THE NEWS

"Whoever controls the media, controls the mind."

Jim Morrison, American singer-songwriter (1943 – 1971)

1. The News Discussion

1. Do you read/watch the news often? What topics are you interested in?
2. Do you like talking about the news with your friends or family? Do you tend to agree or disagree?
3. What are the main stories you have been following in the news recently?
4. What are some important news stories from your country that have happened recently?
5. What are some of the most memorable news events from your life?
6. Do you prefer to get your news from newspapers, the TV, the radio or the internet? What are the pros and cons of each of these?
7. How has the internet changed the way we get our news? What are the good and bad things about this change?
8. Is there too much bad news these days? If so, why do you think that is? Isn't this just the reality?

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2. The News Vocabulary

- **bias** (noun), **biased** (adjective) – *prejudice for or against a person or group, often seen as unfair.*
- **sensationalism** (noun), **sensationalist** (adjective) – *presenting stories in a shocking way designed to grab people's attention or provoke strong emotional responses.*
- **journalist / reporter** (noun) – *someone who writes about the news.*
- **the mainstream media** (noun) – *traditional and well-known media outlets such as TV networks or newspapers.*
- **circulation** (noun) – *the average number of copies produced by a publication.*
- **to read between the lines** (verb/idiom) – *to be able to see the implied message, rather than what is explicitly stated.*

Using the vocabulary words above, complete the following sentences (remember to use the correct form of the word, e.g. verb conjugation or plural noun)

1. Lois Lane is the Daily Planet's _____ who covers all the important stories.
2. Not including the Metro, which is distributed for free, The Sun has the highest _____ in the UK, selling around 45,000 copies per day.
3. The news is so _____ these days; yesterday I read a story saying that tap water could kill you.
4. The _____ report whatever their sponsors tell them to.
5. It was reported that the Prime Minister was visiting a friend, but _____, it appears this 'friend' was actually his mistress.
6. The Daily Moon is completely _____ in the President's favour; they never report a bad word about him.

The News vocabulary comprehension questions

1. Is the news in your country biased? How so?
2. Why are news stories so sensationalist?
3. Who are your favourite journalists?
4. Do you trust the mainstream media to tell you the truth? Why or why not? Can you think of any times when a news story in the mainstream media was not true?
5. Why has there been a decline in the circulation of newspapers? How can newspapers deal with this decline?
6. How do you read between the lines? Why might you have to read between the lines? Why wouldn't a newspaper just include all the details?

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3. Video: How the Media Shapes Our Reality

You are going to watch a video by PBS Idea Channel called "But Wait: How DOES The Media Tell You What To Think?"

Watch the video here: https://yourenglishpal.com/blog/esl-conversation-lesson-plan-news-media/

Multiple choice

1. The media…

   a) controls our brains *b) shapes how we see the world* *c) teaches us values*

2. When was the magic bullet/hypodermic needle theory developed?

   a) 1920s *b) 1930s* *c) 1940s*

3. During World War 2, what was one of the main functions of the media?

   a) propaganda *b) disinformation* *c) sensationalism*

4. The magic bullet/hypodermic needle theory suggests that the media directly influences what?

   a) world events *b) politicians* *c) public opinion*

Sentence completion

5. Opinion leaders consume, digest and refine the output of media and transmit this interpretation to their own _____.
6. The two-step flow theory struggles to explain the relationship between the media and the _____.
7. Uses and gratifications tries to explain why people lean towards certain _____.
8. Media we _____ with makes us feel gratified.

Short answer

9. Uses and gratifications assumes the audience will consume the media that is most…
10. The more we are exposed to something, the more we…
11. What does the media work hard to get us to accept?
12. What are humans not good at explaining?

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4. The News Conversation Questions

1. How important is the news for our day-to-day lives? What is the purpose of the media?
2. What is the role of the media in a democracy? Is it just to sell newspapers and make a profit, or do they have other responsibilities?
3. What influence do advertising and sponsorship have on the way the media reports the news?
4. Which groups of people do you think the mainstream media represents?
5. How much influence does the news have over our lives? Is it too much?
6. Is everybody a news reporter these days? Why is this and what are the effects?
7. How will the reporting of the news be different in the future?
8. How would the world be different if we didn't have any news?

5. The News Writing Task

Write about the media. Try to use some of the vocabulary you learned earlier in this lesson. In your answer, include the following topics:

- The importance of the news.
- How much influence the media has over people.
- How the news will be different in the future.

Alternative exam practice question:

For some people, the media is responsible for manipulating and influencing its audience. For others, however, the media simply reflects the beliefs and values of those it provides news to. Discuss both of these views and give your own opinion.

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