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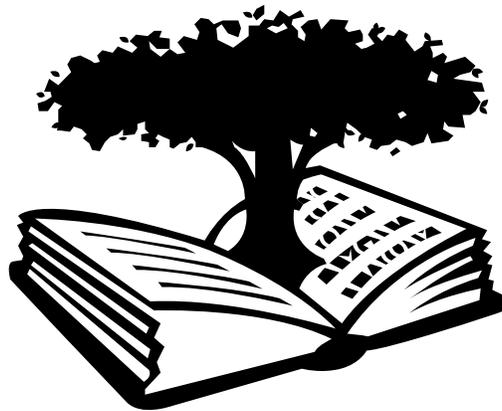


To the Student



Welcome to an investigation of your role in the mass media. This text is designed to make you aware of the powerful media that influence your life. It is also designed to help you develop a critical attitude. In order to have a set of personal standards, you have to examine what you're thinking. To that end, many of the exercises in this book are designed to help you discover what you know, what you like and dislike, what your opinions are—in effect, where you stand at this point in your life on some very important issues.

Each mass medium is given its own chapter. There are also chapters on propaganda, advertising, and censorship. When you complete this book, you should be better informed, much more alert to the media you use every day, and better able to make judgments and decisions about the mass media, which are always trying to influence you.





To the Teacher



This book of activities has been written to invite students to examine, think about, and respond to the mass media. It has been designed so that students will employ all of the important basic and more-sophisticated skills they have been learning through their school years: reading, writing, researching, discussing, thinking, interpreting, debating.

Since I encourage students to state their raw opinions often, let me say a word or two about that practice. Thirty years of public school teaching (along with years of college and senior citizen teaching) have taught me that the best way for students to improve all of their skills, as well as their self-esteem, is to encourage use of these skills, no matter how elementary or undeveloped they seem to the teacher.

It's obvious that most students have very little hard information about the mass media, and they've probably read or thought little on the subject. Why, then, do I ask them to pass judgment so often? Because I want to welcome them into the fray! I do not agree with the viewpoint that says, "You cannot discuss this matter or have an opinion until you have matured, or until you have read or thought long enough to have considered, well-documented views." Under this line of reasoning, many people will never be ready to state opinions, get involved in a subject enough to care about it, and hear and read different points of view. Meanwhile, the media continue to have their effects whether or not students (who are also citizens) are examining what they are experiencing daily. It therefore seems reasonable to me to welcome all students into the debate about the mass media, whatever their experience, expertise, and ability, and to welcome them with enthusiasm, openness, and encouragement. The goal, of course, is to become well-informed.

Having said all of the above, I do not wish to suggest that there is nothing substantial about what is to follow. There is, on the contrary, a great deal of substance in *You and the Mass Media*, and it makes many demands on students. When they have completed all of the activities and exercises, this book will be filled with fascinating and provocative information, observations, questions, and imaginings. Students should be able to look at the media, at their language, and even at themselves with a new alertness and awareness.

I wish to stress the importance of library use for the full success of *You and the Mass Media*. Every library—school, public, or private—is a powerhouse of information that many students fail to employ satisfactorily. Maybe it's because the library is not a place for socializing. Maybe it's because adolescents feel intimidated by the avalanche of information in a library. Maybe it's because there's a psychic conflict

between their emergence as individuals and their need to be helped to use the mass of information that sits inertly on the shelves. Whatever the reasons, I know that most students underuse a library, and we've got to encourage and persuade them to do the opposite! As a result of these considerations, many activities in *You and the Mass Media* require use of the library.

You should know that *You and the Mass Media* is designed to meet national social studies standards as established by the National Council for the Social Studies. As you know, the primary purpose of social studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world. Another purpose is to manage technology so that the greatest number of people benefit from it. Since the mass media are the major way citizens get their information, it is necessary that they examine these media and recognize the impact on their lives. Civic competence in our society, an important goal of social studies, is influenced very strongly by the media. Some critics think that the media create consumers rather than civic activists and that this is not helpful in creating students able to assume "the office of citizen" (as Thomas Jefferson called it). Furthermore, the national social studies standards invite activities that address "the contemporary conditions of real life and of academic scholarship." *You and the Mass Media* meets these goals by helping students construct a personal perspective as well as an academic one. Students will gather information, reflect, and learn to read, write, and think critically.





Assessing Student Performance



While many of the activities in *You and the Mass Media* are open-ended and subjective, there are concrete ways of assessing student performance. These are:

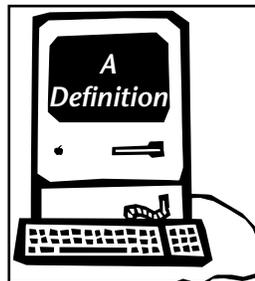
1. extended written assignments
2. oral reports
3. projects
4. tests and quizzes on the contents of chapters, key vocabulary words, and definitions of terms
5. keeping a journal

1. Written assignments There is no better way to assess students' performance and progress than to ask them to produce a coherent essay on a pertinent topic. Observing how students organize their thoughts, use details, and analyze the results of their research will tell you a great deal about how well they are absorbing and applying the content of each chapter. As you will note, there are many writing assignments in the text. The evaluation of student writing must be a key factor in determining grades.

2. Oral reports Listening to students explain their encounters with the media—reporting what they see and hear—is another concrete means of assessment. For example, students may watch no TV at all for one week and report their reactions to the class in terms of what they did with their time, what they thought they were missing, what their reactions were. Did they feel out of touch? Did they have a positive experience? Were they bored? Were they unable to occupy themselves usefully?

3. Projects Students are assigned the creation of their own short movies, tapes, collages, ads, and interviews of local people working in the media. Then they present their work to the class.

4. Tests and quizzes You could ask students to define mass media, television, prime time, and the terms in each chapter. Who wrote the original *War of the Worlds*? Who wrote the radio version? etc. There are scores of significant specific facts in *You and the Mass Media* that students must make a part of their media vocabulary and consciousness.



Mass Media are those means of communication (TV, movies, CDs, tapes, the Internet, newspapers, books, and magazines) that reach and influence millions of people.

5. Journal Granted, journals are subjective, but students need discipline to keep them. Requirements for journals can be simple but clear-cut. Entries should be about the media, with reactions to all aspects: television, advertising, movies, magazines and newspapers, radio, the Internet. There should be a certain number of pages required each month. The journal must be legible. All entries must be dated.

The World of Media



The word *media* means “ways of transmission.” It’s the Latin plural of *medium*. When we put the word *mass* in front of *media*, we mean ways of transmission to very large audiences in the tens of millions and beyond.

What exactly is being transmitted, and how does it reach so many people at once? Let’s start by looking at the most basic aspects of mass media.

The world of media is made up of pictures, words, and sound. To make progress in trying to understand all three of these ingredients of media, let’s think a moment about each of the three factors.

1. Pictures, of course, are the most powerful component of media. The old cliché that “a picture is worth a thousand words” is, in many ways, absolutely true. (But not in *all* ways; we’ll come back to this thought later on.)



When you are shown a house on a television or movie screen, you know what it is immediately. You also know immediately whether it is an old house, a new house, an attractive house, or a run-down house. You see a great many of the details of the house all at once, whereas in print you would have to read a page of print, line by line, to learn about these details.

The print experience is slower, whereas the picture experience is faster. Here, also, the pictures reflect your daily visual experience, so you are attracted to the TV or movie screen because of the familiarity.

2. Words are the only part of the media that do not have a counterpart in life, except as sounds. Words, as such, do not exist as pictures and sounds do. They are completely the invention of the human mind. Nevertheless, the media must use words because we hear them and read them in life. Without words there would be an enormous loss of information and ideas.

You'll recall that I said that the cliché "a picture is worth a thousand words" is true in many ways but not in *all* ways. Suppose that behind the house in your picture there is a deep ravine that is not visible. Or suppose there is a garbage dump right next to the house but it's not shown. Words are then needed to complete the truth of the situation.

When we talk about ideas like democracy or freedom or good health, we have no pictures, and therefore we need words. Words are the only medium that can explain these ideas or concepts. Even a picture, as informative as it is, has its limitations. These limitations can be minimized by words. Once again, words are necessary in the media because there are ideas to communicate, and words do that job best.

3. Because sounds exist in the world they must be placed in the media. When we hear them in the media, we say to ourselves automatically, "Oh, yes, those sounds are the same ones I hear in my daily life: a whistle, a plane, a conversation, a piece of music."

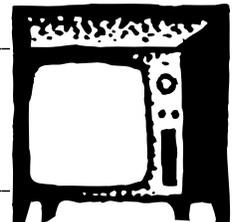
Sound is necessary to complete the picture of reality that the media must show us if we are to take an interest in them. No one would watch *Seinfeld*, *Dallas* or *Monday Night Football* if there were no sound. Before 1930, when there was no sound in the movies, each theater had a piano and a piano-player who accompanied the action on the screen with live music. For the broadcast media to do their job, which is to attract an audience, they must include sound.

Pictures. Words. Sound. These are the ingredients of the media. Used in proper combinations, they have a mighty attraction for us. We know this is true because of the popularity of TV, movies, magazines, newspapers, radio, records, tapes, and, of course, books.

In order to fully understand the power of pictures, sounds, and words in our lives, try doing some sensory deprivation experiments.

1. Listen to TV for a half hour with a blindfold on your eyes. Describe here your feelings and reactions:

2. Watch TV with the sound off for a half-hour. Describe here your feelings and reactions.



3. In your English class, spend a period wearing a blindfold and earplugs so that you cannot read or hear words. Describe your reactions and feelings.

4. Which was the worse form of deprivation, not to hear or not to see? Explain your choice.

The term “mass media” means that the same pictures, words, and sounds are being seen and heard by anywhere from 20 million to 80 million people. (A Super Bowl game is seen by 140 million people, for example.) This is something to think about.

Think what it means to a manufacturer of a new product, a president with a message, or an association of doctors who want to inform a large number of people about a new finding. Think what it means to a news company that has to report the news it’s collected over the past 24 hours. Think what it means to a man or woman who wants to attract attention to a cause. Think what it means to a movie producer who has a handsome new star to show the public. And think what it means to a person or group who wants to communicate to the mass audience, but can’t. How does that person feel?

There has been nothing in human history equal to the power of the media in the 20th century. Even if a book sells 100,000 copies, does that number compare to the tens of millions of people who *daily* watch TV and movies? It’s been said that in one night of television, more people will see a production of a Shakespeare play than the total number of those who have seen it in the theater since Shakespeare’s time. And he died in 1616.

What are your personal reactions to these realities, facts, and statistics? Using the space on the following page, write a commentary called “Living With the Mass Media,” or “The Mass Media in My House,” or “Life Without the Mass Media.” Include your thoughts, observations, feelings, and questions as they occur to you. Jot down whatever comes to mind at first, then organize it. Do this for homework and share it with your class.

It is important to write down your thoughts, because it helps you remember what you have learned and often reveals thoughts and opinions you didn’t know you had.

