

Session 4: Analysis of News Stories

Outcomes

- considered working with language, images and sound and the kinds of audiences addressed by different news stories

9. ACTIVITY: Analysis of news stories

10. MASTERCLASS 3: News and society – Presenter Alex Thomson

9. ACTIVITY: ANALYSIS OF NEWS STORIES

Working with language, images and sound



The selection of key language, images and sound will play a large part in the success of the news stories produced by the class. Over the last 50 years, TV news has provided the most haunting, iconic and joyous images of history in the making – some of these sounds and images will never be forgotten. Ask pairs of students to discuss and answer the following questions:



- which images, first seen on TV news bulletins, have stayed with you over the years?
- which sounds, first heard on TV news bulletins, have been the most memorable?
- can you remember hearing a particular word, phrase or sentence on a TV news bulletin which has stayed with you over the years?

Editing



Ensure that students understand the importance of editorial decision-making. What effect does editing have on the representation and delivery of news stories? Examine the different purposes of editing:

- clarity
- impact
- quality
- compliance.



In the stories available on this site there are two others that students could study in detail.. Ask students to take notes on how the piece has been edited. Discuss these notes as a group and establish some principles of good editing.

<http://www.channel4.com/learning/breakingthenews/schools/toolsandresources/trsamplenewsstories.html>

Save our buildings



This report concerns the Government's decision to draw up a list of treasured national monuments and buildings that would be officially designated as protected under the Hague Convention, and thus supposedly outlawed as targets for attack by an enemy.

The story comprises an introduction by the anchorman; a report package featuring a montage of stock footage of such places as Stonehenge; Blenheim Palace and Hadrian's Wall (with Roman centurion in full costume). It also features some of the buildings that have not been included on the list such as St Paul's Cathedral. After the package, there is an interview involving the Guardian's architecture correspondent, Jonathan Glancy.



1. What are students' immediate reactions to the story?
2. Ask them to do a quick 'news values' audit of it.
3. Do they think that it is an appealing story for young people?
4. What do they make of Glancy's references to the last war, and his awful mock-German accent when telling one anecdote? Should he have been allowed to tell the story in that way, and not asked to do it again (perhaps it was filmed live and so that option did not exist)?
5. In what way would they alter the content so that it was more appealing to a younger audience – for example, what historic sites or famous buildings might have they included in the montage? Were there some serious points that were not raised in connection with this story? For example – is the list an invitation to terrorists? Is the exercise absurd in a world in which millions live in poverty or without education – was it a feel-good story that deserved coverage?

Persian treasures



This report is a highly textured package about the opening of a new exhibition at the British Museum. The show concerns the 'forgotten empire' of the Ancient Persians – the centre of which was in modern-day Iran. Many of the exhibits have never been out of Iran and, we discover, after years of careful negotiation, the whole project nearly fell through when elections in Iran in 2004 brought the decidedly anti-Western Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to power. The report cuts between arts correspondent Nicholas Glass' visit to Iran to see some of the artefacts in situ and to speak to the curators at the Tehran Museum, and his time with BM curator John Curtis as the exhibition is being set up.

The story has several interesting angles. First, there is explicit reference to the fact that the BM has the money and proper facilities to protect and best exhibit the artefacts – several of the most important items from Tehran are kept only in store. This is highly political, not least because the BM is often under pressure to return artworks to their country of origin (Elgin/Parthenon marbles) and in fact owns a cylindrical tablet covered in writing called the Cyrus Cylinder that is revered in Iran.

Then there is the fact that Iran is in the news at the moment for defying the West regarding its nuclear energy policies. There are those in Washington that regard Iran as a greater enemy to America than Iraq – a member of the 'Evil Empire' that hates the US. Such 'foreign policy hawks' would love the US to push for a regime change in Iran.

Clearly, an exhibition that illustrates the history and culture of Iran can only humanise those that politicians might seek to demonise. This is underlined also, because part of the reason the empire is forgotten is because Ancient Greek historians chose to write highly critical accounts of the Persians, which have been the main ways in which modern people have understood the Persian Empire to date.



1. What are students' immediate reactions to the story?
2. This is a beautifully constructed piece of film. It warrants careful analysis. Notice, for example, the clever fade that brings the curator John Curtis first into view, even as he speaks of this being about a forgotten piece of history. The fade catches the idea that something is being restored, recaptured and brought into view.

3. Ask them to do a quick 'news values' audit.
4. Can they think how they might have added to the suggestion that Tehran really is failing these items and its people by not putting them on display?
5. Do they think that it is an appealing story for young people?
6. In what way would they alter the content so that it was more appealing to a younger audience – for example, are there educational angles or artefacts relating to younger people's lives in Persia that could have been given more attention?
7. Use this story as inspiration for a story involving a nearby museum – every cabinet must have objects that tell fascinating tales and there may be a new local exhibition the story of which students could tell in the same textured way as this package. For example, local museums often suffer huge financial problems and cannot acquire new items because of their tight budgets – how could that be incorporated into a story about objects on show at the museum?

10. MASTERCLASS 3: NEWS AND SOCIETY - PRESENTER ALEX THOMSON



Find out more about news and society with Presenter, Alex Thomson.

<http://www.channel4.com/learning/breakingthenews/schools/channel4newsroom/masterclass3.html>