

MEDIA, ENTERTAINMENT & INFLUENCE

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Focus: Celebrity culture, public figures, representation, advertising, media ethics, freedom of expression and platform regulation.

A. Warm-Up – The Power of the Media

Discuss:

1. Do celebrities have too much influence over society?
2. Should famous people be expected to behave as role models?
3. Does the media give too much attention to certain individuals?
4. Can films and television programmes influence people's attitudes towards different groups?
5. Should entertainment companies have social responsibilities?

B. Celebrity Influence – Where Is the Line?

Read the situations.

1. The Celebrity Campaign

A famous actor promotes an environmental campaign and encourages millions of followers to reduce plastic waste.

2. The Controversial Endorsement

A popular athlete promotes an expensive product despite having little knowledge about its quality or benefits.

3. The Public Apology

A celebrity makes an offensive comment online. After receiving criticism, they publish a public apology.

4. The Personal Lifestyle

A famous influencer regularly shares expensive holidays, designer clothing and luxury purchases. Some followers begin comparing their own lives negatively with this image.

Discuss:

1. Should celebrities be held to higher standards than ordinary people?
2. Are public figures responsible for how their followers interpret their messages?
3. Should companies reconsider partnerships with controversial celebrities?
4. Is it fair to expect celebrities to be positive role models?

C. Representation in the Media

Representation refers to how different people, communities and experiences are presented in films, television, news and advertising.

Discuss the following situations.

Situation 1: A television series consistently portrays a particular profession using outdated stereotypes.

Situation 2: An advertising campaign features people of different ages, backgrounds and abilities.

Situation 3: A news organisation repeatedly focuses on negative stories about one particular neighbourhood.

Situation 4: A popular film receives criticism because its characters do not reflect the diversity of the society it represents.

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Questions:

1. Why does representation matter?
2. Can media influence how people see groups they know little about?
3. Should entertainment companies actively try to represent different communities?
4. Is there a danger of focusing too much on representation at the expense of storytelling?
5. Who should decide what responsible representation looks like?

D. Freedom of Expression vs Media Responsibility

Consider the following statements.

1. Social media platforms should remove content that encourages violence.
2. Platforms should be required to explain why certain posts are removed.
3. Celebrities should have the same freedom to express opinions as everyone else.
4. Advertising aimed at children should be more strictly regulated.
5. Media companies should take responsibility for harmful misinformation.
6. Governments should have limited power over what people can publish online.

Choose three statements and explain your position.

Challenge: Find one statement you initially disagree with and try to construct the strongest possible argument in its favour.

E. Role-Play – Should the Platform Regulate More?

A major social media company is facing criticism over its handling of harmful content, misleading advertisements and inappropriate material.

A public consultation has been organised to discuss possible changes.

Student A – The Platform Executive

You believe excessive regulation could limit freedom of expression and make the platform less attractive to users.

Student B – The Media Regulator

You believe platforms have a responsibility to protect users and prevent the spread of harmful material.

Student C – The Independent Journalist

You support transparency and accountability but worry that powerful organisations could use regulation to silence criticism.

Your task: Discuss the proposed changes and agree on a set of recommendations.

You must consider:

- Misleading information.
- Advertising transparency.
- Protection of younger users.
- Harmful content.
- Freedom of expression.
- Independent oversight.

Present your final recommendations to the class.

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F. Critical Thinking – Who Shapes Public Opinion?

Discuss:

1. Does the media reflect society or influence what society thinks?
2. Are people becoming more critical of celebrities and public figures?
3. Can entertainment be politically or socially influential without intending to be?
4. Should news organisations be completely neutral?
5. Is responsible journalism more important than being first to publish a story?

G. Final Challenge – The Media We Want

Imagine you have been invited to advise a new international media organisation.

Prepare a short presentation outlining FIVE principles that should guide its work.

Consider:

- Accuracy.
- Fairness.
- Representation.
- Freedom of expression.
- Responsibility towards audiences.

Explain why each principle matters.

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