

Name _____

Date _____

The Evolution of News Media

Use the text to answer each question below.

1. News coverage depends on three main factors. The first is the events that occur and the people who influence those events. An event may be natural, like a hurricane, planned, like a presidential election, or impromptu, like a comment made by a famous person. The second factor is the journalists who make the news; each person has their own interests, experiences, and biases that affect what they choose to cover and how they choose to cover it. And the third, and perhaps most important, is us: the consumers of news. News is tailored to the people who are most likely to consume it. In practice, this can create a bit of a vacuum. Wealthier, more educated people are statistically more likely to buy newspapers and watch news programs, so journalists report on issues they think will be interesting or relevant to that audience. This means that certain parts of the population—and their interests and concerns—may be underreported in the media, which in turns makes them less likely to consume it, continuing the cycle.

Which of these best describes the three main factors that influence news coverage?

- | | |
|--|---|
| A. Hurricanes, elections, and commentary by influential people | B. The interests, biases, and experiences of the journalists who decide what and how to cover |
| C. The events that occur, the journalists who make the news, and the people who consume the news | D. Newspapers, TV news programs, and internet news |

2. The oldest form of news media is print: newspapers and magazines. The first continuous press in the US was created in 1704 in colonial Boston, and daily papers soon emerged in other large cities like New York and Philadelphia. As editors and publishers became increasingly disillusioned with British rule, newspapers became a key source of revolutionary messaging. After the American Revolution, many people disagreed on how the new nation should be governed, and those disagreements were evident in journalism. Editorial content was dominated by political partisanship, propaganda, and criticism of government leaders. But even in the face of this criticism, the Founding Fathers still believed that in a free society, journalists should be able to write whatever they wanted. In fact, the First Amendment guarantees the right to a free press. Today, freedom of the press still stands, though some types of press, including obscenity and defamation, are not protected.

With which of these statements would the Founding Fathers have agreed?

- | | |
|---|---|
| A. Freedom of the press is essential to liberty and must be protected. | B. Freedom of the press is conditional, depending on who is writing. |
| C. Freedom of the press is important, but maintaining a peaceful society is more important. | D. Freedom of the press wasn't written into law, but it should have been. |

3. By the mid-1800s, Americans began to look to newspapers not only for information, but for entertainment. Yellow journalism, which prioritized sensational stories over absolute truth, became the style of the times, exemplified by Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World*. Other newspapers copied Pulitzer's style to compete for readership, resulting in increasingly scandalous, tabloid-style journalism. When the Progressive Era began later that century, yellow journalism morphed into muckraking. Newspapers and magazines still published sensational articles, but now these stories focused on exposing corruption. Journalists sometimes went undercover to investigate businesses, hospitals, and government institutions. Upton Sinclair's novel *The Jungle*, serialized in the socialist newspaper *Appeal to Reason*, was based on his findings from working in Chicago's meatpacking plants. The journalist Nellie Bly pretended to be mentally ill to gain admission to one of New York's most notorious psychiatric hospitals, then called mental asylums or madhouses. She wrote about the hospital's dire conditions, including filthy rooms, abusive staff, and spoiled food. The work of Sinclair, Bly, and other muckrakers led to public outcry and actual changes in how institutions were managed.

Which of these is a similarity between yellow journalism and muckraking?

- | | |
|--|--|
| A. They were both based more on hearsay than fact. | B. They were both invented by Joseph Pulitzer. |
| C. They were both focused on exposing corruption in government institutions. | D. They were both sensational and intended to pique the public's interest. |

4. News coverage has the power to shape public perception of people and events. In the 1960s, televised footage of Bloody Sunday, when Alabama state troopers beat and teargassed a group of activists marching over the Edmund Pettus Bridge, aired the same evening the events occurred. Compared to a newspaper article in which a journalist would describe the event with words, TV audiences could see the brutality of the attack with their own eyes. Congress passed the Voting Rights Act later that same year. Similarly, footage of soldiers carrying bodybags and bombing the Vietnamese landscape may have caused support for the Vietnam War to decline. More recently, a cell-phone video of George Floyd's murder at the hands of Minneapolis police went viral, resulting in a worldwide movement for racial justice.

According to the passage, what is similar about the news coverage of Bloody Sunday, the Vietnam War, and the murder of George Floyd?

- | | |
|--|--|
| A. The events all took place in the 1960s, but significant news coverage came years later. | B. The footage was all captured by everyday citizens. |
| C. The coverage changed how the public felt and led to social or political action. | D. The coverage made people feel more positive about these events. |