometimes reporters go out into their communities or look online to find new story ideas. Other times people come to them with interesting topics.

Once the reporter has an idea, they explain, or “pitch,” it to their editor. They have to prove to their editor that the story is interesting for readers and timely in the community. If it is a good story idea, the editor will approve it.

- [5] Then the reporter must go out into the community to collect information. Depending on what topic they are covering, they might attend events, search through public documents, or interview people involved in the story. They want to find enough information to make sure the story covers all the important points about their topic, and they want to make sure they have presented both sides of anything controversial.¹ Once they have all their information, they can write the story.

1. **Controversial (adjective):** likely to give rise to public disagreement

The final step is giving the completed story to the editor, who reviews it to make sure all the information is clear and checks all the facts. Now that the story is complete, it can be published — whether it is printed in a newspaper, posted online, or read by a TV news anchor.

Why Do We Need News?

Looking at a newspaper full of articles about politics and international events may seem boring, but the news media actually plays an extremely important role in our country. Reporters keep track of elected government officials to make sure they follow the laws. They also keep the public informed about what the government is doing. People rely on the information they learn in the news to decide who to vote for and whether they approve of their current leaders and representatives.

Why is the News Sometimes Controversial?

Reporters gather facts and write about them — so why do some people say the news is unreliable? They are worried that news stories might be biased. Bias is an unfair representation of something or someone. It can happen when only one side of a story is presented, when only certain facts are shared, or when news organizations choose which stories they want to publish. Readers sometimes worry that news organizations, intentionally or accidentally, publish biased stories.

News organizations try to avoid bias as much as they can. They hire trained reporters who know how to ask good questions about all sides of a story. They also employ many different editors to double-check all of the facts cited in the articles.

- [10] Readers of the news can take their own steps to avoid possible bias in the news they read. They can read news from multiple sources, or they can look up facts on their own to make sure the news matches other websites and records. It is impossible to avoid bias completely, but news writers and news readers can still do a lot to make sure the information they share and read is accurate.

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Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which of the following identifies a central idea of the text?
 - A. News media has evolved to include a range of sources, but it continues to play an important role in informing citizens and holding public officials accountable.
 - B. News media can be a valuable resource for learning about current events, but it is impossible to determine whether information is unbiased.
 - C. News media has shifted to consist mainly of online sources, which makes checking the validity of a source difficult.
 - D. News media provides unprejudiced information to the people, which allows them to remain informed and hold those in power accountable for their actions.

2. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "The Internet has radically changed how news sources communicate with their audience, and it has made it harder to define 'news media' exactly." (Paragraph 1)
 - B. "People rely on the information they learn in the news to decide who to vote for and whether they approve of their current leaders and representatives." (Paragraph 7)
 - C. "It can happen when only one side of a story is presented, when only certain facts are shared, or when news organizations choose which stories they want to publish." (Paragraph 8)
 - D. "They hire trained reporters who know how to ask good questions about all sides of a story. They also employ many different editors to double-check all of the facts cited in the articles." (Paragraph 9)

3. PART A: Which of the following identifies the author's main purpose in the final section "Why is the News Sometimes Controversial"?
 - A. to provide readers with the pros and cons of news media and the best way to acquire truthful information
 - B. to encourage readers to not accept the information that news outlets provide them and seek answers on their own
 - C. to provide readers with the process required to publish an article to reassure them of the accuracy of the news media
 - D. to discourage readers from paying attention to the news and believing the information that it claims to be true

4. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
- A. "Reporters gather facts and write about them — so why do some people say the news is unreliable?" (Paragraph 8)
 - B. "They hire trained reporters who know how to ask good questions about all sides of a story." (Paragraph 9)
 - C. "They also employ many different editors to double-check all of the facts cited in the articles." (Paragraph 9)
 - D. "It is impossible to avoid bias completely, but news writers and news readers can still do a lot to make sure the information they share and read is accurate." (Paragraph 10)

5. How is the public affected by the possibility of biased news?
