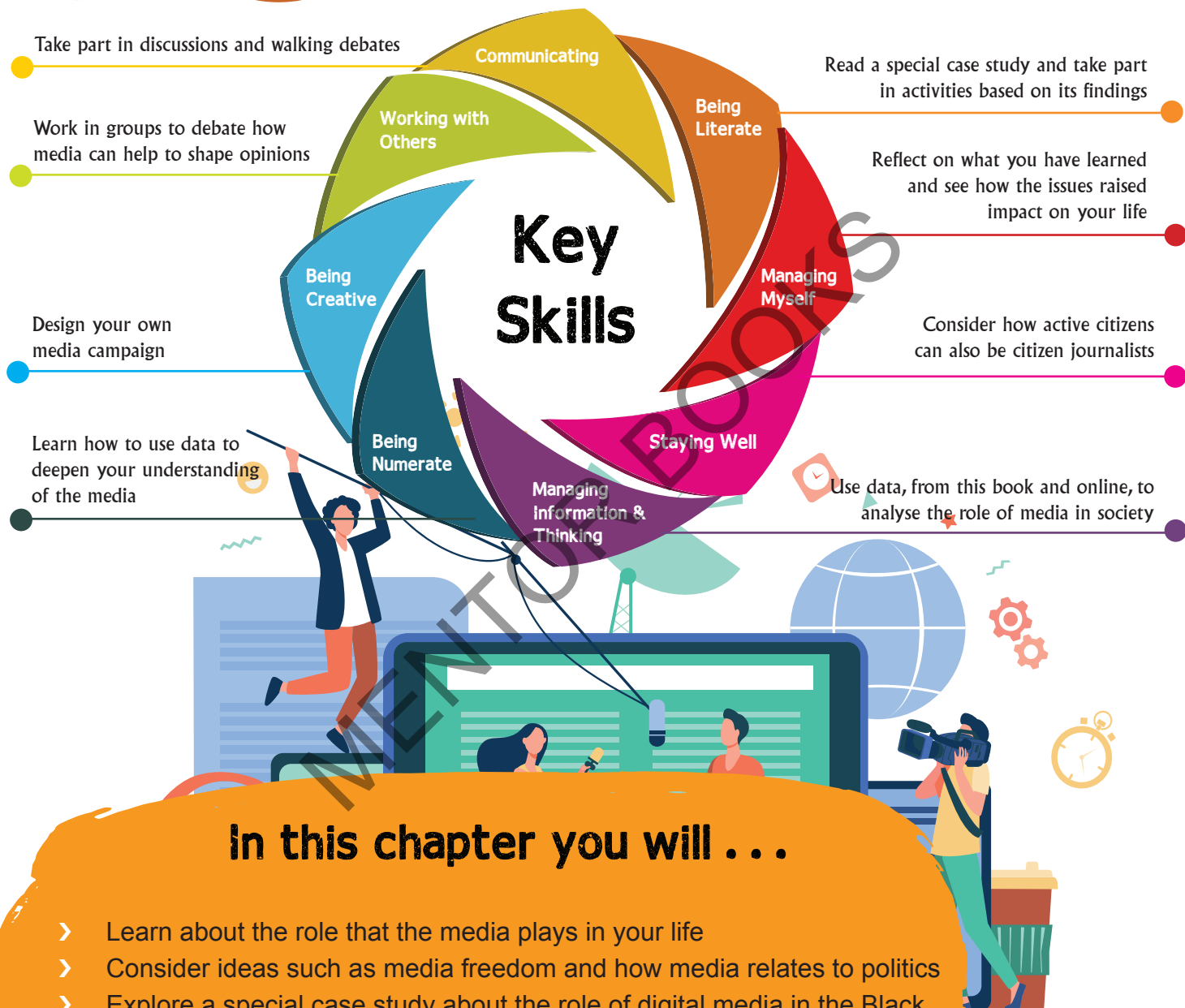


10 The Media



In this chapter you will . . .

- › Learn about the role that the media plays in your life
 - › Consider ideas such as media freedom and how media relates to politics
 - › Explore a special case study about the role of digital media in the Black Lives Matter movement
 - › Learn about social media, fake news, media regulation, censorship, citizen journalism and other fascinating concepts
 - › Think about places in the world where the media is not free
 - › Take part in debates, surveys and discussions
 - › Play your part as an active citizen and reflect on the role of the media in politics
- Develop each of the 8 Key Skills of Junior Cycle

Learning Outcomes:

3.12 / 3.13 / 3.14



Get started ... On the Media

The word 'media' refers to communicating information by radio, television, social networks or print. Usually, the word 'media' refers to the news media. In this chapter you will explore the news media and analyse how it works across different formats.



Discussion

Discuss your opinions of the following statements in small groups. Report back to your class:

- People should never have to pay anything for news because it is so important.
- People should be able to say what they want in the media.
- Radio, print and TV news is more trustworthy than news websites.

Roles of the media

The media plays many different roles in society, including gatekeeper, business and watchdog.

- **Gatekeeper:** A gatekeeper is a person who stands guard at a gate and decides who gets to pass through and who does not. In a similar way, the media is a gatekeeper because it gets to decide which stories are published and which ones are not. This is important because the media can use its power to highlight some issues while perhaps overlooking others. In this way all media is in some way biased – as it prefers some stories to others.
- **Business:** Most media organisations try to make money from their product (the news). Advertisers pay money to media companies to advertise on their website, social media, television channel, newspaper or radio station. The audience can pay for news directly, through a subscription, or indirectly, through clicking on stories.
- **Watchdog:** In real life, a watchdog stands guard and barks if something is wrong. Likewise, the media watches the government and those in power and alerts the public if it sees something that should not be happening.



Discussion

What role is the media playing? In small groups read the examples below and decide which role the media is playing in each case. Report back to your class.

- A radio station finds that it gets more text messages from listeners when it talks about sport. It sets up a sports podcast which gains a lucrative sponsorship deal with a health insurance company.
- A popular news website publishes stories for ten days showing pollution on beaches around the country. The government announces it will give more money to environmental groups.
- A newspaper journalist publishes a story that proves one of the country's most famous politicians has taken bribes while a member of government. The politician apologises and resigns from office.

Portfolio

Media Audit: Carry out your own audit of the different roles of the media. (Activity 1, page 184)

News in Ireland

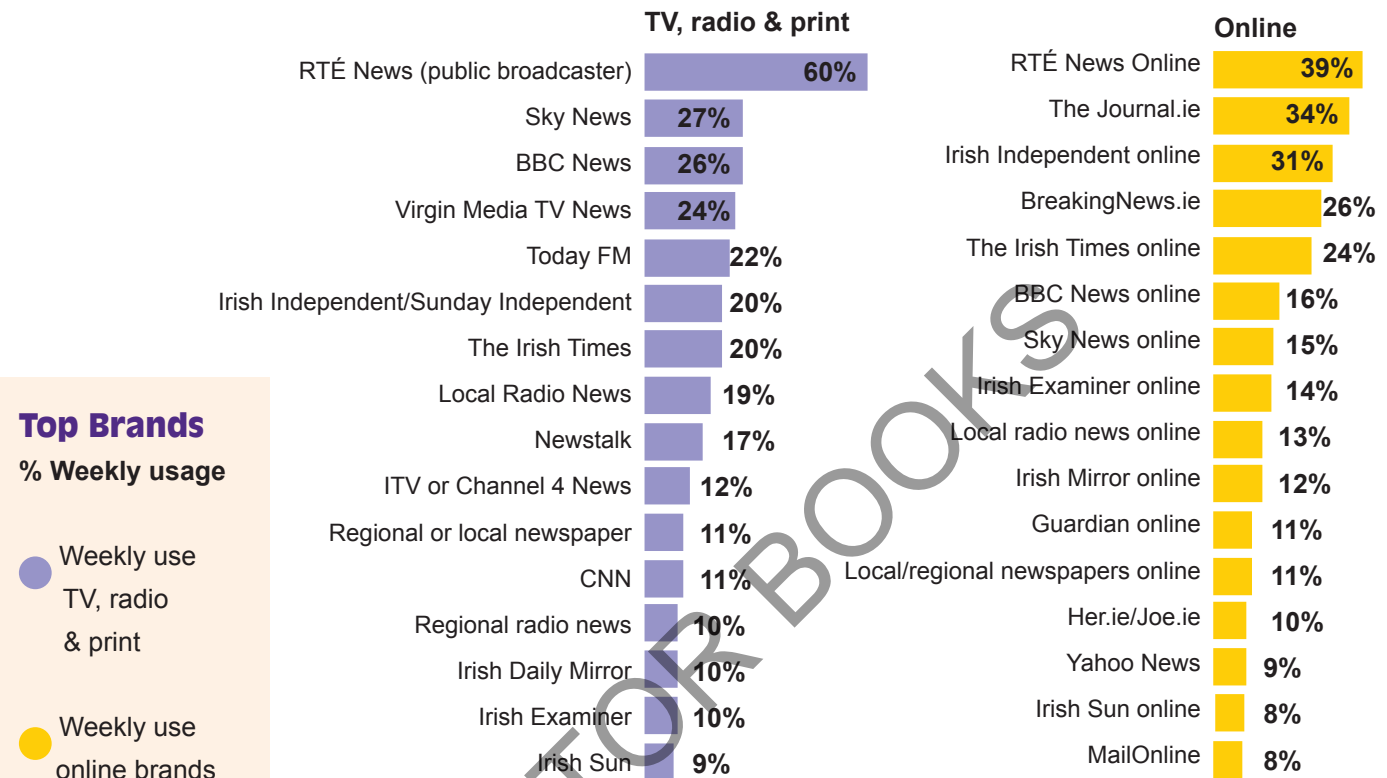
People in Ireland are among the world's biggest consumers of news. As a result, there is a lot of competition between media companies to get people to watch their TV channel, buy their newspaper or click on their website.

Portfolio

Analysis of Media Brands:

Examine the graphic below and complete an analysis of popular brands. (Activity 2, page 185)

Weekly Reach Offline and Online



Source: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism

Get Active

Class survey

Carry out a class survey based on the graphic above. To complete the survey you could:

- Have one person writing on the board. This person should write the titles of each media company in a list, as done in the graphic.
- Get a show of hands to see who uses each media title each week.
- Write the number of people who put up their hands for each media title.
- Discuss the similarities or differences between the class survey and the national one above. Give reasons for the similarities or differences that you find.

Create

Design a visual of the data you have gathered as a class. You could use a similar style to the one done by the Reuters study, or come up with your own. Work could be done digitally, or in a poster format for display in class.

What do people think about news in Ireland?

In the following dialogue, three people discuss their views about news, social media, devices and the future of news. Work in groups of four (one person is the interviewer) and read the dialogue out loud.



Alex (19) lives in Mayo and goes to college.



Val (53) works in a library in Donegal.



Jordan (71) lives in Dublin and is a retired taxi driver.

1. Where are you most likely to see news: on TV, in print, online or on social media?

Alex: I watch TV at home with my family in the evening but I get most of my news through Twitter. I've never bought a newspaper.

Val: I get my news from everywhere and anywhere. I check my phone first thing every morning, listen to the radio at breakfast, buy a paper at work and watch TV news in the evening.

Jordan: I buy a newspaper every morning. I watch the nine o'clock news most evenings but I never go on social media for news.

2. How much trust do you have in the news?

Alex: I think there's a lot of fake news out there, especially online. But even newspapers and TV get it wrong sometimes, and they are definitely biased.

Val: I trust the newspaper I've been reading for years. From time to time they make mistakes but I don't think they do it on purpose.

Jordan: RTE is the most reliable for me. There are a few journalists in there that are very good. They were spot on during the pandemic.

3. Is there any kind of news that you avoid?

Alex: Politics is so boring. It does my head in. I also hate sport – there's just too much of it.

Val: I avoid stuff about crime as it makes me a bit nervous.

Jordan: I wouldn't have much interest in entertainment news, if you can even call that news.

4. Are you happy paying for news?

Alex: I never pay for news. I don't see why I should. Social media and news websites make money from advertising if I use them, so that should be enough.

Val: I am happy paying for news, especially Irish news. I like to know what's happening in politics, and see who's doing a good job. I do think newspapers are quite expensive though.

Jordan: I think it's crucial that we all pay for news. What kind of country will we have if people stop paying for news? It costs money to send journalists to cover stories – and it's well worth it.

Discussion

In your groups, decide whose views you agree with most, Alex's, Val's or Jordan's? Report back to your class.

Portfolio

The Media in Ireland: Discuss your views on the media in Ireland. (Activity 3, page 186)

Influence of the Media

The media acts as a gatekeeper in society. It decides what is spoken about in the public sphere by giving priority to some stories over others.

However, there is another way that the media influences the way people think about issues. The **language** that is used when reporting a story affects how people will **react** to that story. This means that public opinion can be **shaped by the media**. In turn, this can have a major impact on the way people think, act and vote. The media's influence can be seen in terms of its bias, as well as its use of language.

Bias is when a news story favours a particular viewpoint, individual or organisation. This may be done by only presenting one side of a story or by exaggeration or by misrepresenting the truth. One way bias can be created is through language. A media outlet may choose certain words or information that encourage certain strong emotions; this is called **emotive language**.



Talking Point

In small groups look at the headlines below. For each pair, decide which headline is more emotive. Report back to your class which headline you think is trying to:

- (a) Sound alarmist
- (b) Sound neutral
- (c) Sound more interesting

1. **School set on fire by a group of youths**
SCHOOL SET ABLAZE BY YOUTH MOB

2. **Minister walks out of meeting**
Minister storms out of meeting

3. **IRELAND CRASH OUT OF WORLD CUP**
Ireland lose final group match in World Cup campaign

4. **Defenceless pensioner carjacked downtown**
Elderly woman has car stolen in city centre

5. **Family evicted from home one week before Christmas**
MONSTER LANDLORD KICKS FAMILY OUT OF HOME SHORTLY BEFORE CHRISTMAS

Portfolio

Newspaper Article: Use bias and emotive language to write a newspaper article. (Activity 4, page 187)

The role of a journalist

The media plays an important role in society because it holds powerful people to account. This is also known as the media's watchdog role. It monitors the work of politicians, big companies, and other people of public interest and then informs the public when it finds something wrong. Journalists are people who 'break stories' in the media. This means they research, interview and analyse people and issues that are important to the public, and then report on these issues.

Discussion

In small groups, discuss the following questions:

- What is the biggest story in the news today?
- How do you think the journalists found this news?
- What impact will this story have on people?
- What issue do you think the media should report on more?
- Report back to your class.

In the piece below, former Deputy Political Editor of *The Irish Times*, Fiach Kelly, explains his work as a journalist and the importance of media and journalists to society.

The media and journalists are an important part of any healthy democracy. We are not a formal part of the democratic process, in the ways that the Oireachtas, the courts or the Cabinet are. However, we have an important role to play in reporting on those parts of Irish democracy. At times, the media can play a crucial role in exposing the behaviour of TDs and counsellors. In fact, some of the stories I have pursued led to people apologising and even standing down from their jobs.

This kind of work can make some people uncomfortable, and there are a lot of people who do not like journalists because they shine a light on difficult topics and even taboo subjects. However, this is the job of a journalist – we have to report on the world as we find it, not as we wish it to be. This can mean asking difficult questions of the government, and even having arguments with spokespeople, party leaders or ministers. At the same time, it is not the job of the media to attack or embarrass people for the sake of it. We must be fair and balanced and give politicians the space to discuss, debate and explain their positions.

As a journalist for a national newspaper, my job was to cover events of national importance. This meant dealing with issues to do with the government, including Ireland's role in the European Union, as well as debates around new laws that come before the Dáil.

One of my favourite parts of being a journalist is election time. It is the perfect moment to quiz politicians about their plans for the future. It also gives journalists a chance to step outside our 'bubble' and talk to ordinary people about how they feel about life in Ireland. It is easy to forget that most people don't follow politics in detail – but their lives are affected by it, and it is important for democracy that their views are heard. So, as well as our role in holding power to account, the media must also provide a platform for ideas, debate and discussion.



Portfolio

The Role of a Journalist: Answer questions on Fiach's piece about the role of a journalist. (Activity 5, page 188)

Social Media

Giving people a voice

Social media has changed life for people around the world. It has made communication easier than ever before. Powerful people have used social media to increase their popularity. At the same time, it has given a voice to people who would have been powerless in the past.

Citizens who bring about change in society through their actions are often called **activists**. Activists play a valuable role as they act positively to make the world a better place. **Activism** includes actions such as protesting, creating petitions, letter writing campaigns and contacting politicians.

With the growth of the internet, some of this activism now takes place online. This is known as **clicktivism**. Instead of taking part in the types of actions listed above, clicktivism means that people try to bring about change through the 'click' of a mouse.

By clicking 'like' on an idea or sharing a post, internet users can now easily take part in political debates and share their views. Some feel that this is very healthy for democracy, as now everybody can get involved with politics. However, others argue that because it is easy to click any idea online, clicktivists do not really consider their actions and that clicktivism is a less meaningful form of political action.

Clicktivism: What's your view?

- In small groups read each of the four different views of clicktivism below.
- Explain which view you most **agree** with.
- Explain which view you most **disagree** with.
- Report back to your class

(b) Because I am a wheelchair user, online campaigns let me protest in a way that is easy for me. Clicktivism helps everybody get involved in politics.



(a) Who could be bothered going out and protesting? When I click 'like' on a political campaign, at least I'm doing something.



(c) All day people put up political stuff on social media. I don't pay attention to any of it.



(d) I know some people give out about 'keyboard warriors' but I think online campaigns really make a difference. So much of our lives are online, so why not activism?

