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IB Language & Literature, Year 1
Written Task 1, Part II: Language & Mass Communication

Rationale

This task relates to the Language and Mass Communication course, with reference to *Zeitoun*, by Dave Eggers. I chose to write an opinion column about why it is important for high school students to learn about mass media. Its purpose is to raise awareness about the possible factors in mass media that can lead to a bend in the truth. With connections to *Zeitoun*, referencing to the over exaggeration in the media about events following the storm. I chose this text type because I have a strong opinion about this topic and want to voice that opinion. In an opinion column, one perspective is heavily assessed and no counter arguments need to be addressed. Some techniques I use throughout my task are, the presence of reliable facts, credited to the original author, the use of a persuasive tone when I convey my points, and I provide a solution to the problem I have brought up. To put my task in context, it is essential for the reader to know that the book *Zeitoun* was written about a man who lived in New Orleans and waited out Hurricane Katrina in his uptown home. Furthermore, the reader needs to understand that right after the Hurricane, there was a massive overflow of news stories about the bad condition of New Orleans. I wrote this task from my own perspective and based off my own ideas. The intended audience is high school teachers and administrators. One publication that would print my task would be Yes! Magazine. What I am addressing in my task is that it is important for people to know how to analyze mass media and be able to question what they see and hear, and not just believe everything right away.

Word Count: 290

Mass Media in Context

One thing that has started taking our world by storm is the new forms of media that are surfacing. Mass media such as Facebook and Twitter are growing and engulfing the current generation. According to Amanda Lenhart a member of the Pew Research Center, 92% of teens in the U.S. go online daily. There are countless different sites, users, and information traveling around the World Wide Web. Other media such as the news or the newspaper can be similar in that, based on the different networks and who funds those networks, they can have their own bias on certain topics. The media has been known to manipulate and bend the truth. For example, according to David Badash credited by The New Civil Rights Movement, fact checkers have found that 60% of what Fox News reports is false. It can be hard sometimes to tell what is 100% truthful and what has been tampered with.

Currently in my English class at school we are studying mass media. We are learning about the different forms of media and how perspective is everything. We are comparing sources of media to others and analyzing the different language that is used based on race, sex and how they affect the media consumers. These are all important aspects to keep in mind when consuming media. Media can stretch the truth from the actual story or be given from an unreliable source. It's important to know that most media will contain some form of bias. Just simply knowing that all media forms will contain some bias, including this essay, would build awareness. The news and other forms of media tend to worry people into believing their reports

even though a specific story can have multiple different perspectives and bias within the story. A lot of the worry that people get from watching the news is based on stories that could have been exaggerated. For example, after Hurricane Katrina there were many publications circulating about the skyrocketed crime, murder, and rape rates. In our english class we read *Zeitoun*, by Dave Eggers, in which the main character, Abdulrahman Zeitoun, stays in New Orleans to wait out the storm. Meanwhile, his wife, Kathy, is in Phenix, listening to reports of the post storm city on the radio. After a while she has to turn the radio off and keep it off, because all it was doing was worry her. After the storm died down and New Orleans became inhabitable again, many of those stories were put to rest with claims that they were far from the truth. According to Lou Dolinar, a writer for Real Clear Politics, the national media even admitted to the rape and murder reports being far from accurate.

In this day and age, nothing is private. The news runs on every major network 24/7 and there is never a break in social media. There are countless different perspectives, controversies and stories that are being addressed. We, as the human race have created a system that connects us all to one another and allows information to spread like wildfire. This is a little intimidating because everyone's personal information is just a few clicks away. Ever try Googling yourself? Just by simply putting your name into the Google search engine it can bring up the business you are associated with, countless pictures and profiles from different social networking sites, and much more. Mass media has become crucial in our society, it is always present, almost anywhere you go. There are new types of problems that have arose from the advancement of technology and mass media. Online scams rip off almost 4 million people a year, according to

citizensadvice.org, and countless children fall victim to cyberbullying. There are many things that the population needs to be aware of every time they go online.

Even though the World Wide Web has some frightening aspects to it, there are also a lot of benefits. These benefits include, fast acting relief aid to those who need it, exercising the world's coexistence, and the flow and exchange of brilliant ideas. After the earthquake that swept Haiti on 12 January, 2010, US coast guards were in the area giving relief within 24 hours. Furthermore, the whole world knew about the ISIS bombings in Paris just minutes after it happened. So, mass media provides a world wide connection that helps everyone communicate, receive and provide necessary aid, and spread important information quickly.

For all of these reasons, I believe that high school English teachers should be required to teach a mass media unit. I think it is important that high schooler's know the dangers of believing everything you read and hear through media. I hope that in the future we can all learn to question what we hear through media and will not believe everything that is told to us. Media can be manipulative and arrogant, and if people aren't taught how to intemperately use media they can also become arrogant.

Word count: 829

Works Cited

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