

Challenging Big Media News and Censorship

12 Ways to Use Project Censored in Your Classroom!

ACME's independent and critical approach to media education is an essential part of re-creating a 21st century news and journalism culture that is less censored, more participatory and more democratic.

—Peter Phillips
Executive Director,
Project Censored



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media curricula,
activities, and
resources.

1. "News" and "Censorship": Beginning with definitions can be helpful. Have students define "news," and make a list of topics *they* deem newsworthy. Compare their lists with what "news" they actually see, hear or read in various media outlets devoted to "news"—television, radio, print, the Internet. Then, have students define "censorship." Ask them: Do we live in a society in which "news" is "censored"? Why?

2. Media Ownership Chart: Most of our media sources are ultimately owned by a very small number of very large media corporations. Have students make a list of all the media they consume in a typical day—print media, television, video games, music, etc. Aim for a list of 8–10 media examples. Then ask students to research and chart who ultimately owns each media example. Use www.cjr.org and www.media-reform.net to help you and your students with questions of ownership.

3. Media "News" Journal: Have each student monitor or explore *one* specific news source in your community—a local television or radio news show, or a local newspaper (often owned by a large media corporation). Have students make a list of the 4–6 major news stories covered in their particular news source over a 1–2 day period, and then compare their findings in class. What do they observe about the nature of news in their community? Are the same sorts of stories covered across the spectrum? Is there some diversity of news coverage? What stories are of real importance to your students, and which seem irrelevant? Ask them: How do you suppose news stories are chosen by media outlets?

4. Censored News Stories — Research: Have students select a *Project Censored* (PC) news story from the Top 25 list and become an expert on the story, not only by reading the PC article, but by finding at least three other independent news stories about the topic. Then have students write a short summary of the story, concluding with thoughts about why that particular story might be on the censored list.

5. Public Presentation: Have students prepare and present a 5–7 minute

speech to the classroom or community on their PC story, complete with a multimedia component if possible (PowerPoint, Key-Note, posters, a collage). Find public spaces for students to display their work.

6. Critical Viewing: Have students watch and critique a "news" show, preferably one they have never seen before. Apply ACME's "Questioning Media" principles, available for free at ACME's web site.

7. Critical Reading: Have students read and critique a daily newspaper or weekly news magazine, preferably one they have never read before. Apply ACME's "Questioning Media" principles, available for free at ACME's web site.

8. Letters To The Editor: Have students draft and mail letters to the editor of their local newspaper highlighting what they have learned from their conversations and research.

9. Media Production — Radio Spot: Have students script and perform a 2–3 minute radio news story, complete with voice overs and sound effects. If possible, record the stories for public airing and send them to a local radio station.

10. Media Production — TV/Video Spot: Have students script, film and edit a 2–3 minute television news story. Send the VHS or DVD copies of the stories to your local news station.

11. Class Visits: Invite a local television, radio, or print news anchor, editor, or journalist to class to talk about their experiences as a news producer. Ask your visitor to consider engaging the claims made in PC regarding media, news, and censorship.

12. Class Debate: Have students read some of the essays included with PC. Then select a provocative question related to your study of media, news, and censorship. "Do we live in a censored news culture?" "Do Big Media corporations exercise too much control over US news?" Have students prepare a position on the question, based on evidence from a variety of sources, and host a formal debate.



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