

**Lesson
Two**

Media Influences in your Life

Aims

By the end of this lesson you should be able to:

- understand what the term 'Media' is
- create a mind map to show your ideas on what the Media consists of
- learn about the power of radio and the power of words
- be aware of how image and stereotyping can be used in the media
- become aware of the ways in which the media can influence young people's lives

Context

This lesson is an introduction to the world of the Media. This first module will introduce you to different type of Media and the different purposes each has.


In this lesson we consider what the term Media actually means and how it is linked to the first lesson's discussion of communication.



Oxford Home Schooling

Introduction

This starter activity involves you giving a personal definition of the term Media. What does this word mean to you?

Activity 1	What does the Media mean? Can you give a definition? Jot down your ideas for one minute.
	


The Media

Communication involves sending and receiving messages. The method we use to communicate is called the 'medium' and the plural of the word medium is 'media'. The word Media can refer to newspapers, television, movies, radio also electronic media, which was discussed in Year 7 when we mentioned television.

Now try to answer the following questions based on your understanding of the Media.

<p>List your favourite types of media. For example, if you read magazines, list a few of them.</p>	<p>Why is studying the Media important?</p>
---	--

Who is the Media important to?	How can the Media influence people?

Activity 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a mind map to show your ideas about what the Media is. You may want to include pictures, photos, maps or drawings. You can use anything that shows your knowledge of the world and any topics you think make up the study of Media. • Remember to use images and add as much detail as possible to each branch that you create.
	

The Power of the Media

The media has long been recognised as one of the things that influence people the most. Whatever people see and hear has an effect on them in some way, whether big or small. However, the influence of media on young people is of significant interest.

There have been many times in the course of history when the media has not just reported the events- it has also influenced the events. Would your life be the same if you never saw or heard any television, read any books, magazines or listened to the radio?

Activity 3

Do you listen to the radio?

If yes, what radio stations do you like to listen to and why?

If no, why don't you like radio? Explain your answers.



THE GOLDEN AGE OF RADIO

In the United States of America on October 30th Halloween 1938 a film director (Orson Welles) was producing a radio version of a book called *The War of the Worlds* by the writer H.G. Wells (no relation!).

1938 was known as 'The Golden Age of Radio'. This incident occurred before the commercial launch of television in 1941; television was only in the experimental stages and the number of TV sets in America probably reached the low hundreds. People would gather in front of their radios and listen to music, news, plays and other entertainment channels. Radio was accessible, entertaining and reliable. People believed what they heard on the radio.

The War of the Worlds is a story about a Martian (alien) invasion of Earth. At the beginning of the radio broadcast and several times

throughout it the announcer made it clear this was fictional but it appeared many people missed these announcements.

Orson Welles wanted to make this radio drama realistic and interesting so he began the drama as though it was a newsflash interrupting a dance-music programme. The bulletin announced that a professor at the Mount Jennings Observatory in Chicago had reported seeing explosions on the planet Mars.

The dance music began again and then a dramatic commentary was heard. The section that follows is what the radio audience would have heard:

PHILLIPS: Ladies and gentlemen, this is the most terrifying thing I have ever witnessed...Wait a minute! Someone's crawling out of the hollow top. Someone, or ...something. I can see peering out of that black hole two luminous disks...are they eyes? It might be a face. It might be...

(Shout of awe from the crowd)

PHILLIPS: Good heavens, something's wriggling out of the shadow like a grey snake. Now it's another one, and another. They look like tentacles to me. There, I can see the thing's body. It's large, large as a bear and it glistens like wet leather. But that face, it...Ladies and gentlemen, it's indescribable. I can hardly force myself to keep looking at it. The eyes are black and gleam like a serpent. The mouth is V-shaped with saliva dripping from its rimless lips that seem to quiver and pulsate. The monster or whatever it is can hardly move. It seems weighed down by...possibly gravity or something. The thing's rising up. The crowd falls back now. They've seen plenty. This is the most extraordinary experience. I can't find words...I'll pull this microphone with me as I talk. I'll have to stop the description until I can take a new position. Hold on, will you please. I'll be right back in a minute.

The radio then reported that the U.S. Army was engaged and the announcer declared that New York City was being evacuated.

This broadcast caused massive hysteria and thousands of Americans, listening to the 'news' thought it was true and began to panic and leave their homes.

The next day, the New York Times ran with this headline 'Radio Listeners in Panic, Taking War Drama as Fact.' The newspaper included a sub-heading of 'Many Flee homes to Escape 'Gas Raid

From Mars'- Phone Calls Swamp Police at Broadcast of Wells Fantasy'. This famous incident demonstrates the power of the media of radio and the power of words to communicate.

Hours after the program had finished and listeners had realized that the alien invasion was not real, the public was furious that Orson Welles had tried to fool them. Lots of people sued whilst others wondered if Welles had caused the panic on purpose.

The power of radio had fooled the listeners. They had become used to believing everything they heard on the radio, without questioning it. Now they had learned the truth: the difficult way.

Do you believe everything you read in the media? Have you ever been fooled into believing that something you saw on TV or read on the Internet was real when it was not.

Activity 4

Given the circumstances of the radio broadcast in 1938 how would you have reacted?

How do we respond to the media around you today? Are you greatly affected by it?



Teenagers and young people are often more self-conscious about their image and therefore they are often the target audience of adults and producers.

The media influence can be good or bad depending on how the individuals respond to the adverts, shows, movies, newspaper articles and other media products. The media can also impact our consumer decisions. Advertisers use words and phrases such as 'magically delicious' to sell cereal and the subject of advertising will be considered in the next lesson.

The media seem to play a substantial role in young people's attitudes, behavior and physical aspects.

Meet Ryan, who is 14 and lives in Cornwall:

I have my hair styled in the same way as my favourite pop star and I always wash and condition my hair with an advertised brand. I try to buy similar styles of clothes as I see famous people wearing. I always drink Coke Zero and tell my mum not to buy supermarket own brands - they are so uncool!

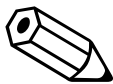
I support Manchester United even though I live in Cornwall and have never seen them play. When I grow up I want to be a footballer as they get paid lots of money and girls adore them!

This is an extreme version of the power of the media but now think about how the media affects you.

Activity 5

Draw a mind map, which considers how the media have influenced you.

Think about things such as food, sweets, drink, opinions, hairstyle, clothes, how you talk, career goals, where you spend your free time and what you buy with your pocket money.




The media (television, radio, newspapers, etc.) are an important channel for portraying information and channelling communication. Knowledge about how the mass media work may influence both the promotion of potentially risky behaviour (as in advertising), and for the promotion of health education.

Media influence: good or bad?

There have been positive and negative effects of the media and it can be seen as a weapon or a stepping-stone depending on how it is viewed. For example, print media like newspapers are a good way of becoming well informed about the world and current affairs. Reading newspapers can also develop your reading skills and increase vocabulary as you learn new words. Newspapers will be considered in more detail in Lesson Four.

The media also helps people to exchange information and it can act as a common platform to enable people to share ideas and encourage/support each other. The media conducts polls and lets members of the public share their views about social issues. Through blogging, tweeting or writing letters to the editor in newspapers many people can share their opinion on different social and political issues.

Activity 6	Can you think of any other positive media influences on your life?
	

The Heads-up Media forum, number 43, discussed the issue of the Media and whether it is doing a good job? There were a number of issues identified about the power of the media.

Some users said that they thought that the media focused on celebrities too much and that they should write more about things that are more important in society, i.e. crime.

Commenting on the forum lots of users were very unhappy with the negative reporting of young people in most of the media. Many of the comments suggested that journalists should be writing more about the positive things that young people do such as voluntary

work in their communities. It was acknowledged, however, that local newspapers more often mention young people in a positive light than the national media.

One student mentioned how angry she felt at an article in her local newspaper but didn't complain as she felt she wouldn't be taken seriously. Others mentioned feeling as if they had no voice and that their age counted against them if they did speak out. Here is the student's own response and more information can be found on the webpage and online forum www.headsup.org.uk.

'I nearly wrote a letter into the newspaper, but didn't. Basically a few adults had written into the local newspaper saying that the new park was being vandalised by ALL young people. I instantly thought this wasn't fair because every young person I know and of course myself hadn't vandalised the park. I was infuriated! In the end I didn't write to the newspaper because I thought that one 11 year old girl wasn't going to make a difference. Young people need to have more confidence to speak out to the papers. One day I hope to be a journalist so hopefully I will get my voice heard!!'

Over to you, in this lesson you have read about the power of the media and the influence it can have on each one of us. You have hopefully created your own opinion of this influence on your own life.

SELF-ASSESSMENT TEST

Pretend you are a writer for a teenage magazine and you want to warn teenagers about the power of the media to influence them. You can use pretend quotations from teenagers who have been influenced by the media either in a positive or a negative way. Additionally, you can use quotations that have been used in this lesson.

You should aim to write between 3-4 paragraphs, which show you are aware of the dangers of media influence but also try to demonstrate how the media can and should be a positive influence.