

Mass Media and Public Opinion

Essential Question

What is the place of the media and public opinion in a democracy?

Section 1:

The Formation of Public Opinion

Section 2:

Measuring Public Opinion

Section 3:

The Mass Media



GOVERNMENT ONLINE

On the Go

To study anywhere, anytime, download these online resources at PearsonSuccessNet.com

- Political Dictionary
- Audio Review
- Downloadable Interactivities

Lesson Goals

SECTION 1

Students will . . .

- discuss the concept of public opinion and its place in a democracy.
- explain how key factors influence public opinion by completing a chart.
- identify and explain their opinions on five public issues.
- explore the roots of their opinions by ranking their sources of influence on the five public issues.

SECTION 2

Students will . . .

- examine the significance of how polling questions are worded and practice writing good polling questions.
- understand the importance of scientific polling by examining a poll on issues of concern to voters in a recent presidential election.
- evaluate the accuracy and usefulness of polls by examining a famous photograph.

SECTION 3

Students will . . .

- understand the impact of the Internet as a political medium by examining study findings.
- evaluate the use of the Internet for electoral politics by analyzing a candidate's Web site.
- recognize the strengths of the Internet as a campaign medium by designing a home page for a candidate's Web site.

“What the public knows about politics and government is the result of what the media do, what the politicians do, and what use the public makes of the resulting information.”

—Guido H. Stempel III, *Media and Politics in America*

Photo: Onlookers watch the news in Times Square, New York City.

Pressed for Time

To cover the chapter quickly, review the Section 1 Reading Comprehension Worksheet. Then have students complete Part 1 of the Section 1 Core Worksheet, in which they explain various influences on public opinion. Discuss which influences students consider most important and ask them to explain the reasons behind their choices. Then discuss any polls that students have seen in the media and explain that polls, when conducted properly, are the best way to measure public opinion. Have students examine “Questions to Ask About Polls” in Section 2 and ask them to explain why these questions are important in evaluating a poll's accuracy. List the various types of media on the board (newspapers, television, the Internet, radio, and magazines) and discuss their role in students' lives. Then use the cartoons in text Section 3 to discuss the influence of the media on politics and public opinion.

DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION KEY

Look for these symbols to help you adjust steps in each lesson to meet your students' needs.

L1 Special Needs

L2 Basic

ELL English Language Learners

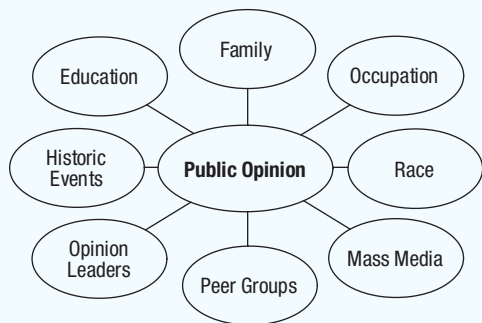
LPR Less Proficient Readers

L3 All Students

L4 Advanced Students

GUIDING QUESTION

What is public opinion, and what factors help to shape it?



Get Started

LESSON GOALS

Students will . . .

- discuss the concept of public opinion and its place in a democracy.
- explain how key factors influence public opinion by completing a chart.
- identify and explain their opinions on five public issues.
- explore the roots of their opinions by ranking their sources of influence on the five public issues.

BEFORE CLASS

Assign the section, the graphic organizer in the text, and the Reading Comprehension Worksheet (Unit 2 All-in-One, p. 172) before class.

L2 Differentiate Reading Comprehension Worksheet (Unit 2 All-in-One, p. 173)

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

COMPARE VIEWPOINTS

Before your classroom discussion of students' opinions about the topics in this section's Core Worksheet, you may want to review information on comparing viewpoints in the Skills Handbook, p. S15.

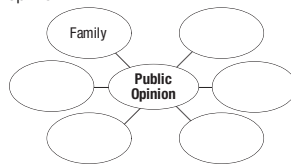
SECTION 1

The Formation of Public Opinion



Guiding Question

What is public opinion, and what factors help to shape it? Use a concept web like the one below to show the factors that influence public opinion.



Political Dictionary

- public affairs
- public opinion
- mass media
- peer group
- opinion leader

Objectives

1. Examine the term *public opinion* and understand why it is so difficult to define.
2. Analyze how family and education help shape public opinion.
3. Describe four other factors that shape public opinion.

Image Above: Guests on *Meet the Press* discuss the 2008 presidential election.

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Do you like broccoli? Blue fingernail polish? Tattoos? Hard rock music? What about sports? Old cars? You almost certainly have an opinion on each of those things. On some of them, you may hold strong opinions, and those opinions may be very important to you. Still, each of those opinions is your own view, your *private* opinion. None of them qualifies as *public* opinion.

What Is Public Opinion?

Few terms in American politics are more widely used, and less well understood, than the term *public opinion*. It appears regularly in newspapers and magazines and on blogs, and you hear it frequently on radio and television.

Quite often, the phrase is used to suggest that all or most of the American people hold the same view on some public issue, such as global warming or deficit spending. Thus, time and again, politicians say that “the people” want such and such, television commentators tell us that “the public” favors this or opposes that, and so on.

In fact, there are very few matters about which all or nearly all of “the people” think alike. “The public” holds many different and often conflicting views on nearly every public issue.

To understand what public opinion is, you must recognize this important point: Public opinion refers to a complex collection of the opinions of many different people. It is the sum of all of their views. It is *not* the single and undivided view of some mass mind.

Different Publics Many publics exist in the United States—in fact, too many to be counted. Each public is made up of all those individuals who hold the same view on some particular public issue. Each group of people with a differing point of view is a *separate* public with regard to that issue.

For example, the people who think that Congress should establish a national health insurance program belong to the public that holds that view. People who believe that the President is doing an excellent job as chief executive, or that capital punishment should be abolished, or that prayer should be permitted in public school, are members of separate publics with those particular opinions. Clearly, many people can and do belong to more than one of those publics; but

Focus on the Basics

FACTS: • Public opinion refers to the attitudes of a significant number of people on matters of government and politics. • Family and education are two important factors in shaping people's political opinions. • Additional factors that shape public opinion include peer groups, opinion leaders, historic events, and mass media.

CONCEPTS: representative democracy, rights and responsibilities of citizens

ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS: • Public opinion is not a single opinion, but a complex collection of opinions of many different publics. • Public opinion includes only views that relate to public affairs and that are expressed publicly.

almost certainly only a very few belong to all four of them.

Notice this important point: Not many issues capture the attention of all—or even nearly all—Americans. In fact, those that do are few and far between. Instead, most public issues attract the interest of *some* people (and sometimes millions of them), but those same issues are of little or no interest to many (and sometimes millions of) other people.

This point is crucial, too: In its proper sense, public opinion includes only those views that relate to public affairs. **Public affairs** include politics, public issues, and the making of public policies—those events and issues that concern the people at large. To be a *public* opinion, a view must involve something of general concern and of interest to a significant portion of the people as a whole.

Of course, the American people as a whole are interested in many things—rock groups and symphony orchestras, the New York Yankees and the Dallas Cowboys, candy bars and green vegetables, and a great deal more. Many people have opinions on each of these things, views that are sometimes loosely called “public opinion.” But, again, in its proper sense, public opinion involves only those views that people hold on such things as political parties and candidates, taxes, unemployment, welfare programs, national defense, foreign policy, and so on.

Definition Clearly, public opinion is so complex that it cannot be readily defined. From what has been said about it to this point, however, **public opinion** can be described this way: those attitudes held by a significant number of people on matters of government and politics.

As we have suggested, you can better understand the term in the plural—that is, as public opinions, the opinions of different publics. Look at it this way: public opinion is made up of expressed group attitudes.

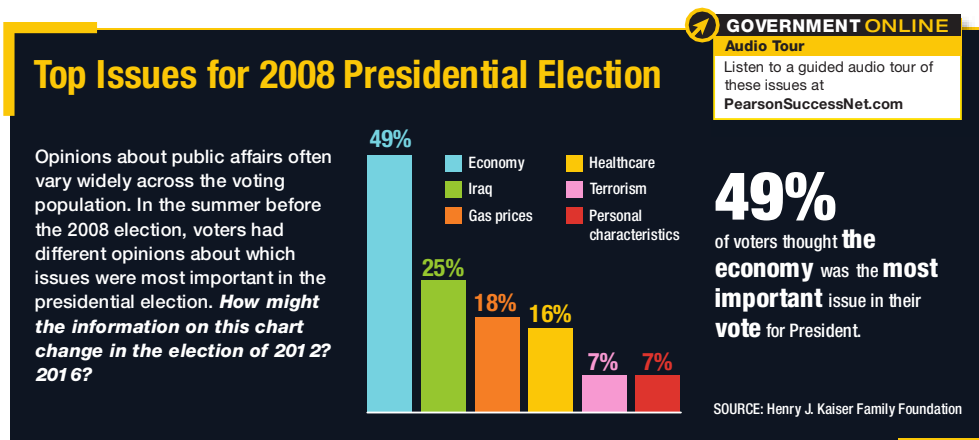
A view must be *expressed* in order to be an opinion in the public sense. Otherwise, it cannot be identified with any public. That expression need not be oral (spoken). It can take any number of other forms, as well: a protest demonstration, a film, a billboard, a vote for or against a candidate, and so on. The point is that a person’s private thoughts on an issue enter the stream of public opinion only when those thoughts are expressed publicly.

Family and School

No one is born with a set of attitudes about government and politics. Instead, each of us learns our political opinions, and we do so in a lifelong “classroom” and from many different “teachers.” In other words, public opinion is formed out of a very complex process. The factors involved in it are almost **infinite**.

Checkpoint
What do public affairs include?

infinite
adj. uncountable,
neverending, limitless

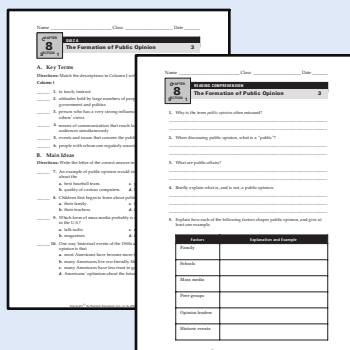


Chapter 8 • Section 1 215

Differentiated Resources

The following resources are located in the All-in-One, Unit 2, Chapter 8, Section 1:

- L2** Prereading and Vocabulary Worksheet (p. 169)
- L3** Reading Comprehension Worksheet (p. 172)
- L2** Reading Comprehension Worksheet (p. 173)
- L3** Core Worksheet (p. 174)
- L3** Quiz A (p. 177)
- L2** Quiz B (p. 178)



BELLRINGER

Write the following on the board. (Note: You may wish to modify the following list or provide your own list of issues, depending on particular sensitivities in your classroom.) **What do you think most Americans believe about the following issues?**

- health insurance for all
- prayer in school
- the death penalty

Teach

To present this topic using online resources, use the lesson presentations at **PearsonSuccessNet.com**.

INTRODUCE THE TOPIC

Display Transparency 8A, Whose Opinions Are They? Ask: **What does television have to do with the public’s opinion on issues?** (*It can portray the news of an event or issue in a way to bias the public.*) **What does this cartoon imply about forming an opinion based on a news issue?** (*The public has to come up with its own opinion because the news is so fresh that it is being reported exactly as it happens.*)

Tell students that they will learn about the formation of public opinion. To help focus the class, ask a student volunteer to read aloud and summarize the text under the heading “What Is Public Opinion?” Then have another volunteer read aloud and summarize the first paragraph under the heading “Definition.” Explain that students will focus on the question of how public opinion is formed and why it matters.

REVIEW THE BELLRINGER

Turn students’ attention to the Bellringer. Lead a discussion on the differences between private opinion and public opinion, and how public opinion shapes public policy. Use the Think-Write-Pair-Share strategy (p. T22) and ask students: **What is the place of public opinion in a democracy?** You may wish to write the following quotation on the board as a discussion starter: **“If forty million people say a foolish thing, it does not become a wise one.” —W. Somerset Maugham, British writer**

Tell students to go to the Audio Tour for a guided audio tour of the top issues in the 2008 presidential election.

Answers

Checkpoint politics, public issues, and the making of public policies

Top Issues for 2008 Presidential Election Possible response: The economy could improve, making it less of an issue, or a terrorist attack could lift terrorism to the top of the list.

DISTRIBUTE CORE WORKSHEET

Distribute the Chapter 8 Section 1 Core Worksheet (Unit 2 All-in-One, p. 174), which asks students to explore factors that influence their own opinions. Have students work individually on this worksheet.

L2 Differentiate Briefly review the various controversies surrounding the issues raised in the Core Worksheet. Make sure students understand in broad terms the range of viewpoints involved.

Name _____ Class _____ Date _____

CHAPTER 8 CORE WORKSHEET
SECTION 1 The Formation of Public Opinion **3**

Part 1 Public Opinion and You

For each statement below, circle "Agree" or "Disagree" and explain the reasons for your belief.

1. The President is doing a great job carrying out his duties. (Agree/Disagree)

2. The death penalty should be an option for people convicted of murder. (Agree/Disagree)

3. People should be allowed to own handguns. (Agree/Disagree)

4. Smoking cigarettes in public places should be banned. (Agree/Disagree)

5. The drinking age should be lowered to age 18. (Agree/Disagree)

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Name _____ Class _____ Date _____

CORE WORKSHEET (continued)
The Formation of Public Opinion **3**

Part 2 Influences on Your Opinions

Why do you believe the things you do? For each question in Part 2, rank how much each source listed below has influenced your beliefs. Rank them from 1 (most influential) to 7 (least influential). If another source influenced your beliefs on the issue, identify the source, rank it, and explain its influence.

6. Presidential Approval—Sources influencing your beliefs
____ Family _____ Peer Groups
____ School _____ Opinion Leaders
____ Mass Media _____ Historic Events
____ Parent's Occupation _____ Other
7. Death Penalty—Sources influencing your beliefs
____ Family _____ Peer Groups
____ School _____ Opinion Leaders
____ Mass Media _____ Historic Events
____ Parent's Occupation _____ Other
8. Handguns—Sources influencing your beliefs
____ Family _____ Peer Groups
____ School _____ Opinion Leaders
____ Mass Media _____ Historic Events
____ Parent's Occupation _____ Other
9. Smoking in Public Places—Sources influencing your beliefs
____ Family _____ Peer Groups
____ School _____ Opinion Leaders
____ Mass Media _____ Historic Events
____ Parent's Occupation _____ Other
10. Drinking Age—Sources influencing your beliefs
____ Family _____ Peer Groups
____ School _____ Opinion Leaders
____ Mass Media _____ Historic Events
____ Parent's Occupation _____ Other

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Checkpoint
What are several agents of political socialization?

You have already considered that point. Recall the detailed look at why people vote as they do in Chapter 6. Those pages amounted to an extensive look at how public opinion is formed. Also in that chapter, you considered the process by which each person acquires his or her political opinions—the process of *political socialization*. That complex process begins in early childhood, and it continues on through one's lifetime. It involves all of the many experiences and relationships that lead each of us to see the political world and to act in it as we do.¹

monopoly
n. dominant or exclusive control

impressionable
adj. easily influenced, receptive

There are many different agents of political socialization at work in the opinion-shaping process. Again, you looked at these agents in Chapter 6: age, race, income, occupation, residence, group affiliations, and many others. Here, look again at two of them, the family and school. They have so large an impact that they deserve another and slightly different discussion here.

Family Most parents do not think of themselves as agents of political socialization, nor do other members of most families. Parents and other family members do nonetheless play an important part in this process.

Children first see the political world from within the family and through the family's eyes. They begin to learn about politics much as they begin to learn about most other things in life. They learn from what their parents have to say, from the stories that their older brothers and sisters bring home from school, from watching television with the family, and so on.

Most of what smaller children learn in the family setting cannot really be described as political opinions. Clearly, toddlers are not concerned with the wisdom of spending billions of dollars on an antimissile defense system, with the causes of global warming, or the pros and cons of the monetary policies of the Federal Reserve Board.

¹ The concept of socialization comes from the fields of sociology and psychology. There, it is used to describe all of the ways in which a society transforms individuals into members of that society. To put this another way: Socialization is the multi-sided, lifelong process in which people come to know, accept, and follow the beliefs and practices of their society. *Political socialization* is a part of that much broader process.

Young children do pick up some fundamental attitudes, however. With those attitudes, they acquire a basic slant toward such things as authority and rules of behavior, property, neighbors, people of other racial or religious backgrounds, and the like. In short, children lay some foundations on which they will later build their political opinions.

A large number of scholarly studies report what common sense also suggests. The strong influence the family has on the development of political opinions is largely a result of the near **monopoly** the family has on the child in his or her earliest, most **impressionable** years. Those studies also show that:

"Children raised in households in which the primary caregivers are Democrats tend to become Democrats themselves, whereas children raised in homes where their caregivers are Republican tend to favor the GOP."

—Benjamin Ginsberg, Theodore Lowi, and Margaret Weir, *We the People*

School The start of formal schooling marks the initial break in the influence of the family. For the first time, children become regularly involved in activities outside the home.

From the first day, schools teach children the values of the American political system. They work to **indoctrinate** the young, to instill in them loyalty to a particular cause or idea. In fact, preparing students to become good citizens is an important part of our educational system.

Students may salute the flag, recite the Pledge of Allegiance, and sing patriotic songs. They learn about George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Susan B. Anthony, Martin Luther King, Jr., and other great Americans. From the early grades on, they pick up growing amounts of specific political knowledge, and they begin to form political opinions. In high school, they are often required to take a course in American government and even to read books such as this one.

School involves much more than books and classes, of course. It is a complex bundle of experiences and a place where a good deal of informal learning occurs—about the similarities and differences among individuals

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Political Cartoon Mini-Lesson

Display Transparencies 8B and 8C when you discuss the meaning of public opinion and its influences. Point out that political cartoonists seek to influence public opinion. Ask: **How does a political cartoon influence public opinion?** (*by expressing a view in a clever, interesting manner and by appearing in mass media*) Display each transparency first without comment, allowing students time to think about each one. Then ask: **What public issue is the subject of both cartoons?** (*gun ownership*) If students need help answering this question, show Transparency 8C and ask: **What is missing?** (*2nd Amendment*) **What is the subject of this amendment?** (*the right to bear arms*) After students identify the issue, ask: **To what "public" does Cartoonist 8B appear to belong?** (*people who support gun control*) **To what "public" does Cartoonist 8C appear to belong?** (*people who support the right to bear arms*)

Answers

Checkpoint age, race, income, occupation, residence, group affiliations, family, education

Political Socialization

Who Influences Our Opinions?

Family and school play significant roles in the development of our political roots and attitudes. They are often our earliest and sometimes longest lasting influences. *What other influences might affect our political views?*



“Children tend to absorb the political views of parents and other caregivers, perhaps without realizing it.”

— Benjamin Ginsberg, Theodore Lowi, and Margaret Weir, *We the People*

and groups, about the various ways in which decisions can be made, and about the process of compromise that must often occur in order for ideas to move forward.

Once again, the family and school are *not* the only forces at work in the process by which opinions are formed. A number of other influences are part of the mix. These two factors are singled out here to highlight their leading roles in that process.

Other Factors

No factor, by itself, shapes a person's opinion on any single issue. Some factors do play a larger role than others, however. Thus, in addition to family and school, occupation and race are usually much more significant than, say, gender or place of residence.

For example, on the question of national health insurance, the particular job a person has—how well-paying it is, whether its benefits include coverage by a private health-insurance plan, and so on—will

almost certainly have a greater impact on that person's views than his or her gender or place of residence.

On the other hand, the relative weight of each factor that influences public opinion also depends on the issue in question. If the issue involves, say, equal pay for women or the restoration of Lake Michigan, then gender or where one lives will almost certainly loom larger in the opinion-making mix.

Besides family, school, and such factors as occupation and race, four other factors have a major place in the opinion-making process. They are the mass media, peer groups, opinion leaders, and historic events.

Mass Media The **mass media** include those means of communication that reach large, widely **dispersed** audiences (masses of people) simultaneously. No one needs to be told that the mass media, including newspapers, magazines, radio, and in particular, television and the Internet, have a huge effect on the formation of public opinion.

dispersed
adj scattered, spread out

REFLECT ON WORKSHEET RESPONSES

While students respond to the remaining questions on the worksheet, you may wish, depending on classroom sensitivities, to have them submit their answers from Part 1 to you anonymously. On the board, keep a tally of the different answers to the questions. Ask: **Are you surprised to see the range of opinions—or to see that the opinions on some topics are the same among all class members?** Next, you may wish to have students present their top influences from Part 2—again, anonymously. Write the results on the board. Ask: **Are you surprised to see the range of influences on public opinions?** Lead a discussion on how the range, or lack of range, of opinions would influence public policy on these issues.

EXTEND THE LESSON

L3 Ask students to recall their answer to Reflection Question 13 from the Core Worksheet. Have students write an essay that explores the ways in which this particular influence has affected their lives and opinions.

L1 L2 Differentiate Have students describe verbally the ways in which their most important influences have affected their lives.

L4 Differentiate For each issue listed in Part 1 of the Core Worksheet, have students describe different backgrounds and experiences that might lead other people to form opinions different from their own. For example, a victim of gun-related crime would be less likely to support gun ownership than would a hunting enthusiast.

L2 Differentiate Divide the class into four groups. Assign each group one of the following factors that shape public opinion: peer groups, opinion leaders, historic events, and mass media. Have groups discuss people, events, and experiences within their category that have had a significant influence on their political opinions. Each group should elect a spokesperson to share the highlights of their discussion, including which factor the group felt was the most influential and why.

Debate

Form teams to debate the issues in the Core Worksheet, Part 2. Omit any issues that are too sensitive for your class. Allow students to choose the issue they want to debate and the position they want to take—either “Agree” or “Disagree.” Allow teams time to prepare. Advise them to prepare rebuttals for points they expect the opposing team to make. After teams debate each issue, ask if anyone's opinion changed based on the points the teams made. Use the Debate strategy (p. T25) to organize the debate.

Answers

Who Influences Our Opinions? possible response: occupation, race, mass media, peer groups, opinion leaders, historic events

Assess and Remediate

L3 Collect the Core Worksheet and assess students' work.

L3 Assign the Section 1 Assessment questions.

L3 Section Quiz A (Unit 2 All-in-One, p. 177)

L2 Section Quiz B (Unit 2 All-in-One, p. 178)

Have students complete the review activities in the digital lesson presentation and continue their work in the **Essential Questions Journal**.

Government online

All print resources are available on the Teacher's Resource Library CD-ROM and online at PearsonSuccessNet.com.

✓ Checkpoint
How does one's peer group shape his or her attitudes?

Take this as but one indication: There is at least one television set in more than 98 percent of the nation's 115 million households. There are two or more sets in more than 80 million homes and millions more in many other places. Most of those sets are turned on for at least eight hours a day, for a mind-boggling total of more than a *billion* hours a day. You will take a longer look at the influence of the mass media later in this chapter.

Peer Groups People with whom one regularly associates, including friends, classmates, neighbors, co-workers, and the like, make up one's **peer group**. When a child enters school, friends and classmates become important agents in shaping his or her attitudes and behavior. The influence of peer groups continues on through adulthood.

Belonging to a peer group usually reinforces what a person has already come to believe. One obvious reason for this is that most people trust the views of their friends. Another is that the members of a peer group have shared many of the same socializing experiences, and so tend to think along the same or similar lines.

To put this observation another way, contradictory or other unsettling opinions are

not often heard within a peer group. Most people want to be liked by their friends and associates. As a result, they are usually reluctant to stray too far from what their peers think and how they behave.

Opinion Leaders The views expressed by **opinion leaders** also bear heavily on the formation of public opinion. An opinion leader is any person who, for any reason, has an unusually strong influence on the views of others. These opinion shapers are a distinct minority in the total population, of course, but they are found everywhere.

Many opinion leaders hold public office. Some write for newspapers or magazines, or express their opinions on radio or television or the Internet. Others are prominent in business, labor, agriculture, and civic organizations. Many are professionals—doctors, lawyers, teachers, ministers, and rabbis—and have regular contact with large numbers of people. Many others are active members of their neighborhood or church, or have leadership roles in their local communities.

Whoever they may be—the President of the United States, a network television commentator, the governor, the head of a local citizens committee, or even a local talk-show host—these opinion leaders are people to whom others listen and from whom others draw ideas and convictions. Whatever their political, economic, or social standing or outlook may be, opinion leaders play a significant role in the formation of public opinion.

Historic Events Historic events can have a major impact on the views of large numbers of people—and so have a major impact on the content and direction of public policy. Clearly, the events of September 11, 2001, and the onset of the global war on terror constitute a leading illustration of that point. American views on national security and foreign policy have undergone dramatic shifts as a result of those events.

Our history affords many other examples, as well—not the least of them the Great Depression, which began in 1929 and lasted for the better part of a decade.

The Depression was a shattering national experience. Almost overnight, need and



► **Analyzing Cartoons** An effort to shape the public's response is known as "spin." **What is the cartoonist implying about the media here?**

Answers

Checkpoint Most people trust the views of their friends and want to be liked by their friends and associates, so they seldom stray too far from the opinions of the peer groups.

Analyzing Cartoons The cartoonist is implying that the mass media generally presents biased information—it tells people what to think.

Background

Celebrity Endorsements Before every election, celebrities of various stripes endorse candidates. Polls by the Pew Research Center, however, suggest that celebrity endorsements do little to sway voter opinion—at least not directly. "[Endorsements] generate free media attention, fundraising, and get people talking about the endorsements to their friends," said Professor Kelli Lammie, of SUNY-Albany, in a US News article from October 24, 2008. A Pew poll in 2007 found that the most influential endorsements come from local religious leaders and State governors. In the 2008 Democratic primaries, however, Oprah Winfrey's endorsement of Barack Obama may have played a key role. Winfrey's television show, magazine, and radio show reach 49 million people a week. A University of Maryland study found that Winfrey's endorsement brought Obama over a million votes in the primaries.

poverty became massive national problems. Hunger and despair stalked the land. In 1929, some two million people were unemployed in the United States. By just four years later, that number had climbed to 13.5 million. In 1935, some 18 million men, women, and children were wholly dependent on public emergency relief programs. Some 10 million workers had no employment other than that provided by temporary public projects.

All of this changed people's view of the proper place of government in the United States. The Depression persuaded a large majority of Americans to support an expanded role for government—in particular, for the National Government—in the nation's economic and social life.

The Great Depression also prompted a majority of Americans to shift their loyalties from the Republicans to the Democrats. The Republicans had dominated the national political scene from Lincoln's election in 1860 to the onset of the Depression. That situation changed abruptly when Franklin D. Roosevelt's landslide victory in 1932 began nearly 40 years of Democratic domination.

The turbulent politics of the 1960s and early 1970s furnish another example of the way in which significant occurrences can impact and shape opinions. The American people had emerged from World War II and the prosperity of the 1950s with a largely optimistic view of the future and of the

United States' place in the world. That rose-colored outlook was reflected in a generally favorable, even respectful, attitude toward government in this country.

The 1960s and early 1970s changed all that. Those years were highlighted by a number of traumatic events. Of special note were the assassinations of President John Kennedy in 1963 and of the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., and Senator Robert Kennedy in 1968. This period also included the civil rights movement and the Vietnam War, with all of the protests, violence, and strong emotions that accompanied both of those chapters in this nation's life. The era ended with the Watergate scandal and the near-impeachment and subsequent resignation of President Richard Nixon in 1974.

Those years of turmoil and **divisiveness** produced a dramatic decline in the American people's estimate of their government—and most especially in their evaluation of its trustworthiness.



Many Americans became Democratic voters as a result of the Great Depression.

divisiveness
n. result of disagreement, tending to divide

REMEDIATION

If Your Students Have Trouble With	Strategies For Remediation
The definition of public opinion (Questions 1, 2, 3)	Have students work in pairs to reread the first section, entitled "What Is Public Opinion?," taking notes about the definitions of public opinion given there.
The roles of family and education in shaping attitudes about public matters (Question 4)	Create a web diagram that describes the influence of family and schools on public opinion.
The roles of the media, peer groups, opinion leaders, and historic events in shaping attitudes about public matters (Questions 5, 6, 7)	Add balloons to the web diagram to include the influence of other factors that influence public opinion.

SECTION 1 ASSESSMENT

Essential Questions Journal To continue to build a response to the chapter Essential Question, go to your Essential Questions Journal.

1. Guiding Question Use your completed concept web to answer this question: What is public opinion, and what factors help to shape it?

Key Terms and Comprehension

- What does it mean to say that there are different "publics" that help make up **public opinion**?
- To what kinds of issues and affairs is **public opinion** limited?
- What two elements make up the "lifelong classroom" in which people receive their political socialization?

- What are the roles of **mass media**, **peer groups**, and **opinion leaders** in influencing public opinion?

Critical Thinking

- 6. Make Generalizations** What features of peer groups explains why they tend to reinforce rather than challenge what a person believes?
- 7. Identify Central Issues** What are some of the public issues that were brought to the forefront of public opinion in the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001?

Quick Write

Cause-and-Effect Essay: Choose a Topic Using the Internet, other sources, and your textbook, identify a public affairs issue, such as the environment or energy, about which there are strong public opinions. Write a brief summary of the issue and cite at least two of the more prominent public opinions about the topic.

Assessment Answers

- Public opinion includes those attitudes held by significant numbers of people on matters of public concern. It is shaped by family, school, occupation, race, mass media, peer groups, opinion leaders, and historical events.
- Each public is made up of all individuals who hold the same view on a particular public issue. Each group holding a differing view on that issue is a separate public. Public opinion is composed of the attitudes held by all of these separate publics on any matter of government and politics.

- Public opinion is limited to matters of public concern, including politics, public issues, and the making of public policies.
- family and school
- The mass media communicate to large, widely dispersed audiences simultaneously. Peer groups help solidify existing opinions because people trust the views of their friends and want to be liked by their friends. Opinion leaders are people to whom others listen and from whom others draw ideas and convictions.
- Peer groups tend to encourage conformity

and discourage dissent. People want to be liked by their friends and associates, so members tend not to challenge the views of their peer groups.

7. Possible answer: The September 11 attacks raised issues of national security and foreign policy, as well as issues of individual rights and freedoms and religious tolerance.

QUICK WRITE Make sure students find a suitable topic of public interest and identify at least two opinions about it.

GUIDING QUESTION

How is public opinion measured and used?

Measuring Public Opinion	
Elections	Voting results can sometimes reflect public opinion.
Interest Groups	Key way public opinion made known, but difficult to know number of people and strength of views
Media	Mirror and mold public opinion, but often reflect views of vocal minority
Personal Contacts	Officials gauge views through interactions, but can fall into trap of finding only views that agree with their own
Public Opinion Polls	Collect information by asking people questions—best measure of opinion
Straw Vote	Asks large number of people same question—unreliable because not based on scientific techniques
Scientific Polling	Define the survey universe, construct a sample, prepare valid questions, select and control how poll will be taken, analyze and report findings

Get Started

LESSON GOALS

Students will . . .

- examine the significance of how polling questions are worded and practice writing good polling questions.
- understand the importance of scientific polling by examining a poll on issues of concern to voters in a recent presidential election.
- evaluate the accuracy and usefulness of polls by examining a famous photograph.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

ANALYZE IMAGES

Before displaying the image in Transparency 8E to the class, you may want to review the information on analyzing images in the Skills Handbook, p. S28.

SECTION 2

Measuring Public Opinion

Guiding Question

How is public opinion measured and used? Use a table like the one below to take notes on the section.

Measuring Public Opinion	
Elections	Voting results can sometimes reflect public opinion.

Political Dictionary

- mandate
- interest group
- public opinion poll
- straw vote
- universe
- sample
- random sample poll
- quota sample

Objectives

1. Describe the challenges involved in measuring public opinion.
2. Explain why scientific opinion polls are the best way to measure public opinion.
3. Identify the five steps in the polling process.
4. Understand the problems in evaluating polls.
5. Recognize the limits on the impact of public opinion in a democracy.

Image Above: NBC News pollster conducts an election exit poll.



How often have you heard the phrase: “According to a recent poll . . .”? Probably more than you can count, especially in the months leading up to an election. Polls are one of the most common means of gauging public opinion.

If public policy is to reflect public opinion, one needs to be able to find the answers to these questions: What are people’s opinions on a particular issue? How many people share a given view on that issue? How firmly do they hold that view? In other words, there must be a way to “measure” public opinion.

Measuring Public Opinion

The general shape of public opinion on an issue can be found through a number of key indicators. They include voting; lobbying; books; pamphlets; magazine and newspaper articles; editorial comments in the press and on radio, television, and the Internet; paid advertising; letters to editors and public officials; and so on.

These and other means of expression are the devices through which the general direction of public opinion becomes known. Usually though, the means by which a view is expressed tells little—and often nothing reliable—about the size of the group that holds that opinion or how strongly it is held. In the American political system, this information is critically important. To find it, some effort must be made to measure public opinion. Elections, interest groups, the media, and personal contacts with the public all—at least to some degree—provide the means by which that measurement can be done.

Elections In a democracy, the voice of the people is supposed to express itself through the ballot box. Election results are thus very often said to be indicators of public opinion. The votes cast for the various candidates are regularly taken as evidence of the people’s approval or rejection of the stands taken by those candidates and their parties. As a result, a party and its victorious candidates regularly claim to have received a mandate to carry out their campaign promises. In American politics, a **mandate** refers to the instructions or commands a constituency gives to its elected officials.²

² The term *mandate* comes from the Latin *mandatum*, meaning “a command.”

Focus on the Basics

FACTS: • Elections, interest groups, the media, and personal contacts reflect public opinion but do not provide accurate measurements of it. • The most reliable measure of public opinion is scientifically conducted opinion polls. • Scientific polls define the universe, construct a sample, prepare valid questions, select and control how the poll will be taken, and analyze and report findings.

CONCEPTS: democratic values/principles

ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS: • To achieve reliable results, pollsters must use a random sample from the target population and avoid bias in the wording of their questions. • Democracy is more about thoughtful participation than mere measurement of public opinion.

In reality, however, election results are seldom an accurate measure of public opinion. Voters make choices in elections for a variety of reasons, as you have seen. Very often, those choices have little or nothing to do with the candidates' stands on public questions. Then, too, candidates often disagree with some of the planks of their party's platform. And, as you know, candidates and parties often express their positions in broad, generalized terms.

In short, much of what you have read about voting behavior, and about the nature of parties, adds up to this: Elections are, at best, only useful indicators of public opinion. To call the typical election a mandate for much of anything other than a general direction in public policy is to be on very shaky ground.

Interest Groups Private organizations whose members share certain views and objectives, and who work to shape the making and the content of public policy are called **interest groups**. These organizations are also very **aptly** known as pressure groups and special-interest groups.

Interest groups are a chief means by which public opinion is made known. They present their views (exert their pressures) through their lobbyists, by letters, telephone

calls, and e-mails, in political campaigns, and by other methods. In dealing with them, however, public officials often have difficulty determining two things: How many people does an interest group really represent? How strongly do those people hold the views that an organization says they hold?

The Media Earlier, you read some impressive numbers about television that help describe the place of the media in the opinion process; you will read more of those numbers later. Here, recognize this point: The media are also a gauge for assessing public opinion.

The media are frequently said to be “mirrors” as well as “molders” of opinion. It is often claimed that the views expressed in newspaper editorials, syndicated columns, news magazines, television commentaries, and blogs are fairly good indicators of public opinion. In fact, however, the media are not very accurate mirrors of public opinion, often reflecting only the views of a vocal minority.

Personal Contacts Most public officials have frequent and wide-ranging contacts in many different forms with large numbers of people. In each of these contacts, they try to read the public's mind. Indeed, their jobs demand that they do so.

Checkpoint
How do interest groups present their views?

aply
adv. fittingly, appropriately, suitably

How Government Works

Using Public Opinion

Public officials seek to measure public opinion through a variety of sources, as shown below. Whether or not a public official gets reelected may depend on how he or she responds to public opinion. **For what reasons are public opinion measured?**

Media	Serve as mirrors and molders of public opinion
The People	Convey their opinions in e-mails, letters, phone calls, or public meetings
Interest Groups	Share the views of their members in hopes of influencing policy

A candidate for office shakes hands with a voter on his way into a polling place. ▶



Chapter 8 • Section 2 221

BEFORE CLASS

Assign the section, the graphic organizer in the text, and the Reading Comprehension Worksheet (Unit 2 All-in-One, p. 179) before class.

L2 Differentiate Reading Comprehension Worksheet (Unit 2 All-in-One, p. 181)

BELLRINGER

Display Transparency 8D, which shows the effects of wording on poll questions. Have students answer the question in their notebook.

Teach

To present this topic using online resources, use the lesson presentations at **PearsonSuccessNet.com**.

REVIEW BELLRINGER

Have students share their reactions to the Bellringer. Point out that the only difference in the wording of the last two questions is the order in which the options are presented. The results, however, are vastly different. This suggests that the order significantly influenced the responses. The first question requiring a simple “agree” or “disagree” response will likely bring most accurate results. Ask: **What do these examples tell you about polls and polling?** (*How questions are worded can change the results of a poll, so polls may not always be an accurate measure of public opinion.*)

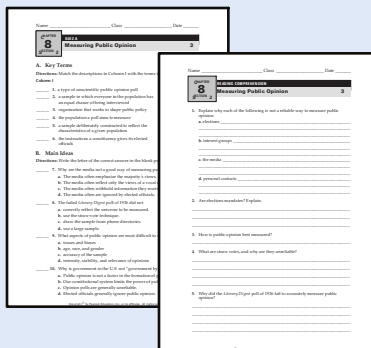
Then write the following topic on the board: **Protecting the Environment.** Ask students to work in pairs to write a poll question two different ways—one designed to elicit a particular response and another designed to be neutral and unbiased. Have volunteers share their questions, and write them on the board. Discuss how the wording of particular questions could influence the answers, and point out which questions would be most appropriate to use in a poll.

L2 Differentiate Start by underlining the parts that differ among the questions on the board and choose questions with the clearest differences in wording to discuss first. Provide help with any difficult vocabulary words.

Differentiated Resources

The following resources are located in the All-in-One, Unit 2, Chapter 8, Section 2:

- L3** Reading Comprehension Worksheet (p. 179)
- L2** Reading Comprehension Worksheet (p. 181)
- L3** Core Worksheet (p. 183)
- L2** Extend Activity (p. 184)
- L3** Quiz A (p. 185)
- L2** Quiz B (p. 186)



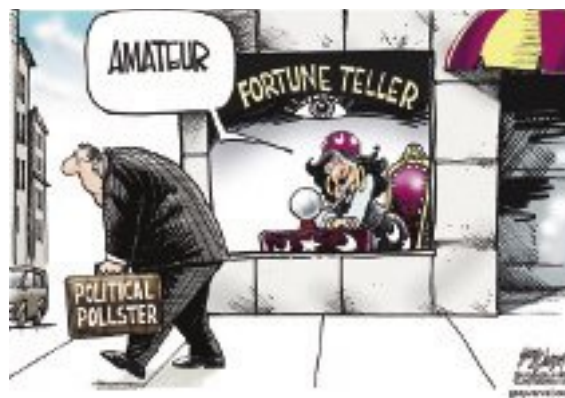
Answers

Checkpoint Interest groups present their views using lobbyists, letters, telephone calls, e-mails, and in political campaigns.

Using Public Opinion to shape public policy and to win elections

INTRODUCE THE TOPIC

Explain that measuring public opinion is a complicated task that is of great interest to public officials. Ask: **Why would officials be interested in public opinion?** (*Knowing public opinion is key to being elected, and it can also help guide officials to form public policy that the people want.*) **Why is this information important to the American political system?** (*The system is based on public officials carrying out the people's wishes.*) Then write the following headings on the board: **Elections, Interest Groups, Media, and Personal Contacts.** Ask students to explain how each reflects public opinion and discuss the limitations of each as a measurement tool. Tell students that scientific opinion polls provide the most reliable measure of public opinion.



► **Analyzing Cartoons** A pollster is a person or group who researches public opinion. **What do you think the cartoonist is saying about pollsters here?**

mishap
n. calamity, disaster,
misfortune

Members of Congress receive bags of mail and hundreds of phone calls and e-mails every day. Many of them make frequent trips “to keep in touch with the folks back home.” Top administration figures are often on the road, too, selling the President’s programs and gauging the people’s reactions. Even the President does some of this, with speaking trips to different parts of the country.

Governors, State legislators, mayors, and other officials also have any number of contacts with the public. These officials encounter the public in their offices, in public meetings, at social gatherings, community events, and even at ball games.

Can public officials find “the voice of the people” in all of those contacts? Many can and do, and often with surprising accuracy. But some public officials cannot. They fall into an ever-present trap: They find only what they want to find, only those views that support and agree with their own.

Public Opinion Polls

Public opinion is best measured by **public opinion polls**, devices that attempt to collect information by asking people questions.³ The more accurate polls are based on scientific polling techniques.

Straw Votes Public opinion polls have existed in this country for more than a century. Until the 1930s, however, they were far from scientific. Most earlier polling efforts were of the **straw vote** variety.⁴ That is, they were polls that sought to read the public’s mind simply by asking the same question of a large number of people. Straw votes are still fairly common. Many radio talk-show hosts pose questions that listeners can respond to by telephone, and television personalities regularly invite responses by e-mail.

The straw-vote technique is highly unreliable, however. It rests on the mistaken assumption that a relatively large number of responses will provide a fairly accurate picture of the public’s views on a given question. The problem is this: The respondents are self-selected. Nothing in the process ensures that those who respond will represent a reasonably accurate cross section of the total population. The straw vote emphasizes the quantity rather than the quality of the sample to which its question is put.

The most famous of all straw-polling **mishaps** took place in 1936. A widely read periodical, the *Literary Digest*, mailed postcard ballots to more than 10 million people and received answers from more than 2 million of them. Based on that huge return, the magazine confidently predicted the outcome of the presidential election that year. It said that Governor Alfred Landon, the Republican nominee, would easily defeat incumbent Franklin Roosevelt. Instead, Roosevelt won in a landslide. He captured more than 60 percent of the popular vote and carried every State but Maine and Vermont.

The *Digest* had drawn its sample on a faulty basis: from automobile registration lists and telephone directories. The *Digest* had failed to consider that in the mid-Depression year of 1936, millions of people could not afford to own cars or have private telephones.

The *Digest* poll failed to reach most of the vast pool of the poor and unemployed,

³ *Poll* comes from the old Teutonic word *polle*, meaning “the top or crown of the head,” the part that shows when heads are counted.

⁴ The odd name comes from the fact that a straw, thrown up in the air, will indicate which way the wind is blowing.

Background

EXIT POLLS On presidential election night, results pour into television and Internet news sources. Their U.S. maps begin lighting up with red and blue as reporters “call,” or project, a winner in each State—even before most votes are counted. News sources project winners based largely on exit polls, which are carried out during the balloting. Interviewers stand outside randomly selected polling places in each State and interview voters as they leave the polls. They select interviewees at set intervals, such as every fourth or eighth voter. The exit poll typically asks voters for whom they voted and why. Pollsters also collect demographic data, such as the gender, race, and age to analyze voting patterns. To avoid influencing voter turnout, the major news sources have agreed not to project the winner in a State until the polls close in that State.

Answers

Analyzing Cartoons The cartoonist is saying that pollsters do a poor job of predicting future actions or events.

millions of blue-collar workers, and most of the ethnic minorities in the country. Those were the very segments of the population from which Roosevelt and the Democrats drew their greatest support. The magazine had predicted the winner of each of the three previous presidential elections, but its failure to do so in 1936 was so colossal that it ceased publication not long thereafter.

Scientific Polling Serious efforts to take the public's pulse on a scientific basis date from the mid-1930s. They began with the work of such early pollsters as George Gallup and Elmo Roper. The techniques that they and others have developed over the decades since then have reached a highly sophisticated level.

There are now more than 1,000 national and regional polling organizations in this country. Many of them do mostly commercial work. That is, they tap the public's preferences on everything from toothpastes and headache remedies to television shows and thousands of other things. However, at least 200 of these polling organizations also poll the political preferences of the American people.

Among the best known of the national pollsters today are the Gallup Organization (the Gallup Poll) and the Pew Research Center for People and the Press.

A number of the leading national polls are joint efforts of major news-gathering and professional polling organizations. Their polls regularly report public attitudes on matters of current interest—including, for example, the level of public support of the President and/or Congress or, in election seasons, candidates running for such major offices as governor or member of the House or Senate. Those joint ventures that can most frequently be found in print and on television and the Internet include the ABC News/*The Washington Post* poll, the CBS News/*The New York Times* poll, the NBC/*The Wall Street Journal* poll, and the CNN/*USA Today*/Gallup poll.

The Polling Process

Scientific poll-taking is an extremely complex process that can best be described in five basic steps. In their efforts to discover and report public opinion, pollsters must



DISCUSS TYPES OF POLLS

Ask students if they have ever participated in a poll or if they look at polls online or on television news shows. Point out that, while interesting to a casual viewer, many of these are straw votes that do not accurately measure public opinion. Ask students to explain how scientific polls differ from straw votes. *(The sample in a straw vote is self-selected. It consists of people who decide to call in or email a response to the poll question. Such a sample is not random and so does not represent an accurate cross section of the total population. A scientific poll uses a random sample of the universe, questions that are carefully worded to avoid bias, and an interview process designed to avoid influencing replies.)* Ask: **Why might policymakers care about how a poll is constructed?** *(They want to know the true nature of public opinion and how accurately the poll measures it.)* **How might a poll be misused?** *(A group might intentionally introduce bias into the polling process to create a favorable rating for their candidate or cause.)*

DISTRIBUTE CORE WORKSHEET

Distribute the Chapter 8, Section 2 Core Worksheet (Unit 2 All-in-One, page 183), in which students evaluate a poll about voters' concerns prior to the 2008 presidential election. Ask students to study the poll on the worksheet and answer the questions that follow.

Name _____ Class _____ Date _____

CHAPTER 8 CORE WORKSHEET
SECTION 2 Measuring Public Opinion **3**

The public opinion poll below was taken prior to the 2008 presidential election. Examine the poll and then answer the questions that follow.

USA Today/Gallup Poll, September 5–7, 2008, 1,022 adults nationwide. Margin of Error ± 3.

Question: "If you had to choose, which of the following issues will be most important to your vote for president: the economy, terrorism, the situation in Iraq, health care, energy, including gas prices, or some other issue?" (Options rotated.)

Issue	%
The economy	42
The situation in Iraq	13
Energy, including gas prices	13
Health care	13
Terrorism	12
Illegal immigration	1
Abortion	1
Other	4
Education	1
Unsure	3

Source: www.pollingreport.com/print.htm

1. What is this poll trying to measure?
2. Who conducted this poll?
3. What do you think the note "options rotated" mean, and why is this technique important?
4. When was the poll taken?

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Answers

Checkpoint National polls measure the public's preferences for a wide variety of products as well as political preferences.

Analyzing Charts possible answer: the first question, because even though the last two questions are the same, their wording produced vastly different results, suggesting bias

The Effect of Poll Wording on Reliability

How you ask the question...

“The Federal Government should see to it that all people have adequate housing.”

55.1% Agree

44.9% Disagree

“Some people feel the Federal Government should see to it that all people have adequate housing, while others feel each person should provide his or her own housing. Which comes closest to how you feel about this?”

44.6% Government responsible

55.4% Government not responsible

“Some people feel each person should provide his or her own housing, while others feel the Federal Government should see to it that all people have adequate housing. Which comes closest to how you feel about this?”

29.5% Government responsible

70.5% Government not responsible

...affects the answer.

SOURCE: Questions and Answers in Attitude Surveys, 1981 & 1996

▶ **Analyzing Charts** This chart demonstrates the importance of carefully wording each question in a poll. **Which question is worded in the least biased manner? How can you tell?**

Background

TRUMAN-DEWEY ELECTION, 1948 When you display the famous photograph of Truman holding up the *Chicago Tribune* with the headline “Dewey Defeats Truman,” point out that this was not the only leading publication that relied too heavily on pre-election polls. *The New York Times* had boldly predicted “Thomas E. Dewey’s Election as President Is a Foregone Conclusion.” The *Life Magazine* cover pictured Dewey with the caption “The Next President of the United States.” Polls had shown Dewey ahead by 5 percent to 15 percent. Post-election analysis suggested that the polls had been taken too early, missing the last-minute swing in voter opinion. The erroneous polls might have helped Truman win by making Republicans overconfident and energizing Democratic efforts to get out the vote. The error proved disastrous for the young opinion polling organization, Gallup, which had to work to regain credibility.

DISCUSS CORE WORKSHEET ANSWERS

Review students' answers to the worksheet, using the following questions to guide the discussion:

Why is it important to know who took the poll?

(The source is an indicator of the poll's reliability. We can assume that a reputable source, such as Gallup, used scientific methods, whereas a biased source, such as a special interest group, might have skewed the results toward the candidate it favors.)

Why is the poll's date important?

(Circumstances may have changed since the poll was taken, making the data no longer relevant.)

What is the significance of the number of people who responded to the poll?

(The sample must be large enough to yield results that are statistically accurate within a small margin of error.)

What information about the respondents is relevant to interpreting poll results?

(It is important to know if this sample was random and large enough to accurately represent the target universe.)

Does this seem to be a scientific poll?

(Yes, it was taken by reputable organizations, the questions were rotated to avoid influencing results, it includes enough people for an accurate sampling, and the margin of error is the standard ± 3 .)

How might a presidential candidate use this poll?

(to craft the campaign message to focus on the issues of most concern to voters)

DISPLAY TRANSPARENCY

Display Transparency 8E, Truman-Dewey Election, 1948. Point out that the man in the photograph is Harry S. Truman. Explain that this photograph dramatizes a famous case of a newspaper incorrectly predicting the outcome of a presidential race. Although polls had predicted that Dewey would win, Truman in fact became President. Ask: **What does this situation suggest about polls?** *(While they can attempt to make predictions, they can be wrong.)* Discuss whether students themselves are influenced by polls. Then ask: **Are polls good for democracy?** *(Yes, they are useful tools to help candidates and policymakers act based on public opinion; No, they do not reflect thoughtful, nuanced responses and could influence voter turnout at the polls.)*

Answers

Checkpoint The *universe* is the whole population that the poll aims to measure.

✓ Checkpoint
Who does the *universe* refer to in the polling process?

sufficient
adj. adequate, enough

deliberately
adv. on purpose, knowingly, intentionally

(1) define the universe to be surveyed; (2) construct a sample; (3) prepare valid questions; (4) select and control how the poll will be taken; and (5) analyze and report their findings to the public.

Defining the Universe The **universe** is a term that means the whole population that the poll aims to measure. It is the group whose opinions the poll will seek to discover. That universe can be all voters in Chicago, or every high school student in Texas, or all Republicans in New England, or all Democrats in Georgia, or all Catholic women over age 35 in the United States, and so on.

Constructing a Sample If the universe is very small—say, the 30 members of a high school class—the best way to discover what that entire universe thinks about some matter would be to question all of its members. Most polls involve much larger universes, however—for example, all of the people who live in a particular city or State or the United States. Clearly, each of those universes is so large that it would be impossible to interview all of its members. So pollsters construct a **sample**—a representative slice of the total universe.

Most pollsters draw random samples (often called probability samples). A **random sample** is composed of randomly selected people, and so it is one in which all the members of its universe stand an equal chance of being interviewed. Recall, the sample used for the infamous *Literary Digest* poll in 1936 was not picked at random and so did not accurately reflect the universe it sought to measure.

Most major national polls regularly use samples composed of some 1,500 or so people to represent the nation's adult population (of more than 200 million people) today. How can the views of so few people possibly represent the views of so many?

The answer to that question lies in the mathematical law of probability. Flip a coin a thousand times. The law of probability says that, given an honest coin and an honest flip, heads will come up 500 times. The results of that exercise will be the same no matter how often it is repeated.

The law of probability is regularly applied in any number of situations—by insurance

companies to compute life expectancies, by food quality inspectors to grade a farmer's truckload of beans, and by many others who “play the odds,” including pollsters when they draw random samples.

In short, if the sample is of **sufficient** size and is properly selected at random from the entire universe, the law of probability says that the result will be accurate to within a small and predictable margin of error. Mathematicians tell us that a properly drawn random sample of some 1,500 people will reflect the opinions of the nation's entire adult population and be accurate to within a margin of plus or minus (\pm) 3 percent.

Pollsters agree that it is impossible to construct a sample that would be an absolutely accurate reflection of a large universe. Hence, the allowance for error. A margin of error of ± 3 percent means a spread of 6 percentage points, of course. To reduce the sampling error from ± 3 percent to ± 1 percent, the size of the sample would have to be at least 9,500 people. The time and expense to interview so huge a sample make that impractical.

Some pollsters do use a less complicated, but less reliable, sampling method. They draw quota samples. A **quota sample** is one **deliberately** constructed to reflect the major characteristics of a given universe.

For example, if 51.3 percent of a universe is female, 17.5 percent of it is African American, and so on, then the quota sample will be made up of 51.3 percent females, 17.5 percent African Americans, and so on. Most of the people in the sample will belong to more than one of the categories used to build the sample. That fact is a major reason why such samples are less reliable than random samples.

Asking Well-Drawn Questions The way in which the questions are phrased is critically important to the reliability of any poll. To illustrate that point, most will probably say “yes” to a question put this way: “Should local taxes be reduced?” Many will also answer “yes” if asked this question: “Should the size of the city's police force be increased to fight the rising tide of crime in our community?” Yet, expanding the police force would almost certainly require more local tax dollars.

Background

SAMPLING Up to 1948, polls used quota sampling. Interviewers could choose their respondents, as long as they satisfied quotas for certain characteristics, such as male, female, young, and old. However, the interviewers tended to choose people who were most convenient to interview, introducing bias into the sample. The polling disaster in the Truman-Dewey election of 1948 led to the adoption of sampling based on probability—random sampling. Random sampling takes the choice of respondents out of the hands of humans. For example, telephone polls today typically use random-digit dialing, in which a computer generates phone numbers from known area codes and digits selected by chance. Interviewing every fourth voter leaving the polls is another form of random sampling. Random sampling techniques ensure that all members of the target universe have an equal chance of being selected.

Evaluating Polls

Questions to Ask About Polls

Poll results are often published in newspapers, magazines, or online. You should learn to analyze such results carefully. Use the following questions as a starting point. *Why is it important to read poll results critically?*

WHO?	WHAT?	HOW?	WHY?	WHEN?
Who is responsible for the poll?	What is the poll's universe?	How was the sample chosen?	Why is the poll being conducted?	When was the data collected?
Polls sponsored by political campaigns may aim to mislead as much as inform.	The universe is the population the poll aims to measure. This allows you to judge whether the sample is truly representative.	Samples should be selected randomly. How were questions written and asked? The method of creating and asking questions can alter the results.	Polls meant to boost a candidate's approval ratings are not reliable.	Opinions change quickly during elections—so knowing when the data was collected is important.

Responsible pollsters recognize the problem and construct their questions with great care. They try to avoid “loaded,” emotionally charged words and terms that are difficult to understand. They also try to avoid questions that are worded in a way that tends to shape the answers that will be given to them.

Interviewing How pollsters communicate with respondents can also affect accuracy. For decades, most polls were conducted door-to-door, face-to-face. That is, the interviewer questioned the respondent in person. Today, however, most pollsters do their work by telephone, with a sample selected by *random digit dialing*. Calls are placed to randomly chosen numbers within randomly chosen area codes around the country. Telephone surveys are less labor intensive and less expensive than door-to-door polling. Still, most professional pollsters see advantages and drawbacks to each approach. But they all agree that only one technique, not a combination of the two, should be used in any given poll.

The interview itself is a very sensitive point in the process. An interviewer's tone of voice or the emphasis he or she gives to certain words can

influence a respondent's replies and so affect the validity of a poll. If the questions are not carefully worded, some of the respondent's replies may be snap judgments or emotional reactions. Others may be answers that the person being interviewed thinks “ought” to be given. Thus, polling organizations try to hire and train their interviewing staffs very carefully.

Analyzing Findings Polls, whether scientific or not, try to measure people's attitudes. To be of any real value, however, someone must analyze and report the results. Scientific polling organizations today collect huge amounts of raw data. In order to handle these data, computers and other electronic hardware have become routine parts of the process. Pollsters use these technologies to tabulate and interpret their data, draw their conclusions, and then publish their findings.

Evaluating Polls

How good are polls? On balance, the major national polls are fairly reliable. So, too, are most of the regional surveys around the country. Still, they are far from perfect. Fortunately,

Tell students to go to the Audio Tour to learn additional questions to ask about polls.

EXTEND THE LESSON

L4 Differentiate Have students use the Internet or other sources to research a recent presidential or other major election. Ask them to write a brief report comparing polling results to the actual outcome of the race.

L1 L2 Differentiate Distribute the Extend Activity entitled “Study a Political Poll” (Unit 2 All-in-One, p. 184), which asks students to find the results of a political poll, study the information, and answer questions about it.

L3 Differentiate Have students find examples of public opinion polls in newspapers, news magazines, or the Internet. Ask them to explain in writing (1) whether the polls are scientific and how they know, (2) what the polls show about public opinion, and (3) who would use these results and for what purpose.

How Government Works

USING PUBLIC OPINION Franklin Roosevelt was the first President to use polling data. He worked to gain public support for his Lend-Lease program and used private polls to track his progress. John F. Kennedy made polling an essential component of campaign strategy. He worked with Louis Harris (founder of the Harris Poll) in several key areas, including education and religion. When the results of one poll showed that 30 percent of families were sending their children to college while 80 percent hoped to do so, Kennedy incorporated the idea of improved educational opportunities in his campaign speeches. When he found that 30 States strongly opposed his candidacy based on his Roman Catholic upbringing, Kennedy eliminated those States from his campaign schedule, focusing instead on those States where he stood a better chance. Today, nearly all candidates use polls to plan their campaign strategies.

Answers

Questions to Ask About Polls Possible response: A poll can contain bias if the pollsters did not follow proper scientific techniques or if the poll was sponsored by a campaign that is trying to boost its candidate's approval rating.

Assess and Remediate

L3 Collect the Core Worksheet and assess students' work.

L3 Assign the Section 2 Assessment questions.

L3 Section Quiz A (Unit 2 All-in-One, p. 185)

L2 Section Quiz B (Unit 2 All-in-One, p. 186)

Have students complete the review activities in the digital lesson presentation and continue their work in the **Essential Questions Journal**.

REMEDIATION

If Your Students Have Trouble With	Strategies For Remediation
The different expressions of public opinion (Questions 1, 2, 3, 7)	Have students work in groups of four, and have each student study and give a lesson to the others in his or her group about one of the sections under the heading "Measuring Public Opinion" (elections, interest groups, media, and personal contacts).
The role of polls in measuring public opinion (Questions 4, 6)	Have students create a Venn diagram that compares and contrasts the straw vote technique and scientific polling.
The process of opinion polling (Question 5)	Have students create an illustrated diagram of the different steps in scientific polling.

Answers

Checkpoint the intensity, stability, and relevance of the opinions they report

Assessment Answers

- Public opinion can be measured through elections and through the opinions put forth by interest groups, the media, and personal contacts, but the most accurate way of measuring public opinion is through polls.
- Candidates claim a mandate when they see their election as a clear statement of public approval of their stands on issues or those of their party.
- It is not always clear how many people are represented by an interest group and how strongly those people hold particular views.

- Straw votes do not use scientifically drawn random samples of the population being studied.
- (1) define the universe, (2) construct a sample, (3) prepare valid questions, (4) select and control how the poll will be taken, (5) analyze and report results
- Possible benefits: encourage voter turnout if the race is tight; focus attention on public questions and stimulate discussion of them. Possible drawbacks: may shape opinions they intend to measure; can create a bandwagon

- effect that brings more votes to the candidate who is ahead in the polls; can discourage turnout if people believe the election already has a clear winner
- Possible examples: The First Amendment guarantee of freedom of speech and assembly enable minority views to be heard. Also, many government positions are appointed, not elected.

QUICK WRITE Students should collect information from reliable sources on their chosen topic.

Checkpoint
What is difficult for polls to measure?

most responsible pollsters readily acknowledge the limits of their polls. Many of them are involved in continuing efforts to refine every aspect of the polling process.

Pollsters know that they have difficulty measuring the intensity, stability, and relevance of the opinions they report. *Intensity* is the strength of feeling with which an opinion is held. *Stability* (or fluidity) is the relative permanence or changeableness of an opinion. *Relevance* (or pertinence) is how important a particular opinion is to the person who holds it.

Polls and pollsters are sometimes said to shape the opinions they are supposed to measure. Some critics say that in an election, for example, pollsters often create a "bandwagon effect." That is, some voters, wanting to be with the winner, jump on the bandwagon of the candidate who is ahead in the polls.

In spite of these criticisms, it is clear that scientific polls are the most useful tools there are for the difficult task of measuring public opinion. Although they may not always be precisely accurate, they do offer reasonably reliable guides to public thought. Moreover, they help to focus attention on public questions and to stimulate the discussion of them.

Limits on the Impact

More than a century ago, the Englishman Lord Bryce described government in the United States as "government by public

opinion." Clearly, the energy devoted to measuring public opinion in this country suggests something of its powerful role in American politics. However, Lord Bryce's observation is true only if it is understood to mean that public opinion is the major, but by no means the only, force at work to influence public policy in this country.

Most importantly, remember that our system of constitutional government is not designed to give free, unrestricted play to public opinion—and especially not to majority opinion. In particular, the doctrines of separation of powers and of checks and balances, and the constitutional guarantees of civil rights and liberties are intended to protect minority interests against the excesses of majority views and actions.

Finally, polls are not elections, nor are they substitutes for elections. It is when faced with a ballot that the voter must decide for himself or herself what is important and what is not. He or she must be able to tell the difference between opinions and concrete information, and appreciate the difference between personalities and platforms.

Democracy is more than a simple measurement of opinion. At base, democracy is all about making careful choices among leaders and their positions on issues, and among the governmental actions that may flow from those choices.

Essential Questions Journal To continue to build a response to the chapter Essential Question, go to your **Essential Questions Journal**.

SECTION 2 ASSESSMENT

- Guiding Question** Use your completed table to answer the question: What are the ways in which public opinion is most effectively measured?

Key Terms and Comprehension

- Why do victorious candidates sometimes claim a **mandate**?
- Why is it difficult to determine much about public opinion based on the actions of **interest groups**?
- Why are **straw votes** a generally unreliable form of measuring public opinion?

- Identify the five steps in the polling process.

Critical Thinking

- Analyze Information** What are the benefits and drawbacks of releasing to the public the results of public opinion polls on upcoming elections?
- Recognize Ideologies** Give an example of how our system of government works to minimize the influence of public opinion on certain types of decisions.

Quick Write

Cause-and-Effect Essay: Research the Topic Use the Internet and other resources to collect information about the history of the topic you chose in Section 1. Find out when the topic first gained prominence in American social life and what events, trends, or factors have had a significant impact on public opinion about that topic.

Conducting a Poll

We live in a representative democracy in which the voters elect representatives to act on their behalf. Your school's student government may operate the same way. One way representatives can gain insight into the thoughts and feelings of their constituents—that is, understand public opinion—is to conduct a poll. A well-constructed poll can help provide solid information about what a group of people thinks. Yet putting together a good poll requires knowledge and skill.

Follow these simple steps to conduct an effective poll.

- 1. Define the universe.** In polling, the universe is the group of people whose opinion you are interested in learning about. For a presidential candidate, it may be all the voters in the country. For a candidate for student council, it may be all the students in a school, and so on.
- 2. Construct your sample.** In some cases, you may be able to poll every person in the universe. If that is not possible, you must identify whom you will poll—your *sample*. Your sample should be a number of people chosen randomly from the universe. The goal is to poll a group that represents the whole universe in its views and attitudes.

Note: The people who volunteer to be polled or who walk by a specific corner of your school or community are not a random sample.

- 3. Prepare valid questions.** Good poll questions do not lead people to an answer or convey a strong attitude about an issue. They provide enough information to frame the question properly, but not so much that they promote one response or another. Before you conduct your poll, invite friends or colleagues to review your questions to help ensure their reliability and objectivity.
- 4. Conduct interviews carefully.** Just as a pollster must prepare questions carefully, he or she must

ask questions carefully. Remember, the goal is to get answers that truly reflect people's attitudes at the time. An interviewer must be careful not to seem to lead respondents to a particular answer.

- 5. Interpret the results.** Polls are not perfect. If you have used a random sample, your results will contain a margin of error. When you interpret your results, remember to analyze the intensity, the stability, and the relevance of the opinions you collect.

What do you think?

- Why do you think that selecting your sample from volunteers or from a group that passes by a specific hallway or corner might not be a valid random sample?
- Explain how an interviewer's behavior affects the way people respond to a poll question.
- You Try It** Follow the steps laid out here, and design a public opinion poll about an issue in your school or community with detailed descriptions of the universe, how you will construct your sample, and what questions you will ask.

GOVERNMENT ONLINE Citizenship Activity Pack

For activities on conducting polls, go to PearsonSuccessNet.com

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LESSON GOAL

- Students will analyze the process for constructing and conducting an opinion poll.

Teach

READ

Have students read the introduction aloud. If students have computer access, you may have them search for more about scientific polling.

DISCUSS

Have students discuss ways to create a random sample. (*Methods might include interviewing every fourth student entering the school or scrambling a list of all students and choosing every tenth name.*) Ask students how the wording of questions might lead people to respond in a particular way. (*Questions might not provide proper context or might include "loaded" language that creates an emotional response. For example, people tend to react more negatively to "bureaucrat" than to "public servant."*)

IDENTIFY LIMITS OF POLLS

Ask: **What is margin of error?** (*It is the mathematical range within which a poll result might vary from the actual result. For example, a poll with a margin of error of plus or minus 3 is expected to be no more than 3 percent higher or lower than the actual opinion of the universe.*) Have students describe the proper way to use polls. (*Polls are estimates, not perfect measures. They can focus attention on public questions and help politicians plan campaign strategy and craft public policy.*)

Assess and Remediate

Collect and assess student plans for a public opinion poll. Have students answer the What Do You Think questions.

Answers

- In both of these cases, not all members of the universe have an equal chance of being interviewed. People who ask to be interviewed are self-selecting. A specific location excludes people who do not routinely use that hallway.
- An interviewer's tone of voice or the emphasis given to certain words can influence replies.
- A strong plan will include an accurate definition of the universe, a means of obtaining a random sample, and well-crafted questions.

Citizenship Activity Pack

L1 L2 If your students need extra support, use the Citizenship Activity Pack lesson *How to Conduct a Poll*. It includes a lesson plan, assessment rubrics, a student survey, and a poster with examples of forced-choice, scaled, and ranked questions. Students may also access the Citizenship Activity Pack online for activities on How to Conduct a Poll at PearsonSuccessNet.com.

GUIDING QUESTION

How has the development of different media helped inform the public about politics?

Newspapers

- America's first regular newspaper 1704
- first daily newspaper 1783
- today more than 10,000
- daily newspapers declining for decades
- most now local

Magazines

- into early 1900s, mostly literature and social graces
- first political magazines mid-1800s
- muckraking early 1900s
- only national medium before radio and television
- most today trade or personal interest

Radio

- began 1920
- by 1930s major entertainment medium
- convenient availability helped it survive arrival of television
- satellite radio receives signals nationwide
- most local
- some all-news stations
- talk radio—political comment

Television

- boomed in 1950s
- early 1960s replaced newspapers as main source of political information
- now main news source for 80 percent of population
- independent broadcasting, cable, PBS

The Internet

- roots in Defense Department Cold War research
- by early 2000s mass medium
- now second to television as source of political news
- almost all government and political organizations have sites
- weblogs usually devoted to specific subject
- podcasts—downloadable digital recordings

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

DIGITAL AGE LITERACY

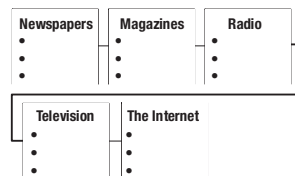
To practice digital age literacy in this section, use the Chapter 8 Skills Worksheet (Unit 2 All-in-One, p. 194). You may teach the skill explicitly either before or after discussing the role of electronic media in politics. For L2 and L1 students, assign the adapted Skill Activity (Unit 2 All-in-One, p. 195).

SECTION 3

The Mass Media

Guiding Question

How has the development of different media helped inform the public about politics? Use the flowchart like the one below to take notes on the development of different media.



Political Dictionary

- medium
- weblog
- public agenda
- sound bite

Objectives

1. Examine the role of the mass media in providing the public with political information.
2. Explain how the mass media influence politics.
3. Understand the factors that limit the influence of the media.

Image Above: People get their news from various media outlets, such as the Internet.



How much television do you watch each day? Little or none? Two hours a day? Three hours? More? However much you watch, you no doubt know that your peers spend a great deal of time in front of the TV. Studies show that by the time the average student graduates from high school today, he or she will have spent nearly 11,000 hours in classrooms and nearly 15,000 hours watching television. On average, high school students now watch more than 20 hours of TV programming each week.

Television has an extraordinary impact on the lives of everyone in this country. So do all of the other elements of the mass media.

The Role of Mass Media

A **medium** is a means of communication; it transmits some kind of information. *Media* is the plural of medium. The *mass media* include those means of communication that can reach large, widely dispersed audiences simultaneously.

Five major elements of the mass media are especially significant in American politics today. Ranked in terms of their impact, they are television, the Internet, newspapers, radio, and magazines. Other forms of the media, including books, films, and satellite radio, play a lesser but still relevant role in the political process.

Importantly, the mass media do not function as an arm of government in the United States. They are, instead, almost entirely privately owned and operated. And, unlike political parties and interest groups, their prime goal is *not* that of influencing the course of public affairs. They are, nonetheless, an extremely potent force in American politics.

Along with entertainment, the media provide political information. They do so directly when they report the news, in a television newscast or in the news columns of a newspaper, for example. The media also provide a large amount of political information less directly—for example, in radio and television programs, magazine articles, and blogs. These venues often deal with such public topics as crime, healthcare, climate change, or some aspect of American foreign policy. Either way, people acquire most of what they know about government and politics from the various forms of media.

Focus on the Basics

FACTS: • The public gets information on issues of public interest through the mass media—television, newspapers, radio, magazines, and the Internet. • The media influence the public agenda by focusing attention on certain issues and helping candidates appeal directly to voters. • The media influence is limited because of limited coverage of public affairs.

CONCEPTS: democratic values, rights and responsibilities of citizenship

ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS: • Mass media influence the public agenda and electoral politics. • To be informed, citizens must seek out in-depth coverage of public affairs.

Television Politics and television have gone hand in hand since the technology first appeared. The first public demonstration of television occurred at the New York World's Fair in 1939. President Franklin Roosevelt opened the fair on camera, and a comparative handful of local viewers watched him do so on tiny five- and seven-inch screens.

World War II interrupted the development of the new medium, but it began to become generally available in the late 1940s. Television boomed in the 1950s. The first transcontinental broadcast came in 1951, when President Harry Truman, speaking in Washington, D.C., addressed the delegates attending the Japanese Peace Treaty Conference in San Francisco.

Today, television is all-pervasive. As you read earlier, there is at least one television set in 98 percent of the nation's 115 million households. Just a few years ago, there were more homes in this country with television sets than with indoor plumbing facilities!

Television replaced newspapers as the principal source of political information for a majority of Americans in the early 1960s. Now, television is the principal source of news for an estimated 80 percent of the population.

The more than 1,700 television stations in this country include more than 1,400 commercial outlets and some 350 public broadcasters. Three major national networks have dominated television from its infancy: the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), the American Broadcasting Company (ABC), and the National Broadcasting Company (NBC). Those three giants furnish most of the programming for more than 500 local stations, and that programming accounts for nearly half of all television viewing time today.

The major networks' audience share has been declining in recent years, however. The

main challenges to them have come from three sources: (1) several independent broadcasting groups—for example, the Fox Network; (2) cable broadcasters, such as Turner Broadcasting, and especially its Cable News Network (CNN); and (3) the Public Broadcasting System (PBS) and its more than 350 local stations.⁵

Newspapers The first regularly published newspaper in America, the *Boston News-Letter*, appeared in 1704.⁶ Other papers soon followed, in Boston and then in Philadelphia, New York, Annapolis, and elsewhere. By 1775, 37 newspapers were being published

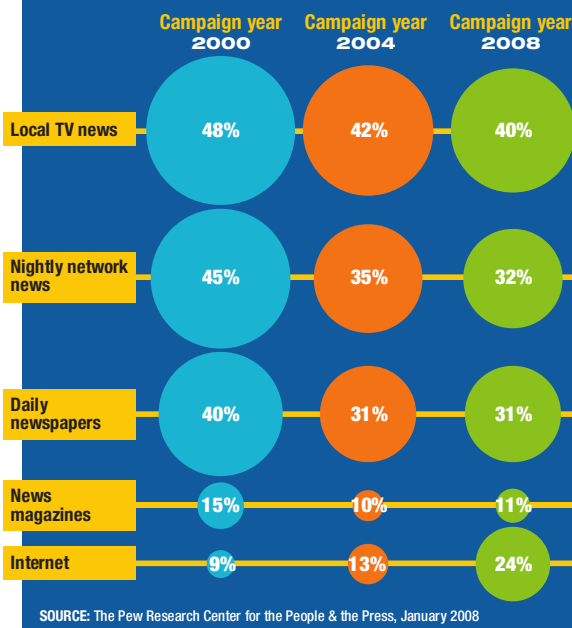
Checkpoint
What is the principal news source for the majority of Americans?

comparative
adj. by comparison

all-pervasive
adj. spread throughout

Where do we get our campaign news?

The number of Americans who use the Internet as their source for campaign news has more than doubled since 2000. How does this compare with the number of people watching network or local television?



⁵ C-SPAN, the Cable-Satellite Public Affairs Network, is sponsored by the cable industry. C-SPAN, C-SPAN2, and C-SPAN3 cover a broad range of public events—including major floor debates and committee hearings in Congress, presidential and other press conferences, and speeches by notable public figures.

⁶ The world's first newspaper was almost certainly the *Acta Diurna*, a daily gazette in Rome dating from 59 a.c. Another very early forerunner of today's newspapers was *Tsing Pao*, a court journal in Beijing. Press historians believe that its first issues, printed from stone blocks, were published beginning in a.d. 618; its last issue appeared in 1911.

Get Started

LESSON GOALS

Students will . . .

- understand the impact of the Internet as a political medium by examining study findings.
- evaluate the use of the Internet for electoral politics by analyzing a candidate's Web site.
- recognize the strengths of the Internet as a campaign medium by designing a home page for a candidate Web site.

BEFORE CLASS

Assign the section, the graphic organizer in the text, and the Reading Comprehension Worksheet (Unit 2 All-in-One, p. 187) before class.

L2 Differentiate Reading Comprehension Worksheet (Unit 2 All-in-One, p. 189)

BELLRINGER

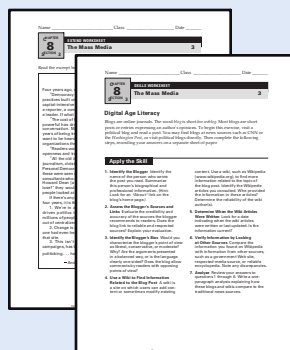
Display Transparency 8F, The Internet and the 2008 Election at a Glance. Explain that this table lists key findings in a research study. Have students examine the findings and answer the question in their notebook.

L3 L4 Differentiate Have students do research to find out how online donations affected the 2008 presidential campaign, and write a brief report.

Differentiated Resources

The following resources are located in the All-in-One, Unit 2, Chapter 8, Section 3:

- L3** Reading Comprehension Worksheet (p. 187)
- L2** Reading Comprehension Worksheet (p. 189)
- L3 L2** Core Worksheets (pp. 191, 192)
- L3** Skills Worksheet (p. 194)
- L2** Skill Activity (p. 195)
- L3 L4** Extend Worksheet (p. 196)
- L3** Quiz A (p. 198) **L2** Quiz B (p. 199)
- L3** Chapter Test A (p. 200) **L2** Chapter Test B (p. 203)



Answers

Checkpoint television

Where do we get our campaign news? Local and network television have both declined as a source for campaign news since 2000 but still exceed the Internet.

Teach

To present this topic using online resources, use the lesson presentations at PearsonSuccessNet.com.

REVIEW BELLRINGER RESPONSES

Invite students to offer their response to the Bellringer question: **If you were a candidate for President, how would you apply the results of this study to your campaign?** (possible responses: create a very attractive Web site; include lots of opportunities for citizens to interact with the site and express their opinions; include videos of television appearances and audio clips of speeches; include an easy way to donate online; collect e-mail addresses of visitors and send them regular e-mail updates; encourage site visitors to volunteer to work for the campaign; constantly update the site with campaign news and documents supporting the candidate's positions; sponsor conversations about issues on social networking sites)

Point out that the Internet has drawbacks for campaigns as well. If a candidate makes a political mistake, the news will spread widely and quickly over the Internet. Also, rumors spread quickly online, so campaigns must closely monitor online chatter and respond to negative posts quickly.

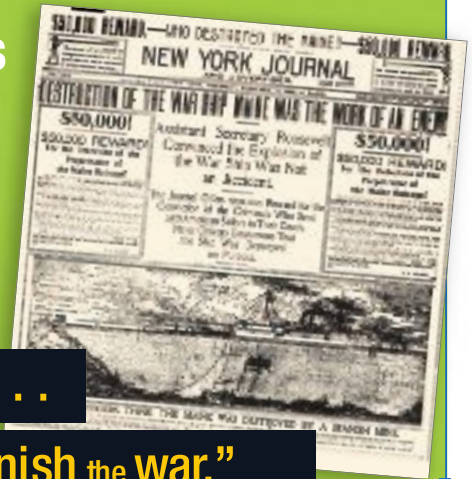
The Power of the Press

The phrase “yellow journalism” came about in the late 1800s when competing newspaper owners William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer used dramatic headlines and editorials instead of facts to stir up public opinion in favor of war with Spain—and to sell more papers. Historians say that “nothing better illustrates the power of the press and the misuse of that power” as well as the Spanish-American War. **Does yellow journalism exist today?**

“You furnish the pictures . . .

I’ll furnish the war.”

—William Randolph Hearst, 1897



in the colonies. All of them were weekly papers, and they were printed on one sheet that was usually folded to make four pages. The nation's first daily newspaper, the *Pennsylvania Evening Post and Daily Advertiser*, began publication in 1783.

Those first papers regularly carried political news. Several spurred the colonists to revolution, carrying the news of independence and the text of the Declaration of Independence to people throughout the colonies. Thomas Jefferson marked the vital role of the press in the earliest years of the nation when, in 1787, he wrote to a friend:

PRIMARY SOURCE

... were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter.

—Thomas Jefferson, Letter to Colonel Edward Carrington, January 16, 1787

The 1st Amendment, added to the Constitution in 1791, made the same point regarding the importance of newspapers with its guarantee of the freedom of the press.

Today, more than 10,000 newspapers are published in the United States, including some 1,430 dailies, more than 7,200 weeklies, some 550 semiweeklies, and several hundred foreign-language papers. Those publications have a combined circulation of about 150 million copies per issue. About 45 percent of the nation's adult population read a newspaper every day, and they spend, on average, a half hour doing so.

The number of daily newspapers has been declining for decades, however, from more than 2,000 in 1920 to 1,745 in 1980 and to about 1,430 today. Radio and television, and more recently the Internet, have been major factors in that downward trend.

Nevertheless, newspapers are still an important source of information about government and politics. Most papers cover stories in greater depth than television does, and many try to present various points of view

Answers

The Power of the Press Possible response: Yes. Tabloids use dramatic headlines and sensational stories with only a loose connection to facts.

Background

CAMPAIGN MISINFORMATION The strategic use of rumors, half-truths, and outright falsehoods have long been part of political campaigns. Political organizations unleash barrages of “attack ads”—strongly negative comments about an opponent placed in the media. Often such ads turn out to be less than truthful. Yet multiple repetitions of the accusations, accompanied by powerful images, influence many voters. In the 2008 campaign, a new trend emerged. The media increasingly reported on the truthfulness of political statements made in debates, speeches, interviews, and ads, based on evaluations by nonpartisan organizations. Many sites devoted to debunking campaign assertions appeared on the Web. In some cases, politicians backed down when their statements proved false. Still, powerful attack ads can overshadow the corrections.

in their editorial sections. Those newspapers that have the most substantial reputations and national influence today include *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *USA Today*.

Most newspapers are local papers. That is, most of their readers live in or near the communities in which those papers are published. While many local papers do provide some national and international news coverage, most of them focus on events closer to home.

Advances in telecommunications and computerized operations are changing that basic fact, however. Now, each day's editions of *USA Today*, *The New York Times*, and *The Wall Street Journal* are generally available on the day of publication around the country.

Radio Radio as it exists today began in 1920. On November 2 of that year, station KDKA in Pittsburgh went on the air with presidential election returns. The new medium soon became immensely popular.

By the 1930s, radio had assumed much of the role in American society that television has today. It was a major entertainment medium, and millions of people planned their daily schedules around their favorite programs. The networks also provided the nation with dramatic coverage of important events, and radio exposed the American people to national and international politics as never before.

President Franklin Roosevelt was the first major public figure to use radio effectively. The late author David Halberstam described the impact of FDR's famous fireside chats:

PRIMARY SOURCE

He was the first great American radio voice. For most Americans of [that] generation, their first memory of politics would be of sitting by a radio and hearing that voice, strong, confident, totally at ease. . . . Most Americans in the previous 160 years had never even seen a President; now almost all of them were hearing him, in their own homes. It was literally and figuratively electrifying.

—David Halberstam, *The Powers That Be*

Many thought that the arrival of television would bring the end of radio as a major medium. Radio has survived, however, in large part because it is so conveniently available. People can hear music, news, sports, and other radio programs in a great many places where they cannot watch television—in their cars, at work, in remote areas, and in any number of other places and situations. The arrival of satellite radio has added to radio's popularity. With this new technology, digital radio signals are beamed from a communications satellite, allowing subscribers to tune into their favorite station anywhere in the country, and often with no commercial interruptions.

Radio remains a major source of news and other political information. The average person hears some 15 hours of radio each week. No one knows how many millions of radios there are in this country—in homes, offices, cars, backpacks, and a great many other places. Those radios can pick up some 14,000 stations on the AM and FM dials.

Many AM stations are affiliated with one or another of the national networks. Unlike television, however, most radio programming is local. There are also some 700 public radio stations, most of them on the FM dial. These noncommercial outlets are part of National Public Radio (NPR), which is radio's counterpart of television's PBS.

Most radio stations spend little time on public affairs today. Many do devote a few minutes every hour to "the news"—really, to a series of headlines. All-news stations are now found in most of the larger and many medium-sized communities. They are usually on the air 24 hours a day, and they do provide somewhat more extensive coverage of the day's events. A growing number of stations now serve the preferences of Latino Americans, African Americans, and other minority listeners.

Over recent years, talk radio has become an important source of political comment. The opinions and analyses offered by a number of talk show hosts can be found on hundreds of stations across the United States. Among the most prominent talk broadcasters today are conservatives Rush Limbaugh, Sean Hannity, and Bill O'Reilly, and liberals Thom Hartmann and Rachel Maddow. Their

ANALYZE A CANDIDATE WEB SITE

Display Transparency 8G, Candidate Web Site, which shows a page from a candidate's Web site during an election campaign. Barack Obama was the first candidate to use the Internet as an effective media resource, setting the standard for future campaigns to follow. This site also makes use of the Internet as an effective media resource. Ask: **What forms of media does this candidate use to reach voters?** (*The Web site offers video clips, photographs, speeches, written information about issues in Spanish as well as English, an e-mail link, biographies, YouTube, blog, and a link for making a contribution.*) Discuss how this site illustrates ways in which the Internet can be used to help a candidate get elected. (*It is a campaign Web site, with the purpose of influencing voters. At the Hot Topics link, the candidate could educate voters about his position on issues. The photos and links to biographical information about himself, his wife, and his running mate would help site visitors relate to them as people. The site includes ways for visitors to participate by e-mail, on the blog, or through contributions.*)

Ask: **What characteristics of the Internet make it an effective medium for electoral politics?** (*The Internet is a mass medium that can spread the candidate's message widely and quickly. Unlike television or the radio, the content remains available online for visitors to access at their convenience, and can be updated constantly. The Internet also offers a convenient, inexpensive way to solicit donations and identify supporters.*)

Background

EVALUATING WEB PAGES Barack Obama's use of the Internet is being hailed as a key tool in his successful presidential campaign. As students' use of the Internet continues to grow, the skills to critically evaluate Web pages become more important. Cornell University offers Jim Kapoun's "Five Criteria for Evaluating Web Pages." The questions to ask include: What is the purpose of the document and why was it produced? What institution publishes the document? What opinions (if any) are expressed by the author? When was it produced? Is the information presented cited correctly? Who wrote the page, and can you contact him or her? Does the publisher list his or her qualifications? Learning to ask the right questions about Web pages can help students find the best of what the Internet has to offer.

DISTRIBUTE CORE WORKSHEET

Distribute the Chapter 8 Section 3 Core Worksheet (Unit 2 All-in-One, p. 191), which provides guidelines for students to design a home page for a candidate's Web site, aimed at reaching today's voter. At the same time, distribute the Rubric for Designing a Web Site (Unit 2 All-in-One, p. 259).

Name _____	Class _____	Date _____
CHAPTER 8	CORE WORKSHEET	
SECTION 3	The Mass Media	3
Design a Candidate's Home Page		
The Internet offers candidates great flexibility in reaching a wide range of potential voters. A well-designed Web site offers visitors access to information in a variety of forms—including print, video, and audio—which they can pursue at their own pace.		
Part 1		
On a separate piece of paper, create a detailed design for the home page of an imaginary candidate for President. Your home page will be the front door to the rich content on your Web site. Use the outline below to list specific kinds of content you would include on your site and ideas for visual appeal. Then design your home page with links to each content element.		
Name of Candidate: _____		
Major Issues: _____		
Multimedia Content: _____		
Interactive Content: _____		
Other Content: _____		
Visual Enhancements: _____		
Part 2		
On a separate sheet of paper, draft a brief memo that explains the various features of your home page. In the memo, describe the types of content visitors will find when they follow each link on your home page.		
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L2 L1 Differentiate For these students, distribute the adapted Chapter 8 Section 3 Core Worksheet (Unit 2 All-in-One, p. 192), which is a simplified version and which gives step-by-step guidance.

programs air nationally and attract millions of listeners every weekday.

Magazines Several magazines were published in colonial America. Benjamin Franklin began one of the very first, his *General Magazine*, in Philadelphia in 1741. On into the early 1900s, most magazines published in the United States were generally devoted to literature and the social graces. The first political magazines—among them, *Harper's Weekly* and the *Atlantic Monthly*—appeared in the mid-1800s.

The progressive reform period in the early 1900s spawned several journals of opinion, including a number that featured articles by the day's leading muckrakers.⁷ For decades before radio and television, magazines constituted the only national medium.

Some 12,000 magazines are published in the United States today. Most are trade publications,

⁷ The *muckrakers* were journalists who exposed wrongdoing in politics, business, and industry. The term was coined by Theodore Roosevelt in 1906 and is derived from the raking of muck—that is, manure and other barnyard debris. The muckrakers set the pattern for what is now called investigative reporting.

such as *Veterinary Forum* and the *Automotive Executive*, or periodicals that target some special personal interest, such as *Golf Digest*, *Teen*, and *American Rifleman*. Among magazines with the highest circulation today: *AARP the Magazine*, *Reader's Digest*, and *National Geographic*. They each sell some 10 to 20 million or more copies per issue.

Three news magazines, *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News & World Report*, rank in the top 35 periodicals in terms of circulation. They have a combined circulation of nearly 10 million copies a week, and they are important sources of political news and comment. There are a number of other magazines devoted to public affairs, most of them vehicles of opinion, including the *Nation*, the *New Republic*, the *National Review*, and the *Weekly Standard*.

The Internet The Internet is fast becoming a leading source of political news and information for the American people. Its roots can be traced to a Defense Department research project of the Cold War era. In 1969, the DoD's Advanced Research Projects Agency established a four-computer network in the

The Transformation of Mass Media

As media have changed, so too has the way that people participate. *What has been the impact of the Internet on political discussion?*

The "big three" networks, ABC, CBS, and NBC, dominated the limited channels of early television. Nightly news programs by respected anchors, such as Walter Cronkite (right), commanded large audiences and set the agenda for the nation.

Radio spread widely in the 1920s and 1930s, giving a national voice to elected officials and gifted speakers.



THEN... A Few Voices Imparting Information

Constitutional Principles

LIMITED GOVERNMENT AND A FREE PRESS Freedom of the press—and of all media—is at the very heart of the American system of limited government. Its roots extend back even to colonial times. In 1735, John Peter Zenger was arrested in New York for printing strong political opinions. He was put on trial, but the jury of local New Yorkers found him not guilty. The trial marked a major moment in the development of a free press.

Today, for the first time in history, a single person, with a minimal investment, can put his or her views out, not only before the local populace but before the entire world. Some individuals have formed Internet news services that provide specialized information instantaneously about politics, weather, the stock market, sports, and entertainment. In addition to the print and broadcast media, the world now has a third branch of the press—the online service.

Answers

The Transformation of Mass Media The Internet has enabled anyone to join the political discussion.

Pentagon designed to protect military secrets from hostile actions. Two years later that grid (ARPANET) had grown to include some two dozen computers at 15 widely scattered locations across the country.

From those beginnings, the Internet has grown phenomenally, and it continues to do so. By the 1990s, it had expanded into the private sector, and by the beginning of the 21st century, it had become a mass medium. Today, more than 75 percent of the American people report that they have access to a computer at home, in the workplace, or at school, and nearly two-thirds of them say they go online on a regular basis.

Television remains the most widely used source for political news and information, but the Internet is now in second place, ahead of newspapers, radio, and magazines. One of every four people say they regularly go online to “get the news.” Younger people are especially **inclined** to do so.

Other media have recognized the Internet’s capabilities. Nearly all newspapers have Web sites where all or most of the stories carried in their print versions can be found. Most

magazines are also available online, and most television stations maintain home pages that provide links to many other sources. With only a few exceptions, media outlets allow visitors to view their Web sites free of charge.

Much the same can be said of virtually all government agencies, interest groups, political parties, elected officials, and candidates’ campaign organizations. The extraordinary range of printed, audio, and visual information available on the Internet really defies description. To the point, much of the updated factual content of this textbook has been drawn from reliable Internet sources.

The Internet has **spawned** the growth of **weblogs**—often called “blogs”—Web site postings usually devoted to some specific subject. Many are written by single authors, others are the work of several contributors, and many allow visitors to post their own comments. Those blogs devoted to government and politics typically feature links to articles and commentaries from a variety of sources. Podcasts, digital recordings that are posted and can be downloaded from the Internet, have also grown spectacularly over recent years.



spawned
v. produced, brought forth

inclined
adj. persuaded, convinced

Television and radio seek out and broadcast the opinions and questions of their audiences, while the **Internet** transforms the way people get political information. Instead of merely receiving information, people are e-mailing, podcasting, and creating videos to add their voices to political discussion. Television and the Internet joined forces (as shown here) when CNN partnered with YouTube to allow ordinary citizens to question presidential candidates in the 2008 primary debates.



NOW... Millions of Conversations

DESIGN A HOME PAGE

Tell students that they will create a pencil-and-paper version of a home page for an imaginary candidate for President. Point out that a home page is the gateway to the rest of the information on the Web site. They will not create the entire site content. Instead, they will decide the kinds of content they would include, so they can provide links to it on their home page. Remind them that Web sites can include a range of media—video clips, sound files, in-depth articles, photos, even campaign-related music and ring tones. Explain that their goal is to attract support—and ultimately votes—for their candidate.

As a first step, have students discuss ideas for Web site content with a partner to help them create their content list on the worksheet. Explain that they should create links on their home page to each piece of site content on their list. Circulate to offer suggestions and refocus student effort as needed. Remind students to consult their Web site home page rubrics for guidance as they move on to designing their home page.

Part 2 of the worksheet asks students to write a memo that explains the thinking behind their home page design. In their memo, students should describe the content visitors would find when they follow each link.

L4 Differentiate Have students choose two links on their home page and create a content page that would appear on visitors’ screens when they follow each of these links.

Tell students to go to the Audio Tour for more information on the transformation of mass media.

Background

MEDIA INFLUENCE According to a study published by the Annenberg Public Policy Center in late 2008, many Americans were unable to identify the stands that major party candidates took on various issues such as abortion, free trade, the Iraq War, and children’s health insurance. It appeared that not much education about the candidates’ positions had taken place in the election campaign. Interestingly, in 2004 a similar study found that people who watched late-night comedy shows such as those hosted by David Letterman, Jay Leno, and Jon Stewart knew more about the candidates and their positions than those who did not watch such programs. Young viewers of the Daily Show with Jon Stewart scored particularly well on campaign knowledge—even better than young people who watched network news programs, and just as well as those who watched cable news programs or read newspapers.

Answers

Checkpoint Weblogs are Web site postings usually devoted to some specific subject that may be written by one or many contributors. Many allow visitors to post comments.

REVIEW HOME PAGE DESIGNS AND MEMOS

Have students post their home page designs at their desks or on a bulletin board or wall, along with their memos explaining their design and links to site content. Then have students move through the classroom reviewing each other's work.

SHARE STUDENT REACTION

After students have had an opportunity to review their classmates' efforts, have them identify examples that seemed especially impressive and explain why. For example, did the home page include a clear, compelling message about the candidate? Did it link to information presented in a variety of media forms? Did the home page make them want to follow the links to learn more about the candidate?

INTERNET GROWTH

Display Transparency 8H, U.S. IP and Internet Traffic Projection. Point out what the text says about the American people's online computer use. In addition, point out that a phenomenal growth of use and data traffic is projected to take place in the near future. Analysts predict that by 2015 there will be an "exaflood"—or a tsunami of bytes—of IP (an Internet protocol address of devices participating in computer networks) and Internet traffic. The flood could even reach one million million billion bytes. (Byte is the lowest familiar size for measuring data, such as one character. Measurements of kilobytes, where one kilobyte equals 1,024 bytes, are probably most familiar.) Look at the scale. Consider that the size of a student's ten-page research paper e-mailed to school is approximately only 86 kilobytes. Consider then that one photo from a digital camera can equal 3 megabytes of Internet traffic. Have students examine the graph now. Then hypothesize what possible uses could cause the growth. (*faster, bigger games; TV shows; videos; digital publishing*)

Media Influence

The mass media have a great impact on the issues that people focus on and how they think about the world around them. **What are the cartoonists saying here about media influence?**



The Media and Politics

Clearly, the media play a significant role in American politics. Just how significant that role is, and just how much influence the media have, is the subject of a long, still unsettled debate.

Whatever its weight, the media's influence can be seen in any number of situations. It is most visible in two areas: (1) the public agenda and (2) electoral politics.

The Public Agenda The media play a very large role in shaping the **public agenda**, the societal problems that the nation's political leaders and the general public agree need government attention. As they report and comment on events, issues, policies, and personalities, the media determine to a very large extent what public matters the people will think and talk about—and, so, those matters about which public-policy makers will be most concerned.

To put the point another way, the media have the power to focus the public's attention on a particular issue. They do so by emphasizing some things and ignoring or downplaying others. For example, they feature certain items on the front page or at the top of the newscast and bury others.

It is not correct to say that the media tell the people *what* to think; but it is clear that they tell the people *what to think about*. A look at any issue of a daily newspaper or a quick review of the content of any television or Internet news story will demonstrate that point. Remember, people rely on the media for most of the information they receive on public issues.

The mass media also have a direct impact on the nation's leaders. Some years ago, Stephen Hess, a widely respected authority on the media, identified several news organizations that form the "inner ring" of influence in Washington, D.C. He cited the three major television networks, CBS, ABC, and NBC; three newspapers, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*,

Political Cartoon Mini-Lesson

Display Transparency 8I, Collateral Damage, as a wrap-up activity on the mass media and electoral politics. Explain that this cartoon appeared just before the 2008 presidential election. Ask: **What is a "toss up" State?** (*a State where the vote is expected to be close and either candidate could win. It is commonly known as a battleground State.*) **Who do the man and woman represent?** (*potential votes*) **What is happening to them?** (*They are being bombarded with political messages from a variety of media and information sources.*) **What does "collateral damage" mean?** (*unintended harm caused by an action*) **What is the collateral damage in this cartoon?** (*voter exasperation*)

Answers

Media Influence Possible response: The first cartoon suggests that popular talk show hosts have as much political influence as both houses of Congress. The second cartoon suggests that listeners tend to "parrot," or repeat, the political opinions they hear on the radio.

and *The Wall Street Journal*; the leading news wire service, the Associated Press (AP); and the three major news weeklies, *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News & World Report*. CNN, MSNBC, Fox News, Reuters, and *USA Today* have since joined that select group.

Top political figures in and out of government pay close and continuing attention to these sources. In fact, the President receives a daily digest of the news reports, analyses, and editorial comments that these and other sources broadcast and publish.

Electoral Politics You have seen several illustrations of the media's importance in electoral politics as you have read this book. Recall, for example, the fact that the media, and in particular television, have contributed to a decline in the place of political parties in American politics.

Television has made candidates far less dependent on party organizations than they once were. Before television, the major parties generally dominated the election process. They recruited most candidates who ran for office, and they ran those candidates' campaigns. The candidates depended on party organizations in order to reach the voters.

Now, both television and the Internet allow candidates to appeal directly to the people, without the help of a party organization. Candidates for office need not be experienced politicians who have worked their way up a party's political ladder over the course of several elections. It is not unusual for candidates to assemble their own campaign organizations and operate with only loose connections to their political parties.

Remember, too, that how voters see a candidate—the impressions they have of that candidate's personality, character, abilities, and so on—is one of the major factors that influence voting behavior. Candidates and professional campaign managers are quite aware of this fact. They know that the kind of "image" a candidate projects in the media can have a telling effect on the outcome of an election.

Candidates regularly try to manipulate media coverage to their advantage. Campaign strategists understand that, even with the Internet, most people learn almost everything they know about a candidate from

television. They therefore plan campaigns that emphasize television exposure. Such technical considerations as timing, location, lighting, and camera angles loom large, often at the expense of such substantive matters as the issues involved in an election or a candidate's qualifications for public office.

Good campaign managers also know that most television news programs are built out of stories that (1) take no more than a minute or two of air time, and (2) show people doing something interesting or exciting. Newscasts seldom feature "talking heads," speakers who drone on and on about some complex issue.


Instead, newscasts featuring candidates are usually short, sharply focused **sound bites**—snappy reports that can be aired in 30 or 45 seconds or so. Staged and carefully orchestrated visits to historic sites, factory gates, toxic-waste dumps, football games, and the like, have become a standard part of the electoral scene.

Limits on Media Influence

Having said all this, it is all too easy to overstate the media's role in American politics. A number of built-in factors work to limit the media's impact on the behavior of the American voting public.

For one thing, few people follow international, national, or even local political events very closely. Many studies of voting behavior show that in the typical election, only about 10 percent of those who can vote and only about 15 percent of those who do vote are well informed on the many candidates and issues involved in that election. In short, only a small part of the public actually takes in and understands much of what the media have to say about public affairs.

Moreover, most people who do pay some attention to politics are likely to be selective about it. That is, they most often watch, listen to, and read those sources that generally agree with their own viewpoints. They regularly ignore those sources with which they disagree. Thus, for example, many Democrats do not watch the televised campaign appearances or visit the Web sites of Republican candidates. Nor do many Republicans

 **Checkpoint**
How do candidates use media coverage to their advantage?

EXTEND THE LESSON

L3 Differentiate Separate the class into three groups, with one group representing television, one newspapers, and one news magazines. Choose a story currently receiving broad media coverage and ask one group to watch coverage on three television news programs, one to read coverage in three different newspapers, and one to read coverage in three different news magazines. As a group, have students compare coverage in the various media.

L2 ELL Differentiate Have students prepare a two-page "Guide for Using the Mass Media to Find Out About Public Issues" that would be useful to a newcomer to the United States. Ask them to include the names of newspapers, magazines, and TV and radio networks available locally. The guide should provide brief descriptions of what each source offers relating to public issues.

L3 L4 Differentiate Distribute the Chapter 8 Section 3 Extend Worksheet (Unit 2 All-in-One, p. 196), which includes an excerpt from an article about the impact of the Internet on American politics. Have students read the article and then answer the reflection questions. As a class, discuss the answers. You may also wish to have students collect data and write a brief report on the use of the Internet in the most recent presidential election.

Teacher-to-Teacher Network

ALTERNATE LESSON PLAN Students will act in the role of consultants hired by major newspapers to help them improve coverage of government-related news and attract younger readers. In this role, they will choose an article, rewrite it, and then write a memo suggesting ways to improve current events coverage and offering strategies for attracting younger readers.

To see this lesson plan, go to



Answers

Checkpoint Mass media allow candidates to appeal directly to the people, with less help from party organizations. Campaign strategists plan television exposure to project a favorable image.

Assess and Remediate

L4 Have students write a brief essay on what they consider to be the best sources of news and information and why. Their essays should include specific examples to support their points.

L3 Collect the Core Worksheet and assess students' work.

L3 Assign the Section 3 Assessment questions.

L3 Section Quiz A (Unit 2 All-in-One, p. 198)

L2 Section Quiz B (Unit 2 All-in-One, p. 199)

Have students complete the review activities in the digital lesson presentation and continue their work in the **Essential Questions Journal**.

REMIEDIATION

If Your Students Have Trouble With	Strategies For Remediation
The role of the mass media (Questions 1, 2, 3)	Have students create an "infographic" that describes the "American media," with images and captions that illustrate its different features.
The impact of the media in politics (Question 4)	Have students work in pairs to read through the section "The Media and Politics," and then create three quiz questions for their partner on one of the subsections ("The Public Agenda" and "Electoral Politics").
The limits on media influence (Questions 5, 6, 7)	Have students read and create an outline for the last section, "Limits on Media Influence."

hampered
v. restricted, curbed, limited

read newspaper stories about the campaign efforts of Democratic candidates.

Another important limit on the media's impact is the content the media carries. This is especially true of radio and television. Most television programs, for example, have little or nothing to do with public affairs, at least not directly. (A number of popular programs do relate to public affairs in an indirect way, however. Thus, many are "crime shows," and crime is certainly a matter of public concern. Many also carry a political message—for example, that the police are hard-working public servants.)

Advertisers who pay the high costs of television air time want to reach the largest possible audiences. Because most people are more interested in being entertained than in being informed about public issues, few public-affairs programs air in prime time. There are exceptions, however, including *60 Minutes*, *20/20*, *Dateline*, and *360*.

Radio and television mostly "skim" the news. They report only what their news editors determine to be the most important or the most interesting stories of the day. Even on widely watched evening news programs, most reports are presented in 60- to

90-second time slots. In short, the broadcast media seldom give the kind of in-depth coverage that a good newspaper can supply.

Newspapers are not as **hampered** as many other media in their ability to cover public affairs. Still, much of the content of most newspapers is nonpolitical. Like nearly all of television and radio, newspapers depend on their advertising revenues, which in turn depend on producing a product with the widest possible appeal. Newspaper readers are often more interested in the sports pages and the social, travel, advertising, and entertainment sections of a newspaper than they are in its news and editorial pages.

In-depth coverage of public affairs is available in the media to those who want it and will seek it out. There are a number of good newspapers around the country. In-depth coverage can also be found on the Internet, in several magazines, and on a number of radio and television stations, including public broadcast outlets. Remember, however, that there is nothing about democracy that guarantees an alert and informed public. Like voting and other forms of political participation, being an informed citizen requires some effort.

SECTION 3 ASSESSMENT

Essential Questions Journal To continue to build a response to the chapter Essential Question, go to your **Essential Questions Journal**.

1. Guiding Question Use your completed flowchart to answer this question: How has the development of different media helped inform the public about politics?

Key Terms and Comprehension

- Cite an example of an influential **medium** in our society.
- What is the status of newspapers today compared to 1980, and what are the likely explanations for this change?
- What is the media's role in shaping the **public agenda**?

- What are **sound bites**, and what do they suggest about the limits of media influence?

Critical Thinking

- Predict Consequences** What might happen to the power of the media if the 1st Amendment guarantee of freedom of the press were to be repealed?
- Recognize Cause and Effect** What are some of the effects of the fact that most television viewers want to be entertained rather than informed?

Quick Write

Cause-and-Effect Essay: Write a Thesis Statement A thesis states specifically what you will cover in your essay. Write a thesis statement for a cause-and-effect essay on the topic you chose in Section 1. You will use your thesis to develop an organizational structure for your essay.

Assessment Answers

1. The development of mass media enabled political news to be spread more widely and more quickly. Early newspapers spurred colonists toward revolution. Magazines communicated news nationally until radio and television arrived. Magazines promoted reforms in the early 1900s, and top news magazines remain an important source today. Radio enabled Franklin Roosevelt to speak directly to the people during the Depression and war years. Today, all-news stations cover politics, and talk radio offers political opinion. The development of television enabled people to see and hear political figures. Today television

is our main source of political information. The Internet is a growing source. Most other media also have an online presence. The Internet allows citizens easily to join the political discussion.

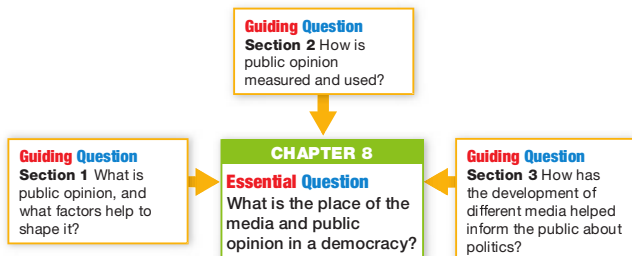
- Examples include television, the Internet, newspapers, radio, and magazines.
- Newspapers have been declining, due mainly to competition from radio, television, and the Internet.
- The media focus public attention on particular issues by emphasizing some things and ignoring or downplaying others.

5. Sound bites are snappy reports that can be aired in about 30 or 45 seconds. They suggest that media coverage often stresses style more than substance.

6. Possible answer: Powerful interests or the government might control the information people receive. Dissent could be blunted.

7. Possible answer: Television airs little public affairs programming, and staying informed requires effort.

QUICK WRITE Students should structure their essay around a clear, concise thesis statement.

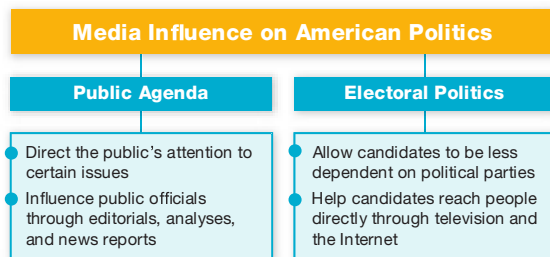


Political Dictionary

public affairs p. 215
 public opinion p. 215
 mass media p. 217
 peer group p. 218
 opinion leader p. 218
 mandate p. 220
 interest group p. 221
 public opinion poll p. 222
 straw vote p. 222
 universe p. 224
 sample p. 224
 random sample p. 224
 quota sample p. 224
 medium p. 228
 weblog p. 233
 public agenda p. 234
 sound bite p. 235

The Mass Media's Impact on Public Opinion

Benefits	Limits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help shape the public agenda Influence electoral politics In-depth media coverage is available to those who look for it, particularly on the Internet. Changing nature of the media allows for more people to actively participate in discussions. Publication of poll results allows media to show how public opinion is measured. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only a small number of people follow media very closely. People tend to be selective in choosing political coverage. Much media content is shallow and unrelated to political affairs. Media, such as radio and television, tend to carry only short reports on general news and politics. Newspapers and television depend on advertising revenue, which can sometimes dictate coverage.



Have students download the digital resources available at Government on the Go for review and remediation.

STUDY TIPS

Choosing Partners for a Study Group Explain that study groups are an excellent way to review information and study for tests. When deciding whom to include in their groups, students should consider which of their peers (1) have similar goals, (2) have comparable study habits, including the time of day they prefer to study (or are available) and their learning style, and (3) have a personality that will complement their own. Suggest that students avoid including friends in their study groups. This choice can lead to more visiting than studying. Students should also consider partners who will balance their own skills and knowledge, who are able to stay on track, and who are self-motivated and can motivate others to learn.

ASSESSMENT AT A GLANCE

Tests and Quizzes

Section Assessments
 Section Quizzes A and B, Unit 2 **All-in-One**
 Chapter Assessment
 Chapter Tests A and B, Unit 2 **All-in-One**
 Document-Based Assessment
 Progress Monitoring Online
 ExamView Test Bank

Performance Assessment

Essential Questions Journal
 Debate, p. 217
 Assessment Rubrics, **All-in-One**

For More Information

To learn more about the media and public opinion, refer to these sources or assign them to students:

- L1** Hibbert, Adam. *The Power of the Media*. Smart Apple Media, 2006.
- L2** Kallen, Stuart A., ed. *Media Bias*. Greenhaven Press, 2004.
- L3** Moore, David W. *The Opinion Makers: An Insider Exposes the Truth Behind the Polls*. Beacon Press, 2008.
- L4** Bishop, George F. *The Illusion of Public Opinion: Fact and Artifact in American Public Opinion Polls*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2004.

Chapter Assessment

COMPREHENSION AND CRITICAL THINKING

SECTION 1

1. (a) people who hold the same opinion on some particular public issue (b) because public opinion includes only those views that relate to public affairs—politics, public issues, and the making of public policies
2. (a) family and school (b) the mass media, peer groups, opinion leaders, and historic events
3. (a) possible response: being well liked, respected, prominent, trusted; having authority (b) crises, such as an economic downturn or war

SECTION 2

4. (a) The cartoon suggests that pollsters keep asking the same questions. A “second opinion” suggests that if the pollster doesn’t like the first response, he’ll see if he can get a different response the next time. (b) The cartoonist suggests that polls are mainly about producing a particular result rather than finding out true opinion.
5. (a) Politicians want to know public opinion to plan campaign strategy and to craft policies that people want. (b) Possible answer: You can learn about the views of the individuals who wrote these opinions, but you cannot learn how many people share the opinions. (c) Voters can express their opinion in elections by voting for candidates with whom they agree on the issues. However, elections are an inaccurate measure of public opinion because voters often choose candidates based on factors other than the issues.
6. (a) because they use valid scientific techniques in an attempt to identify the true opinion of a particular population (b) It must define the universe, include a representative sample of the chosen universe, include valid questions, be skillfully administered in a way that does not prejudice the results, and be accurately analyzed and reported.
7. (a) Polls have trouble measuring the intensity, stability, and relevance of the opinions they report. (b) that polls shape the opinions they are supposed to measure (c) Polls measure a sample, not the whole universe, and projections based on samples have a margin of error. Also, events might occur between the poll and the election that change voters’ minds.

Comprehension and Critical Thinking

Section 1

1. (a) What constitutes a “public” in the United States? (b) Why is the opinion of the public about a popular movie or television program not a good example of public opinion?
2. (a) What are the earliest influences on a person’s attitudes about public matters? (b) What are factors that might influence a person’s public opinions after he or she leaves school?
3. (a) What factors do you think give an opinion leader the ability to shape public opinion? (b) What kinds of historic events are most likely to lead to a significant change in public opinion?

Section 2

4. **Analyze Political Cartoons** (a) What does this cartoon suggest about opinion polls? (b) How does the cartoon exaggerate or downplay the import of opinion polls?



Apply What You’ve Learned

12. **Essential Question Activity** For five days, keep a log of all the time you spend viewing or otherwise interacting with a form of mass media. In addition to keeping track of the number of hours you spend, record:
(a) what programs you watch or listen to, and what articles you read;
(b) whether the program discusses any public affairs topics (include entertainment programs that deal with public affairs topics); and
(c) what you learned about public affairs.

13. **Essential Question Assessment** Based on your research and the content you have learned in this chapter, write a newspaper editorial that helps to answer the Essential Question: **What is the place of the media and public opinion in a democracy?** Your editorial should focus on your interaction with the media and how or whether it had any impact on your opinions on public affairs.

Essential Questions Journal To respond to the chapter Essential Question, go to your **Essential Questions Journal**.

SECTION 3

8. (a) Possible answer: People are exposed to television more than any other media. (b) The growth of the Internet has caused other media to develop their own presence on the Web.
9. (a) The media play a large role in shaping the public agenda and influencing elections. (b) To gain media exposure, politicians must focus less on delivering comprehensive information and more on crafting interesting sound bites that fit easily into the brief story format of newscasts.

5. (a) Why are many interested in learning the content of public opinion? (b) What can you learn by examining such measures of public opinion as magazine and newspaper articles, editorials, and letters to the editor? (c) What is the relationship between elections and public opinion?
6. (a) Why are scientifically conducted polls described as the best measure of public opinion? (b) What features must a poll have in order to be considered an accurate measure of public opinion?
7. (a) What are three factors that even scientifically constructed polls have difficulty accounting for? (b) In addition to their occasional inaccuracy, what is another common criticism of polls? (c) Why do polls sometimes differ from election results?

Section 3

8. (a) What makes television perhaps the most effective of the different forms of media? (b) How has the growth of the Internet affected other media?
9. (a) What are the two ways the media affect politics? (b) How does the concept of the “sound bite” illustrate how the media affect politicians and how they work today?
10. (a) How does the content of most media programming limit the media’s influence on public opinion? (b) How do the attitudes of the American people affect the influence of the media on public opinion?

Writing About Government

11. Use your Quick Write exercises from each Section Assessment to write a cause-and-effect essay about the public affairs issue you selected in Section 1. Be sure to clearly highlight the causes and effects of the issue. Note that there can be multiple causes. See pp. S3–S5 in the Skills Handbook.

10. (a) Most media content contains little on public affairs, and many media just skim the news rather than provide in-depth coverage. Limited and shallow coverage reduces the media’s influence on public opinion. (b) Most Americans rely on the major media for entertainment more than for information. Advertisers want the media to give people what they want. As a result, the most widely used media provide little information on public affairs, and people who want information must seek it out.

Document-Based Assessment

The Impact of Television Media on Political Events

In 1960, most people who listened to the Nixon-Kennedy debates on the radio thought the candidates performed equally well, but for those who watched the debates on television, people thought Kennedy looked vibrant while Nixon looked pale and listless. The power of the media to influence public opinion—and shape history—is well demonstrated in United States history, as shown in the documents below.

Document 1

The Nixon-Kennedy debates' significance extended well beyond 1960. The use of television to transmit an image or idea instantly to millions soon made presidential campaigns more of a spectator sport—leading to campaign concepts and phrases such as 'catchy sound bites,' the 'likability' factor and mass marketing.

—Excerpt from "JFK, Nixon usher in marriage of TV, politics" by Greg Botelho from cnn.com

Document 2



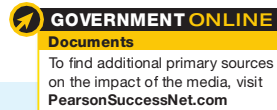
Document 3

In the area of political affairs, the impact of television has been widely condemned. As the dominant form of mass communication, television is said to have contributed to a variety of maladies including reduced voter turnout, discounting of substantive issues in political campaigns, decline of the political parties, [and] automatic reelection of incumbents. . . . As the public's 'mind's eye,' television effectively sets the political agenda; the themes and issues that are repeated in television news coverage become the priorities of viewers.

—Excerpt from *Is Anyone Responsible?: How Television Frames Political Issues* by Shanto Iyengar

Use your knowledge of the media and Documents 1–3 to answer the following questions.

- Which statement best summarizes Document 1?
 - The use of television in the Nixon-Kennedy debates led to new campaign concepts.
 - The significance of the Nixon-Kennedy debates was great.
 - Presidential campaigns as they were known changed dramatically when television broadcasted the debates.
 - The phrase "catchy sound bites" came out of the debates.
- What is the cartoonist's point of view regarding television news in Document 2?
- What does Document 3 suggest about the influence of television?
- Pull It Together** How do you think the impact of television, and the media in general, will change over time? Consider audience, users, and technology.



To find additional primary sources on the impact of the media, visit PearsonSuccessNet.com


DOCUMENT-BASED ASSESSMENT

- A
- The cartoon suggests that the news has a political bias. "Interactive" news could allow the user to "adjust" that bias to get news that is more liberal or more conservative.
- It suggests that television has had a negative impact on public affairs in several ways. It has depressed voter turnout, discounted campaign issues, contributed to the decline of political parties, and determined public priorities.
- A good response will acknowledge both sides of the issue and argue persuasively for one or another viewpoint.

L2 Differentiate Students use all the documents on the page to support their thesis.

L3 Differentiate Students include additional information available online at PearsonSuccessNet.com.

L4 Differentiate Students use materials from the textbook, the online information at PearsonSuccessNet.com, and do additional research to support their views.

 **Go Online to PearsonSuccessNet.com** for a student rubric and extra documents.

WRITING ABOUT GOVERNMENT

- Students' essays should show cause-and-effect relationships for their selected issue.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

- Students should keep a thorough record of their media usage.
- A good student editorial will use findings and information from the chapter to answer the question, "What is the place of the media and public opinion in a democracy?"

Introduce the Chapter

Essential Questions:

UNIT 2

In what ways should people participate in public affairs?

CHAPTER 9

To what extent do interest groups advance or harm democracy?

ACTIVATE PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

Have students examine the image and quotation on these pages. Ask: **To what kind of organization do the people in the image belong?** (*labor union*) **What do you think they are doing?** (*demonstrating to pressure authorities to get something they want*) **Think about an organization to which you belong. Why did you choose to join?** (*Students should recognize that they join organizations because they share interests or goals with the group's members.*) In this chapter, students will learn about interest groups. Tell students to begin to explore interest groups by completing the Chapter 9 Essential Question Warmup Activity in the **Essential Questions Journal**. Discuss their responses as a class.

BEFORE READING

L2 ELL Differentiate Chapter 9 Prereading and Vocabulary Worksheet (Unit 2 All-in-One, p. 213)

SUCCESSNET STUDENT AND TEACHER CENTER

Visit **PearsonSuccessNet.com** for downloadable resources that allow students and teachers to connect with government “on the go.”

DIGITAL LESSON PRESENTATION

The digital lesson presentation supports the print lesson with activities and summaries of key concepts.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

COMPARE VIEWPOINTS

You may wish to teach comparing viewpoints as a distinct skill within Section 2 of this chapter. Use the Chapter 9 Skills Worksheet (Unit 2 All-in-One, p. 231) to help students learn the steps in comparing viewpoints. The worksheet presents the viewpoints of two different interest groups. Students must read the excerpts and then answer questions. For L2 and L1 students, assign the adapted Skill Activity (Unit 2 All-in-One, p. 232).



The chapter WebQuest challenges students to answer the chapter Essential Question about interest groups and their effect on democracy.



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Block Scheduling

BLOCK 1: Teach the Section 1 lesson and the Section 2 lesson in their entirety. Include the Extend activity for Section 2.

BLOCK 2: Teach the Section 3 lesson in its entirety. Assign the Extend activities.