

Worksheet 3.2

News values revisited

This worksheet reproduces news values discussed in unit 1. Decide which are the most important and also what kinds of stories risk being missed out of the news agenda.

News value	Rank order (1 = highest)	Consequences/Ignored stories Possible stories
<p>Immediacy</p> <p>Why should the news media mainly concern itself with stories happening on the day? Should they wait to see what happens before leaping in with opinions and conjecture?</p>		
<p>Familiarity</p> <p>Should the news media reflect the multi-cultural nature of some cities or stick to describing the Britain of white suburbs and country towns?</p>		
<p>Amplitude</p> <p>Should national news always be about big things and multitudes?</p>		
<p>Frequency</p> <p>Should the news media avoid covering the same subjects every year? For example, the idea that A level results indicate that standards are falling?</p>		
<p>Predictable</p> <p>As winter approaches so stories about terrible sales in major stores hit the news. Should the media be less dominated by stories that are seasonal? Equally, should they make every effort to avoid covering stories that are promoted long in advance by publicists?</p>		
<p>Surprise</p> <p>When is surprise merely sensationalism? It may be news</p>		

<p>that Michael Jackson has been arrested but is it actually news or does coverage pander to the same kind of curiosity that sent people off to visit fairground freak shows?</p>		
<p>Continuity</p> <p>Is it right that the news media should often 'follow' one another – pursuing the same stories that other news media appear to be interested in?</p>		
<p>Elite nations and elite people</p> <p>Why should only the rich and famous, or the most powerful nations and people always feature in the news? And what does 'elite' mean in a world in which celebrity is often achieved by those with little real talent?</p>		
<p>Personalisation</p> <p>Is it right that 'human interest' should come to dominate the news media? For example, coverage of a man hugging his dog amid the wreckage of his home after Hurricane Katrina may show the consequences for ordinary people, but should air time be given to them when there may be more important questions to ask? Is such coverage just pandering to the viewer's curiosity? In making politics a matter of personalities, is there a risk we ignore the big issues that matter?</p>		
<p>Conflict</p> <p>We say that conflict is an essential ingredient of drama, but should the news be dramatic? What gets left out? Some problems we face as a country could be solved by all political parties acting together, but because of the negative, 'adversarial' politics in this country, it is almost impossible for politicians to discuss controversial subjects usefully.</p>		

<p>Negativity</p> <p>Should the news always be bad? What is the danger of a news media that always harps on about bad things – crime, for example, or the very occasional kidnapping, killing or harming of a child?</p>		
<p>Balance</p> <p>This is held to be one of the most important standards that the news media must stick to, but is balance possible in an imbalanced world? Giving a powerful corporation the same amount of time to answer allegations against them, reduces the time their often much weaker opponents have to make the points they need to.</p>		