

## Skills for Democracy – Lesson Plan 5

### The Role of the Media

**Objectives** (taken from the PSE Framework for Wales)

- Pupils will “listen attentively in different situations and respond appropriately”; “use a range of techniques for personal reflection”; “critically evaluate others’ viewpoints and messages from the media”.
- Pupils could also develop knowledge of “how democratic systems work and understand how...the media can contribute and have an influence.”

**Resources**

- Paper
- Pens
- Case study – Freedom of the Press
- Photos on which to base news stories
- Newspaper template sheet
- Newspaper slant cards

**Time**

One hour

**Room Layout**

Students in groups

**Introduction**

Access to information is essential to the health of democracy. The media provide a link between the state and all parts of civil society\*.

**Introductory Activity (5 minutes)**

*Using the media to educate*

- Ask students to write a media diary (using student workbooks or copy of the sheet).
- What did they watch?
- Was there any news?
- Was there anything educational?
- How can TV/magazines/radio/the internet be used better to pass on information?

**Main Activity – What is it like to be a journalist?**

**Part 1 (30-60 minutes)**

- Give each group one of the photos to use as a stimulus for their news story.
- Ask them to write a headline/first paragraph of the article on the newspaper template sheet.

*(Alternatively, you can ask the students to focus on an issue around school – e.g. rubbish – and give them a slant on the story before asking them to take a photo and then complete as above.)*

- Get the students to read out their stories. How did they choose their headlines and articles? Are all the finished articles the same? If not, why not?

- Explain that writing newspapers/making television news programmes is all about making choices that will make you watch them. Do they think news is fair? Does it give all sides of an issue?
- Mention independent media that try to combat these problems by getting lots of people to report independently on their point of view.

### **Part 2 (30 minutes)**

- Give students time to read the case study, or read it to them.
- What do they know about the freedom of the press?
- Have they heard about that kind of story before? Do we hear enough about these issues?
- What do they think about this journalist?
- Should an organisation (like the UN) ensure that Sumi Khan, her family and her colleagues receive full protection while she is doing her job?
- Do they think we can write or show *anything* in the name of the freedom of the press?

### **Plenary – Assessment (10 minutes)**

- Why are the media so important?
- Can we call a country a “democracy” without free media?
- What about media that are not impartial at all? Is it right for them to take sides?
- Complete self-assessment using the “Parthenon paper”.

### **Organisations with useful resources**

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| • <a href="http://www.amnesty.org.uk/wales">www.amnesty.org.uk/wales</a> | Amnesty International (campaigns to help journalists in trouble) |
| • <a href="http://www.cpj.org">www.cpj.org</a>                           | Committee to Protect Journalists                                 |
| • <a href="http://www.indymedia.org.uk">www.indymedia.org.uk</a>         | IndyMedia  |
| • <a href="http://www.undercurrents.org">www.undercurrents.org</a>       | Produces ‘counterculture’ videos                                 |
| • <a href="http://www.hrw.org">www.hrw.org</a>                           | Human Rights Watch   |
| • <a href="http://www.unesco.org">www.unesco.org</a>                     | UNESCO – organises World Press Freedom Day on 3 May each year    |

## Information Sheet: The Role of the Media

**Article 19 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights states:**  
**“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”**

### What are the different types of media?

Press	TV	Radio	Internet	Cinema
				

### What is the role of the media?

- Inform
- Educate
- Mobilise the public
- Ensure social transparency\*
- Raise awareness on different topics
- Contribute to international understanding
- Promote the free flow of ideas by word and image
- Make citizens aware of their rights
- Be a watchdog and a guardian of the public interest
- Constitute the backbone of democracy

The media can also help build peace and social consensus, without which democracy is threatened. The media can provide warring groups mechanisms for mediation and a voice so that they can settle their differences peacefully.

### What are the pros and cons of the media?

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☺ Effective way to get information out to people</li> <li>☺ There are large budgets to make exciting programmes and get journalists out to every part of the world</li> <li>☺ Easy to get information anytime and anywhere</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☹ You get the point of view that the media company (or the government) chooses for you</li> <li>☹ Easy to forget that other people are choosing what you read/watch</li> <li>☹ Journalists can get caught up in conflicts</li> <li>☹ Only a very small number of firms are involved in mass media</li> </ul>



# DEMOCRACY NEWS



## Newspaper Slant Cards

Your paper thinks this issue is a big problem.	Your paper thinks that this issue is being blown out of proportion.
Your paper thinks that this issue isn't a problem at all.	Your paper thinks this is a conspiracy issue.
Your paper thinks that this is a one-off occurrence.	Your paper thinks the wrong people are being blamed on this issue.

## Case study – Freedom of the Press

This is the story of a journalist who has had her human rights infringed as a result of her job.

### Sumi Khan – Bangladesh

"I wasn't scared, why should I be scared? I have truth and justice in my heart."

**Sumi Khan, speaking to Amnesty International in March 2005**



Sumi Khan © AI

Sumi Khan, a 34-year-old mother of two young sons, is a journalist with weekly investigative magazine *Shaptahik 2000*.



Sumi Khan was stabbed and critically wounded on 27 April 2004, while on her way to a courier service to send a report to her editor. Three men in an autorickshaw attempted to drag her into their vehicle, but she resisted. They then stabbed her several times. As people came to her aid, the assailants grabbed her handbag and drove away.

Sumi Khan has filed a complaint with the police about the attack, but so far no-one has been arrested. She received more threatening phone calls as she recuperated at home. The death threats and attack are believed to be linked to her articles. Sumi Khan has written investigative articles alleging the involvement of local politicians and religious groups in attacks on members of minority communities, and articles about kidnapping and 'land grabbing' by landlords.

Before the attack, she received several threatening telephone calls, warning her not to 'defame' people in her reports. The people who came to Sumi Khan's rescue heard the assailants yelling about her reports in the paper, saying she would be killed if she did not stop writing.

On 12 March 2005, Sumi Khan received a written death threat, telling her to retract articles she had written on Islamist groups, and threatening grenade attacks on her home and office if she reported on these issues again. Fellow Chittagong-based journalists Samaresh Baidya and Zubair Siddiqui received similar death threats on 10 and 11 March.

Despite these threats to her personal safety, Sumi Khan continues to pursue her award-winning work in investigative journalism because of her commitment to exposing human rights violations and seeking justice.

**If you want to get involved with campaigns about journalists like Sumi or learn more about the work of Amnesty International, please go to their website**

**[www.amnesty.org.uk/wales](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/wales) or send an email to [wales@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:wales@amnesty.org.uk)**

## The Role of the Media – Skills Sheet

### 1. *Media Diary (on your own and as a whole class)*



#### **LISTENING**

\* You will listen to other people's opinions.

#### **DEBATING**

\* You may have a mini debate about the role of the media.

### 2. *Writing a news story (in a group)*



#### **DECISION MAKING**

\* You will need to choose a good headline and picture.

#### **COMPROMISE**

\* You may need to compromise in order to get the best headline.

#### **LISTENING**

\* You will need to listen to other people in your group.

### 3. *Freedom of the Press (whole class)*



#### **LISTENING**

\* You will be listening to other people's opinions.

#### **DEBATE**

\* You will have a debate about the consequences of being a journalist.

Skills for Democracy  
Self-assessment “Parthenon paper”

# The Role of the Media

**DECISION MAKING**


**LISTENING**


**DEBATING**


**MEETING**


**COMPROMISE**


**YOU**