

LPF Writing Exemplar

The Role of the Mass Media

Task Description

Students wrote an article for the school magazine, discussing the role of the mass media in society and whether laws should be set up to regulate them.

Preparation

Before writing the article, students read news articles about the role of the mass media and how the lives of some pop stars were affected by the mass media. To help students generate ideas, they were asked to participate in a forum in which students played the roles of a pop star, a reporter, the boss of a publishing house or a magazine reader. They spoke from the point of view of the role they played and discussed in groups of four whether laws should be set up to regulate the mass media.

Learning Outcomes: ATM8

Content	Organisation	Language and Style
ATM8 Writing texts to convey information, ideas, personal experiences and opinions on familiar and less familiar topics with substantial elaboration	ATM8 Linking ideas coherently throughout the text, and showing effective overall organisation of ideas	ATM8 Using a wide range of appropriate and accurate language forms and functions, and appropriate tone, style, register and features of a range of text types
<p>The student can</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • argue about the issue in a balanced and unbiased manner, e.g. taking into account the different points of views of the mass media, the readers and the celebrities/pop stars when discussing their relationships • justify the arguments with well-chosen examples, e.g. the cases of Princess Diana and Bill Clinton • describe what interests the readers most about pop stars and celebrities with elaboration, e.g. ‘where they dine, whom they are dating and what they are wearing’ 	<p>The student can</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establish links within paragraphs effectively using punctuation, e.g. a colon to explain what has been in the earlier part of the sentence in Paragraph 4, a semi-colon for contrast in Paragraph 6, and cohesive devices, e.g. ‘Yet’ and ‘On the other hand’ for contrast in Paragraphs 1 and 3 respectively • provide links and facilitate the development of ideas across paragraphs using cohesive devices and adverb phrases, e.g. using ‘So there’ in Paragraph 3 to refer to what has been discussed in the previous paragraph, ‘But’ in Paragraph 4 to indicate a twist in the development of ideas, highlighting the complexity of the issue, ‘After all’ in Paragraph 6 to round off what has been discussed 	<p>The student can</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use a wide range of vocabulary and word collocations on the topic of mass media, e.g. ‘sensational’, ‘infatuation’, ‘celebrities’, ‘paparazzi’, ‘scandal’, ‘hold...at bay’, ‘in the limelight’, and on whether laws should be set up to regulate the mass media, e.g. ‘violate’, ‘deprive...of’, ‘political correctness’ • use carefully-chosen and effective vocabulary and expressions, e.g. ‘infatuation’ to highlight how much the reader is interested in the news about the celebrities and pop stars, ‘feeds on’ and ‘nurture’, which draw on the imagery of food, suggest that their news is the daily essentials that people cannot do without, ‘stargazing’, which is borrowed from a term in astronomy, to mean ‘having an interest in the news about pop stars’, creating an ironic effect to highlight the unexpected consequence of ‘stargazing’

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make a convincing conclusion based on what has been discussed in the body paragraphs, e.g. highlighting the importance of discipline and responsibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • coherently structure the text which shows a clear development of ideas and arguments, e.g. introducing the topic about the mass media in Paragraph 1, discussing step by step the complex relationship and interdependence of the mass media, the reader and the celebrities/pop stars in Paragraphs 2-4, putting forth the writer's viewpoint and making a conclusion of what has been discussed in Paragraph 5, ending with a thought-provoking question which allows room for reflection in Paragraph 6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use a range of stylistic features to create special effects or achieve certain purposes, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - parallel structures, such as '...where they dine, whom they are dating, what they are wearing...' to highlight the trivialness of the activities, creating a humorous effect - rhetorical questions, such as 'Would it go out of control if...the mass media?' to prompt the reader to reflect - semi-colons, such as "stargazing" is meant to be fun; who would want a tragedy?' to show a contrast of ideas - capitalisation, such as 'a balance between making money AND respecting human rights' for emphasis • use 'if-clause' and the modal 'would' to suggest hypothetical situations, e.g. 'Would it go out of control if laws were set to control the mass media?', '...would regulations which ...violate human rights and political correctness?'
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The mass media have been playing an important role in our society. They provide us with updated news and hold illegal activities at bay by keeping a watchful eye on them. Yet, the work of the mass media, especially the paparazzi, at times sparks controversy. Recently, this has become more evident when the news about the nude photos of some pop stars has been widely reported in a sensational manner.

Since the birth of the television and the flourishing of the mass media, 'stars' and celebrities from all fields have become part of our lives. We are concerned about where they dine, whom they are dating, what they are wearing, and all these provide a fabulous amount of entertainment for us. Without our infatuation with the stars and celebrities, there won't be the mass media. We cannot live without them.

So there, we can see that the existence of the mass media feeds on our support. Isn't it natural, then, that they try their best to nurture us with the news we want? It is the job of the reporters. On the other hand, we must also take the view of those whose lives are being affected into consideration. In my opinion, these people do need the mass media to gain publicity so that they can be in the limelight. In fact, the mass media are both loved and hated by the celebrities. They love it because they can get themselves known easily; they hate it when the mass media make up untrue stories about them. Love it or loathe it, the mass media are reporting news the public want to know about. They are actually acting as a go-between for the public and the celebrities, and this can be viewed as a dual relationship from which both parties can benefit.

But the matter isn't that simple. We must admit that the mass media, in particular the paparazzi, have gone too far — the tragic death of Princess Diana, Bill Clinton's sex scandal or more recently the coverage of the nude pictures of pop stars. The problem has received much attention and a complex dilemma evolved: who is ultimately responsible - the press, the public, or the celebrities and pop stars themselves? Would it go out of control if laws were set to regulate the mass media? Then again, would regulations which deprive us of the right of knowing certain news violate human rights and political correctness?

I think the crux of the matter is discipline. The mass media should reflect on what they have done and exercise discretion. It is the responsibility of the mass media to publish or report the news that is true and that wouldn't cause harm or embarrassment to the victims. The key is to strike a balance between making money AND respecting human rights.

After all, 'stargazing' is meant to be fun; who would want a tragedy?

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