

“A New Definition For What’s News”

A viewer response guide for PBS *Frontline*'s segment on what is news

1. During the introduction, one newscaster says: “We’re judging journalism by the same standards that we apply to entertainment. That may be one of the greatest tragedies in the history of journalism.” Respond to this statement. What do you think those standards are? Why are those standards a bad fit for journalism?
2. A producer of Jon Stewart’s *Comedy Central* said that the show’s success is really a reflection of other people’s/news organizations’ failures. What do you think he means here? How are news organizations failing?
3. The same producer describes today’s media as “horrible news, broadcast horribly.” Is this too cynical? Are we putting too much pressure on journalists to keep us informed when we, too, share the obligation and responsibility to be well-informed citizens?
4. ABC President David Westin said “News is what’s important to people.” What if what’s important to people isn’t useful or current? How do journalists create content that addresses this dilemma or balances out what people need to know, want to know, and should know?