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Mr. Henry

Language and Literature II: Part 2, Language and Mass Communication--Media Institutions

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One of the suggested topics for Part 2 of the *Language A: Language and Literature* guide is ‘media institutions’. Here we study the role of organizations and businesses in determining the messages that the public receives. Many people see ‘the media’ as a top-down process, where a few, elite people decide what the masses consume. This ties in with the second learning outcome for Part 2, where we develop an awareness of ideological influences on the media.

**Guiding Questions**

1. Where do we see the ideological influence of certain institutions in various media?
2. How do a few media institutions manage public opinion?
3. How can one media institution, such as Twitter, change the rules for other media institutions, such as the New York Times?

You need to have knowledge and understanding of these six topics. Use the anagram ‘AT PROM’ to help remember what’s important in Institutions:

AUDIENCES The significance of media ownership to the way audiences receive texts.
TECHNOLOGY The importance of new technologies on media ownership and audiences.
PUBLIC SERVICE The cultural and financial differences between public service institutions and commercial institutions.
REGULATION the regulation of media institutions.

OWNERSHIP Ways in which ownership of a media institution can affect or influence the content and distribution of its media texts.

MARKETING The way institutions can affect the marketing of media texts.

A Media Institution is an established and regulated organization that owns, and produces many different media products, systems, and texts.

Media institutions tend to be large global corporations such as broadcasting companies, newspaper and magazine publishers, film production companies, music and publishing companies, and some governments.
Introduction

In writing about media institutions it is best to avoid making generalized comments such as ‘they influence everything we watch’ or ‘they make enormous profits’. Try to be more specific and quote actual examples.

Media production is a market place where media products are bought and sold. Some products are more successful than others, and make money for everyone involved including the institution.

Some institutions may seek to have some influence over their products, and use them to gain political favors. Totalitarian governments always take over television and radio stations as a way of controlling the flow of information to people.

For example, the news of the uprising by monks in Burma in September 2007 was ruthlessly suppressed by the Burmese government. Only a few websites and mobile phone pictures were able to get the news to the rest of the world. This does not happen in western democracies where a free press underpins the concept of a working democratic system of government.

A popular misconception is that all media is owned by a few wealthy influential tycoons who are trying to take over the world with stealth and dirty tricks using James Bond style tactics to achieve political power. In fact the media in the west is carefully regulated, and media tycoons have less and less power over an articulate and well informed audience in the modern, competitive, multi-channel, digital environment.

This does not mean that global media institutions are able to do what they like or can contravene the law. The possible excesses of commercial media corporations are controlled by regulation. In the US, The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is an independent agency of the United States government created to regulate interstate communications by radio, television, wire, satellite, and cable. The FCC works towards six goals in the areas of broadband, competition, the spectrum, the media, public safety and homeland security, and modernizing itself. The MPAA has advocated for the [motion picture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Film) and [television](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Television) industry, with the goals of promoting effective copyright protection, reducing [piracy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Copyright_infringement#%22Piracy%22), and expanding market access. In the UK broadcasting is controlled by OFCOM and the film industry by the British Board of Film Classification.