

THE ROLE OF MEDIA

WHAT IS "THE MEDIA?"

When you hear the phrase "the media," usually it is referring to the sources of our news and information about current events. Paying attention to the media is how we stay informed about what's going on in the world around us and what our government is doing.



MEDIA AS GATEKEEPER

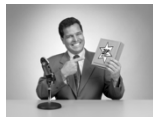
A gatekeeper stands guard at a gate and decides who gets to pass through and who doesn't. In its role as gatekeeper, the media decides which stories and issues are important enough to receive public attention—and which aren't.

As a citizen, it is important for you to realize there are many serious events and issues you will never hear about on the evening news.



GATEKEEPER:
"B" is for Business

With the exception of PBS, the Public Broadcasting System, most are commercial or for-profit sources. They make money by selling time or space to advertisers.



GATEKEEPER:
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But advertisers won't pay for ads nobody will see, so for-profit media must make the news as exciting as possible to attract lots of viewers.



GATEKEEPER:
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But let's face it: News programs are not always as exciting as, say, action films. In order to survive in today's culture, television news must keep things short, fast paced, and exciting.



GATEKEEPER:
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Stories most likely to get through the gate are those that are the most gripping (ever wonder why the "news" is full of car crashes and house fires?) or that affect the most number of people.



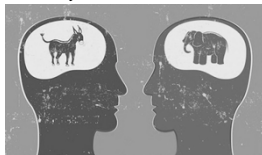
GATEKEEPER:
"B" is for Biased

Biased means favoring one view over another. As a human being, it is impossible to be completely unbiased even if you try. The media is made up of human beings; therefore, even when media outlets try to be unbiased, they're not always successful.



GATEKEEPER:
"B" is for Biased

There are many causes of bias. The most common among media sources is being more politically liberal (leaning toward the Democrats) or conservative (leaning toward the Republicans).



Media as Agenda-Setter

Because of its role as gatekeeper, the media is largely responsible for deciding what issues society discusses in the public sphere. That means the media also determines which issues are on the public agenda, which is the to-do list of issues the public agrees are a priority. An issue won't get on the public agenda unless it is being discussed in the public sphere, and it won't be discussed in the public sphere if nobody has heard about it.

Media as Watchdog

A real watchdog stands as a guard and barks loudly to alert the owner if there is something wrong. In its role as watchdog, the media keeps watch on the government and others in power.




Media as Watchdog

It speaks out to alert the public if something happens that shouldn't. Government officials who engage in bad behavior know they will be on every news show and newspaper in the country if they are caught.



The Media's Audience: YOU
A watchdog doesn't do any good if nobody is paying attention. The public sphere and the public agenda both depend on the same thing — the public, which is made up of people like you. If the media reported an event and nobody watched or responded, it would have no influence at all. In the same way, the public influences the media because the media can't function without peoples' attention. How people respond to the media's reporting can affect which stories get through the gate.

**MASS MEDIA ROLE
IN ELECTIONS**



IDENTIFYING CANDIDATES

**MASS MEDIA ROLE
IN ELECTIONS**




**EMPHASIZING
SELECTED ISSUES**

**MASS MEDIA ROLE
IN ELECTIONS**

EDITORIAL
THE EDITORIAL BOARD
of the New York Times
has called for a
change in the
way the country
is governed.

**WRITING
EDITORIALS**

**CREATING POLITICAL
CARTOONS**



Opinion
Take fresh look at enclosure issue

**PUBLISHING
OP-ED PIECES**

**MASS MEDIA ROLE
IN ELECTIONS**



**BROADCASTING DIFFERENT
POINTS OF VIEW**

**ROLE OF MEDIA
QUIZ**

"The media" only refers to television.
(T/F)

FALSE

In it's role as gatekeeper, the media decides which stories to run.
(T/F)

TRUE

A "sound bite" is a story designed to expose wrongdoing.
(T/F)

FALSE

Most news sources are not for profit.
(T/F)

FALSE

Biased means favoring one view over another.
(T/F)

TRUE

About half of all human beings are completely unbiased.
(T/F)

FALSE

Bias can affect what stories a media outlet decides are important.
(T/F)

TRUE

An issue can't get on the public agenda if nobody has heard about it.
(T/F)

TRUE

Everyone agrees the media should play the role of agenda-setter.
(T/F)

FALSE

If you watch TV news, you will hear about all the issues. (T/F)

FALSE

In its role as watchdog, media decides which issues need public action. (T/F)

FALSE

Thanks to the media's influence, people don't need to pay attention to what's going on. (T/F)

FALSE

Media has an important role of identifying the candidates. (T/F)

TRUE

The most common bias in media is leaning left or right on the political spectrum. (T/F)

TRUE

Media writes editorials, creates political cartoons, and publishes pop-ed pieces. (T/F)

FALSE

