

## Fame and the media, media bias

## Fame and the media

1.1 Look at the opinions and decide which ones you agree or disagree with.

- 1 Reality TV shows are not very entertaining.
- 2 Reality TV shows are as popular now as ten years ago.
- 3 The main reason people take part in reality TV shows is because they want to be famous.
- 4 Newspapers increase public enthusiasm for reality TV shows.
- 5 Some reporters go too far when they pursue famous people.
- 6 Some people are famous for the wrong reasons.

1.2 ▶ 37 Now listen to a conversation between Paul and Vickie and decide whether the opinions in 1.1 apply to ...

- A Paul                      B Vickie                      C both Paul and Vickie

1.3 ▶ 37 Look at the words and phrases in the box associated with fame and use a dictionary to check the meaning of any you don't know. Then listen again. Which ones do the speakers use?

shoot to fame   worldwide phenomenon   media attention   in the public eye  
high-profile   in the headlines   instant celebrities   world-famous  
become famous overnight   tabloid press   paparazzi   prominent   eminent  
making headlines   gossip columns   new-found fame   chief claim to fame   earn fame

2.1 Which part of the media are the following words associated with? Put them into the correct column. Some words belong in both columns.

article   reporter   broadcaster   viewer   reader   series   print  
publication   listener   tabloid   episode   publisher   screen  
the press   headlines   journalist   online edition   rolling news  
live stream   programme   gossip column

Television and radio

Newspapers and magazines



### Vocabulary note

**Infamous** means famous for doing something bad, e.g. Ronnie Biggs, the infamous train robber, died in 2001.

**Celebrity** is used to refer to famous people: They invited a celebrity along to open the event.

The **paparazzi** are the photographers who follow celebrities around.



### Error warning

We use the preposition *for* with the word **famous**: New Orleans is **famous for** its music. NOT **famous with** / **famous on**. **Famous** describes something that is well known by many people: The Eiffel Tower is a **famous** building in Paris.

We use **popular** to refer to things that are liked or used by a lot of people: The train is the most **popular** form of transport in my home town. NOT the most **famous** form of transport.

- 2.2** Complete the following answers to two Speaking test questions. Some of the words you need to use are in the table in 2.1, but you may need to use them in a different form.

*How do you think the media will change in the future?*

Well, I think we are already moving from getting our news from <sup>1</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ articles and moving to digital, <sup>2</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ of newspapers. Then there's the <sup>3</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ we have on the TV day and night. This is actually moving online, too, with many TV companies offering a <sup>4</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ so you can watch the news on your computer or phone. I think we will soon blur the distinction between a <sup>5</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, a listener and a viewer because we will be doing all these things at the same time on the same website.

*What is the role of the media in our society today? Do you think they do a good job?*

Well, I think they have a responsibility to keep us informed about what's happening in the world. But unfortunately, sometimes they're more concerned about profits and so there are lots of sensational <sup>6</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ to try to persuade us to buy a newspaper, and sometimes as much prominence is given to a <sup>7</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ column as to the serious news stories. Of course, I realise that the media is also there to entertain people, but we need to bear in mind the impact it has on our society. For example, they should make sure that unsuitable content is kept away from children. The images that are <sup>8</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ on our television <sup>9</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ are often not suitable for children, and I think <sup>10</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ have a duty to warn parents about that.



### Error warning



The *media* refers to newspapers, magazines, radio and television and has a definite article.

*Medium* refers to a method or way of expressing something, e.g. the *print medium* / *through the medium of television*. I believe television is the most effective *medium* for advertising. NOT the most effective *media*

*Medium* is singular and *media* is plural, but we don't always use a plural verb with it.



### Vocabulary note

Notice the following rules for the spelling of the words *programme* and *program*:

*programme* (UK only) = a show on television

*program* (US only) = a show on television

*program* (UK and US) = instructions for a computer (a verb and a noun)

## Media bias

- 3.1** Read the passage on the next page and write YES, NO or NOT GIVEN for questions 1–8.

- Baxter believes biased media reports reflect the attitude of the general public with regard to women in politics.
- Baxter maintains that female politicians are treated more fairly on TV than in newspapers.
- Baxter warns that the attitude of the media may lead to fewer women in politics.
- Baxter suggests that the press try to show that female politicians make poor leaders.
- According to Baxter, the general public is biased against the idea of female leaders.
- In the tabloids, Baxter found fewer articles than anticipated about local politicians.
- Most print media provide political reporting that is impartial.
- Baxter should have included a wider range of newspapers in her study.

Regardless of their suitability, the moment a female candidate announces their intention of entering the political arena, the press immediately begin to speculate about the possibility of a female president of the United States. The media debate doesn't stop even if the candidate fails to get nominated as a candidate.

In her recent book, *Media Bias and Politics*, Susanna Baxter explores the press treatment of female presidential candidates from the 1800s to the present day. Baxter contends that, while the public's attitude towards women in politics has evolved considerably, media coverage both on TV and in the press, has failed to keep pace and remains biased against them. We generally use the press as our primary source of information about political candidates. According to Baxter, it could therefore be argued that, by treating women unfairly, media reports not only impede the progress of female candidates but also inevitably deter women from taking part in the political process.

The book begins by examining the stereotypes that the media ascribes to female candidates, and asserts that, as well as portraying women as incompetent leaders, reporters also tend to describe them their according to their fashion choices. Baxter also concludes that reporting on male candidates is far more likely to concentrate on political issues and questions whether we are in fact ready for a woman president. She claims that this blatant media prejudice against women contradicts opinion polls that indicate voters would actually support a female candidate.

Baxter's study involved a detailed analysis of national broadsheets and one tabloid from each candidate's local area. In my view, the inevitable home-town bias of local newspapers could give a distorted view in terms of the number and length of articles they contain. Furthermore, when it comes to elections, the coverage in the majority of newspapers is generally tainted with political bias. Consequently, selecting only one newspaper from each town seems too small a sample to reach any decisive conclusion.

### 3.2 Find the verbs (1–6) in the reading passage and then match them with the correct definitions (a–f).

- |                            |                                                       |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 announce                 | a guess possible answers to a question                |
| 2 speculate                | b discuss an idea carefully to discover more about it |
| 3 explore / examine        | c show or make clear                                  |
| 4 contend / argue / assert | d judge or decide something after some consideration  |
| 5 conclude                 | e state something is true or a fact                   |
| 6 indicate                 | f state publicly                                      |

### 3.3 Which of the verbs in the box are used to say that something is *not certain* or *in doubt*, and which are used to say that something is *true* or a *fact*?

disagree question state debate cite contest challenge declare dispute

### 4 Complete the following sentences with the words in the box.

biased prejudiced influential subjective impartial

- Some companies are \_\_\_\_\_ against taking on employees over 40.
- The mass media is very \_\_\_\_\_ in our society and has a big impact on young people.
- I think they're the best team here, but then I am \_\_\_\_\_ as I'm their teacher.
- The judging of artistic works can be very \_\_\_\_\_; we need to find a way to make it more specific.
- A good sports journalist tries to remain \_\_\_\_\_ and doesn't show support for any one team.

## Speaking

### Part 1 (4–5 minutes)

The examiner will ask you some questions about yourself, your home, work or studies, and familiar topics.

- 1 Do you work or are you a student?
- 2 Is it important to enjoy what you do? (Why? / Why not?)
- 3 Do you spend a lot of time with other people where you work or study? (Why? / Why not?)
- 4 Tell me about your home town in your country.
- 5 Is it a good place to visit? (Why? / Why not?)
- 6 What would you improve about your home town? (Why? / Why not?)
- 7 How often do you send letters or emails?
- 8 Do you prefer to write to someone or speak to them on the telephone? (Why?)

### Part 2 (3–4 minutes)

The examiner will give you a topic like the one on the right and ask you to talk about it for one to two minutes. Before you talk, you have one minute to think about what you are going to say. The examiner will give you some paper and a pencil so you can make notes if you want to.

Describe a television show you have seen recently.

You should say:

- what it was about
- where and when you saw it
- what type of programme it was and say why you enjoy this kind of show.

### Part 3 (4–5 minutes)

The examiner will ask some more general questions which follow on from the topic in Part 2.

- 1 Is it better to read a book or watch TV?
- 2 Is it important for children to have books at home?
- 3 Should young people read newspapers?
- 4 Do you think we will read more or less in the future?
- 5 Is local news important?
- 6 Is there too much news these days?
- 7 Should news services be controlled by the government or by private business?
- 8 How easy is it for broadcasters and media outlets to manipulate public opinion?



### Test tip

Make sure you keep to the time limit and, if possible, record your response so that you can play it back at the end. Use as much new vocabulary as you can.