

# Whose News?

## Activity 3



**PURPOSE:** To encourage students to think critically about how we form ideas about how people in other countries live, while enhancing their research, writing and public speaking skills.

**TIME:** This activity can be carried out over a month or longer, in order to give students the opportunity to look at a variety of issues in the media.

**MATERIALS:** Magazines, newspapers (local and national) and other sources of news such as television and the Internet.

### METHOD:

Have the students brainstorm a list of words that come to mind when they think about their image of Africa. Explain that after the following activity, you will come back to the list and see if their initial impressions have changed.

Have students monitor both a national and a local newspaper over several weeks. Ask them to categorize the stories they find into three groups – those dealing with local issues, those dealing with national issues and those dealing with international issues. The local newspaper may have a national or international section, and the national newspaper may have a section on local or “human interest” stories.

Now have students characterize the stories about life in other countries, using the chart on the following page. If there are photos, do people look happy? Resourceful? Sad? Have students draw their own conclusions from the charts they have

completed. How much of the news actually deals with other countries? Of that, how much is about Africa? Asia? Latin America?

From whose perspective is the story written? Are there interviews with people who are actually experiencing the situation dealt with in the story? Or is the story written from the point of view of an expert who has researched the story but probably doesn't live where the story is taking place? What is the difference?

Have students make a list of words they had to look up because they weren't sure what these words meant. Are these words generally positive or negative?

Advise students to try to identify the main problems or issues being dealt with in the stories. Have them pay particular attention to articles about solutions to problems. Are the media providing sufficient coverage of solutions? Or does the situation seem hopeless? Are media providing a balanced coverage of the issue? If there is an emphasis on disasters and not solutions, ask students to discuss why this might be the case.

Ask students: How many of these stories were about young people like you? Do you think that any of them were written by children? Have them rewrite one of the stories from their own perspective. Perhaps students would like to compile their news stories in a school newsletter.

*continued in Activity 4: "Writing a Press Release"*

### EXTENSION:

**1.** Assist the students in developing a short list of concerns held by the people in your community. They may want to design a short survey, asking people to name the issues of importance to them. Have students discuss the results. Is this what they imagined would be of interest? Is it possible that there are some things that people in the community are very interested in that are not covered by the media? Are there issues that the students would like to raise in the community? How would they get this message across?

**2.** Each student should choose one issue that is important to him or her and form a group with other students who have made the same choice. Ask students to identify some of the positive and negative aspects of this issue. If students identify a problem, talk about what they think are the causes of the problem and the possible solutions that they (and others) see. Ask each group to assemble a scrapbook of magazine and newspaper articles on the issue they have been discussing, including articles on both local and international stories.



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WRONG WHEN  
WE FORGET THAT  
FUNDAMENTAL  
LAW OF OUR  
BEING.**

*Archbishop  
Desmond Tutu*