

## Lesson Plan

### Title

**Understanding and Explaining the Role of the Media in a Free and Democratic Society**

### Audience

Social Studies, Grades 7 to 12

### Objectives

The intent of the following assignments is to have students understand the role of the media in a democratic society.

Some of the learning outcomes would be:

- listing the types of political media careers that exist;
- explaining the job descriptions and responsibilities for each;
- simulating a media person's job;
- explaining the significance of the media in a democratic society, and
- describing the challenges facing the media in non-democratic countries and war zones.

## Activities and Methods

Students will select a project from the following list. They may work in pairs or groups of threes for the appropriate assignments.

1. Produce a journalistic video news story on a current school or community issue.
2. Produce three thirty second radio news reports on a current school or community issue from three different perspectives.
3. Write an extended and well-researched newspaper article (including interview quotes) about a current school or community issue.
4. Interview the local MLA, Mayor or City Councillor or Regional Director and write a 500-word article about their responsibilities and their views on some of the important issues in the news.
5. Job shadow a local radio or newspaper reporter and file a 500-word report describing their responsibilities. Are there any perks or interesting aspects to their jobs?
6. Pretend you are a newspaper editor. You must prioritize 15 stories in order of importance: 5 for your local community; 5 for the province, and; 5 for the country. Explain in a sentence why each story is relevant to your readers. Choose one of the 15 stories and write a 500-word editorial on the topic.
7. Create a Power Point presentation on any one of the following:
  - a. a day in the life of a reporter at the B.C. Legislature;
  - b. reporter's tool kit, explaining what each item is used for (include a reporter's rules of conduct);
  - c. a day in the life of an anchor person (e.g., Peter Mansbridge, Tony Parsons);
  - d. explain how a reporter becomes "embedded" with an army, and what their responsibilities are when they are covering a story among soldiers, or;
  - e. assemble 25 current or past political cartoons and explain their relevance.
8. Support (or contradict) the following statements in one hundred words each:
  - a. reporter has the right to report on anything except....;
  - b. reporters should be allowed to investigate the private lives of politicians....;
  - c. freedom of the press is vital to democracy because....;
  - d. embedded reporters serve no useful purpose and are only asking for trouble...., or;
  - e. embedded reporters endanger the lives of the soldiers they accompany....

*...continued*

## Activities and Methods (continued)

9. In 500 words, explain the role of Hansard in a democratic society. In what ways is Hansard important in supporting the media's role in society?
10. Create a newsroom set and a news program similar to "The National" or "CNN News" by reporting on five issues in your community, province or country.
11. Create a satirical news program similar to "This Hour Has Twenty-Two Minutes" or "The Daily Show with Jon Stewart" by creating five items about stories in the news.
12. Explain the role of a political cartoonist. List five of the top political cartoonists in Canada and examples of their work. Create, explain and display a political cartoon of your own.

## Materials & Resources

[www.mediawatch.com](http://www.mediawatch.com)

[www.caj.ca](http://www.caj.ca)

[www.adbusters.com](http://www.adbusters.com)

[www.mediaed.org](http://www.mediaed.org)

[www.acmecoalition.org](http://www.acmecoalition.org)

[www.medialit.org](http://www.medialit.org)

[www.media-alliance.org](http://www.media-alliance.org)

## Evaluation of Activity

The criteria for evaluating the projects should be arrived at in a collaborative process between the teacher and students when the projects are assigned. As an example, projects could be worth 50 marks and evaluated by a committee of student volunteers, chaired by the teacher. The committee will decide the criterion for the final grade assigned. Committee decisions are confidential and final.

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*NOTE: The ideas and opinions expressed in this classroom activity belong to their authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia. The Public Education and Outreach office only edits for clarity.*