

# 6 Messages in the Media

## OBJECTIVE

Students will learn about various types of media and scrutinize multiple sources to determine whether a story is fact or opinion-based.

## KEY WORDS

media, paid media, earned media, owned media, social media, news media, reporter, columnist, editorial, bias, opinion

## QUESTIONS TO BE EXPLORED DURING THIS LESSON

- What are the different types of media?
- What is the difference between Old media and New media?
- What is the role of news media in an election?
- Why is it important to know the difference between opinion and fact?

## SUPPLEMENTARY TOOLS

- PowerPoint 6: Messages in the Media
- Worksheet 6.1: Analyzing Media
- Worksheet 6.2: Facts vs. Opinions

## TEACHING STRATEGIES

### Hook: 25-30 min

1. Review the concept of media. Media is the communication of information and messages to people.
2. Collect and share one or more examples of paid, earned and owned media related to the election (e.g., newscast summary or news article, candidate's blog, party's campaign ad on TV or in the newspaper). For each piece, initiate a discussion related to the following:
  - Who is the audience?
  - Who is the sender?
  - Who paid for it?
3. Have a closing discussion: Which type of media did you find to be the most effective and why? Which type of media did you find to be the most credible and why?

### Instruction: 10-15 min

1. Media can be divided into three main types: Paid, Earned and Owned.
  - Paid Media: Awareness gained through paid advertising, such as TV commercials or newspaper ads.

- Earned Media: Awareness gained through efforts other than advertising, such as news coverage.
- Owned Media: Self-managed promotional platforms, such as your website, blog, Facebook page, YouTube channel and Twitter feed.

2. Media is often defined as Old (or Traditional) or New media.
  - Old media includes sources in broadcast (television or radio) or print format (newspaper, magazines and pamphlets/flyers).
  - New media includes content that is easily accessible, such as online sources and social media platforms.
3. The news media play an important role in elections. News media reports on the events of an election campaign, provides a way for parties and candidates to get their message out, encourages debate between the parties and candidates, and provides a way for citizens to communicate their concerns and opinions.

### Discussion: 10-15 min

What are the advantages and disadvantages of each type of media?

### Activity: 20 min and homework

1. Explain to students that in most cases, the news media provides factual and informational coverage without letting their opinions (biases) interfere. However, the news media also produces articles that are an analysis or reflection of a particular situation, event or person. These are called editorials or opinion pieces because they share opinions.
2. Share an example of a news story and an editorial related to the election. As a class, distinguish between the two examples and help students understand the difference between opinion and fact.
3. For homework or in class, ask students to read through one or more newspapers and analyze four stories related to the election using Worksheet 6.1.

**Debrief: 5 min**

Have a closing discussion about the role of media in elections.

- What have you learned about the different types of media?
- What is the role of media in election campaigns?
- Why is it important to read multiple sources of news?
- Why is it important to know the difference between opinions and facts?

**EXTENSION ACTIVITIES**

A. Assign Worksheet 6.2 to your class. Ask students to determine which of the ten fictional statements provided could be fact or opinion-based. Have each student pick a statement and use it as the inspiration to write a short newspaper article. Have students discuss their articles the next day. Did they choose a fact or opinion-based statement? How was it incorporated into their article?

B. Create a classroom social media account (e.g., Twitter) to track campaign news and your local candidate and/or the parties running candidates in your electoral division. You can follow CIVIX (@CIVIX\_Canada) and Student Vote (@studentvote), major news outlets, and particular journalists or pundits. Each day you can review the news coming through your classroom's personalized Twitter feed.

C. As a class, have students analyze a campaign commercial for one or more of the political parties. Ask them to determine whether the advertisement promotes the political party's platform, or whether it attacks another party. They should identify the main message of the ad, what images are shown to support that message, and analyze whether they believe it is effective or achieves its goal.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS**

*What are the different types of media?*

Media can be divided into three main types: Paid, Earned and Owned.

- Paid Media: Awareness gained through paid advertising, such as TV commercials or newspaper ads.
- Earned Media: Awareness gained through efforts other than advertising, such as news coverage.
- Owned Media: Self-managed promotional platforms, such as your website, blog, Facebook page, YouTube channel and Twitter feed.

Media can be defined as Old (Traditional) or New media.

- Old media includes sources in broadcast (television or radio) or print format (newspaper, magazines and pamphlets/flyers). Old media is typically one way communication, delivered at a specific time, has limited jurisdictional reach and strives to maintain journalistic integrity and standards.
- New media includes content that is easily accessible,

such as online sources and social media platforms. New media is typically interactive, user-driven, functions in real-time, is borderless and does not always adhere to journalistic standards and ethics.

*What is the difference between factual and opinion-based news coverage?*

In most cases, the news media provides factual and informational coverage to inform the public without letting their opinions (biases) interfere.

The news media also produces opinion pieces or editorials, where news organizations and their columnists or pundits will openly add their opinions or those of their writers to their stories to influence their audience.

*How does the news media operate during an election campaign?*

Most news organizations remain officially neutral during elections. These organizations will balance the amount of coverage given to any party or candidate, so that no one gains a real or perceived advantage.

During an election, some newspapers will endorse a candidate or party and explain their decision in an editorial.

**EXTERNAL RESOURCES**

Provincial, regional and local media websites. Major examples include:

- Calgary Herald — [www.calgaryherald.com](http://www.calgaryherald.com)
- Edmonton Journal — [www.edmontonjournal.com](http://www.edmontonjournal.com)
- Edmonton Sun — [www.edmontonsun.com](http://www.edmontonsun.com)
- Calgary Sun — [www.calgarysun.com](http://www.calgarysun.com)
- Lethbridge Herald — [www.lethbridgeherald.com](http://www.lethbridgeherald.com)
- Red Deer Advocate — [www.reddeeradvocate.com](http://www.reddeeradvocate.com)
- Medicine Hat News — [www.medicinehatnews.com](http://www.medicinehatnews.com)
- Grande Prairie Daily Herald-Tribune — [www.dailyheraldtribune.com](http://www.dailyheraldtribune.com)
- Fort McMurray Today — [www.fortmcmurraytoday.com](http://www.fortmcmurraytoday.com)