

Unit 8 Producing the news

About the unit

In this unit, pupils explore the roles and responsibilities of those in the media who provide information to the public, within the context of a democratic society. Pupils role-play news editors, compiling a radio news broadcast and making editorial decisions under real time pressures. They explore issues as they take part in editorial decision-making, and consider a variety of points of view. They consider how to balance competing rights, *eg the right to free speech and the right to privacy*. Pupils record their news bulletin, which should be based on current news items.

A debrief session is used to reflect on, and discuss the basis for, the editorial decisions made by the pupils during the exercise. Pupils have opportunities for group work, decision-making, arguing points of view and using the internet.

The activities in this unit could be adapted for different media contexts, *eg pupils could make a film or TV programme, or produce a newspaper or news-based website*. The unit may be run ‘live’ with the support of a local radio station, or may be based on information garnered from news sites on the web.

It may be useful to liaise with the English department in your school when planning this unit.

Where the unit fits in

This unit addresses the following aspects of the key stage 4 citizenship programme of study:

Knowledge and understanding about becoming informed citizens

Pupils should be taught about:

- 1g the importance of a free press, and the media’s role in society, including the internet, in providing information and affecting opinion

Developing skills of enquiry and communication

Pupils should be taught to:

- 2a research a topical political, spiritual, moral, social or cultural issue, problem or event by analysing information from different sources, including ICT-based sources, showing an awareness of the use and abuse of statistics
- 2b express, justify and defend orally and in writing a personal opinion about such issues, problems or events
- 2c contribute to group and exploratory class discussions, and take part in formal debates

Developing skills of participation and responsible action

Pupils should be taught to:

- 3a use their imagination to consider other people’s experiences and be able to think about, express, explain and critically evaluate views that are not their own
- 3b negotiate, decide and take part responsibly in school and community-based activities
- 3c reflect on the process of participating

The unit builds on unit 9 ‘The significance of the media in society’ in the key stage 3 citizenship scheme of work.

Expectations

At the end of this unit

most pupils: take part in discussions about content and technical issues, and are able to ascertain bias in reports. They can use ICT to prepare and amend bulletins. They appreciate the importance of an effective group decision-making process when there are particular time constraints. They recognise the role and responsibilities of the media, and how it can affect public opinion.

some pupils have not made so much progress and: contribute to discussions about the content of bulletins. They recognise the importance of the media in affecting the views of the public.

some pupils have progressed further and: are able to identify the key points of reports. They construct a news bulletin, using ICT to help them achieve a broadcast of the correct length. They recognise the importance of establishing an editorial team with clear roles and responsibilities, and of setting up an effective decision-making process. They understand how the media affects the views of the public and draw comparisons between the activities they have undertaken and those of the media. They recognise the importance of production guidelines to avoid bias and to ensure a balance of views.

Resources

Resources include:

- pre-recorded news items from chosen radio stations
- tape recorders
- access to the internet and printers

Many groups and organisations produce online resources that are relevant to citizenship. QCA has not printed these website addresses as it recognises that they can and do change, often at short notice. So that we can monitor and maintain a reliable and useful resource, the website addresses of the following organisations can be accessed through the key stage 4 citizenship scheme of work site at www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/ schemes

- BBC (for news and Producers' Guidelines)
- British Film Institute
- Press Complaints Commission
- Children's Express (online newspaper)
- The Newspaper (online newspaper)
- Contemporary History Weekly

Links with other subjects

In this section, references are made to the programme of study if there is one at key stage 4, or to the subject specific criteria on which GCSE courses are based. Some of the links have been included in the 'Points to note' section to illustrate these opportunities.

English: En1, 3a, 3b, 3d, 3e, 9b, 9c, 10a, 10b; En2, 1e, 4a, 4b, 4c, 5a, 5b, 5c, 5d, 9b, 9c in the programme of study

ICT: 1b, 3b, 4a, 5c in the programme of study; builds on unit 10 'Information: reliability, validity and bias' in the key stage 3 scheme of work

History: builds on knowledge and understanding of democracy and censorship and the skills of interpretation and enquiry in the key stage 3 programme of study; GCSE criteria: skills of critical evaluation of sources (2.1ii); organising and communicating knowledge and understanding (2.1iv); reaching substantiated judgements (2.1v)

Geography: builds on decision-making skills, 2g, 3a, locational knowledge in the key stage 3 programme of study; links with GCSE criteria: developing locational knowledge (3.1viii); awareness of the values/attitudes of those involved in issues (3.1vii); decision-making skills (3.1vii)

RE: many locally agreed and GCSE specifications cover issues of personal and social responsibility that have relevance to the role and use of the media. Some GCSE specifications also cover issues relating to religious and other beliefs and practices and the media

Pupils should learn:

Pupils:

Preparation – who makes the news?

- about the role and responsibilities of the media in providing information to the public in a democratic society
- to contribute to group decision-making
- Explain the purpose of the unit to pupils. Pupils listen to several pre-recorded news broadcasts and look at several news websites. They analyse them both from a technical viewpoint and from the point of view of bias, breadth, interest, intended audience, etc.
- Pupils prepare and practise editing and recording sample news items. Where the samples have been e-mailed from a local radio station or gathered by cutting and pasting from news websites, pupils should use ICT to edit them.
- In groups, pupils discuss how, if they had selected the samples themselves, they would have made their selections. They discuss, decide upon and write down a set of guidelines they think should be used to check the quality and suitability of material for broadcast, but which do not infringe the rights of the free press, *eg they could consider how to balance the right to free speech and the right to privacy.*
- Each group feeds back to the class what they discussed. They compare their guidelines with those used by the media, *eg the BBC's Producers' Guidelines.*
- Extension activity: groups of pupils investigate the rights of the free press, contrasting these with a situation where reporting is controlled or restricted. They research why restrictions are sometimes imposed on the press, *eg for the safety of civilians during war, as a result of a political regime.* They debate why a free press is important in a democratic society.
- produce a news bulletin from pre-recorded news items, having first analysed them for bias and technical information
- reflect on their broadcast and agree a set of criteria or guidelines to ensure the quality and suitability of broadcast material
- Teachers will need to prepare a selection of news items in advance, using a variety of sources, *eg 'serious' and 'pop' radio stations, different news websites.*
- Pupils may already have worked through unit 9 'The significance of the media in society' in the key stage 3 citizenship scheme of work. Sections of this unit may be adapted or combined for use at key stage 4.
- Visits to local radio and TV stations, or visits from journalists and programme makers would be helpful.
- Link with ICT: 1b in the key stage 4 programme of study. In order for pupils to be able to detect or infer bias, it would be useful for them to understand how to interpret a web address and how to go about verifying the content of websites.
- Link with geography: builds on 3a and 3b in the key stage 3 programme of study and links with GCSE criteria: issues (3.1vi); values/attitudes (3.1vii); locational knowledge (3.1viii).
- Link with history: the extension activity provides an opportunity to link with work in history. It builds on the programme of study at key stage 3.
- This section links with work on balancing competing rights in unit 3 'Human rights' in the key stage 3 scheme and unit 1 'Human rights' in the key stage 4 scheme.

Learning objectives

Pupils should learn:

Possible teaching activities**Learning outcomes**

Pupils:

Points to note**Going live**

- to contribute to group decision-making
- to express, justify and defend their views
- to decide upon and implement a research strategy to investigate news items, and to analyse information from different sources, including ICT
- Set a broadcast time in advance of this activity, *eg 45 minutes, one hour.*
- In different groups of four or five, pupils work as a news team. They discuss and allocate different roles and responsibilities, *eg newscaster, chief editor, sub-editors, researchers.* They agree how to make group decisions, *eg each member of the team has a vote, a selection of the team acts as an editorial board*, what to include in their broadcast, how to ensure a balance of views, how to verify the accuracy of any information received, and how to put into practice the editorial guidelines developed in the first activity.
- The team reviews news items as they are received, either 'live' via e-mail from the local radio station or direct from pre-selected news websites. It is important that pupils have access to plenty of news items. The sub-editors use a word processor to edit the items to time (typically three words per spoken second) and to reflect the desired editorial slant, position or balance of views. Pupils can use the word processor's word count facility to help them.
- Give the groups a few more interesting news items in the final minutes before the broadcast deadline. Each broadcast should have a strict time limit, *eg three minutes.*
- Allow pupils the opportunity to unwind after the broadcasts. They discuss and reflect with others on how the activity went, and how they dealt with the late-arriving news items.
- This activity could be varied by providing different groups with a different political, religious or other point of view to represent, asking them to produce their news bulletins accordingly.

- analyse a range of topical issues, problems and events from a variety of sources, including ICT
- produce a news bulletin that is **exactly** a certain number of minutes long
- recognise the importance of establishing and agreeing on a group decision-making process
- contribute to group decision-making and listen to the views of others
- reflect on their participation in the activity
- Although pupils are working in groups, it should be clear what each individual's contribution is.
- Link with English: En1 3a, 3b, 3d, 3e, 9b, 9c, 10a, 10b; En2 1e, 4a, 4b, 4c, 5a, 5b, 5c, 5d, 9b, 9c in the programme of study.
- If the suggested variation on this activity is used, it is important to give all groups the same 'raw material' at the outset.

Making editorial decisions

- to explain and defend their editorial decisions
- to recognise the impact the media has on a story and on the opinions of the audience
- about the rights and responsibilities of the media
- Replay the broadcasts, analysing them in the same way that the 'real' broadcasts were analysed in the first section of the unit.
- The groups/chief editors explain why they chose the stories they did, and why particular stories/items were rejected. They consider how editing a story can change its impact. If appropriate, they discuss the sources of the stories.
- Drawing on their experiences in this unit, pupils reflect on the rights of the free press and the role and responsibilities of the media in providing information to the public within a democratic framework that protects the rights of individuals. They identify ways in which they can apply what they have learned to their own work in school or elsewhere.
- discuss reasons for the inclusion/exclusion of items, and how editing can change a story's impact
- reflect on their participation in and contribution to the broadcast, and identify what they have learnt that could be applied to other areas of their work
- Link with ICT: 4a, 5c in the programme of study; builds on unit 10 'Information: reliability, validity and bias' in the key stage 3 scheme of work.