

Activity 9

Headline Hysterics

Aim: Explore how different groups – including young people - are portrayed in the media

Age: 12+

Time: 30 mins

Materials: Headlines from national and international newspapers, flipchart, markers, post-it notes.

What to do:

Preparation: Find examples of headlines from Irish and international newspapers relating to young people to use with your group. Include some examples which are particularly negative or exaggerated. Blank out one of the key words in the headline (see the underlined word in the headlines given here). You can start with headlines about young people, and move on to headlines about other issues – Immigration, Travellers, Aid and Development.

Part 1:

Step 1: Brainstorm with your group: What does the term 'media' mean? What types of media can you think of? Who is the media? Newspapers, TV channels, all of us? Who controls the media? Does the media change over time, or remain the same?

Step 2: Show the blanked headlines to the participants. In smaller groups of 3-4 people, ask them to guess what the missing word might be. They can choose to put a positive or negative word. Hand out post-it notes and ask them to write their guess on a post-it and stick it in the blank space.

Step 3: Then read out the actual headlines, and award points for each right answer.

Step 4: Continue with other headlines and the first team to three points wins.

Alternative: If participants prefer working in smaller groups, hand out a sheet with all the headlines (including blanked words), and give them 5 minutes to complete as many headlines as possible. After the 5 minutes is up, have the groups read out their 'new' headlines. Then read out the actual headlines, and see how many each group got right.

Examples of Headlines about Young People:

- ☆ 'Youths attack anti-racism protest in Belfast' (Irish Examiner, 16 June 2009)
- ☆ 'Rise of the Teenage Mothers' (Independent, 21 February 2009)
- ☆ 'Half of teenagers binge-drink and use illegal drugs' (Independent, 23 May 2008)
- ☆ 'Fireman injured by youths' (Irish Times, 2 February 2000)
- ☆ 'Youths climb into the Aras' (Irish Times, 4 April 1997)

DID YOU KNOW?

Localise organisation has been working in Ireland for about 40 years through a programme of 'Caring in the Community'. In 2010, young people from a school in Clondalkin participating in a Localise programme designed a project called 'Heroes in Hoodies' in order to promote a positive image of their school and the students. Many of the students wore hoodies and found out that some older people in the area found them intimidating. The students organised a social event at their local active retirement club and presented hoodies that they had designed themselves to the older people.

Part 2:

Do the same activity using the following examples of headlines about Asylum Seekers, Refugees and other Immigrants, the Traveller Community and international development.

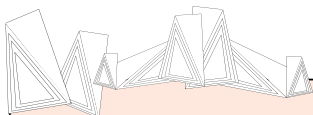
- ☆ 'Just 38pc of failed asylum seekers deported' (Irish Independent, June 22 2010)
- ☆ 'Immigrants must go home', (Irish independent 1 March 2009)
- ☆ 'Government urged to remove voting rights for asylum-seekers' (Irish Times 5 October 2004)
- ☆ 'Travellers set up illegal camp at beauty spot', (Irish Independent 7 June 2006)
- ☆ 'Report shows Traveller community viewed as 'demanding' by doctors', (Irish Independent 12 January 2002)
- ☆ 'Time To Get Tough On Tinker Terror 'Culture'' (Sunday Independent, 28 January 1996)
- ☆ 'France urged to repay Haiti billions paid for its independence' (the Guardian, Sunday 15 August 2010)
- ☆ 'Africa's dying again', (Daily Mirror, 21 May 2002)

Debrief: How many headlines did the groups guess correctly? Were you surprised by the tone of the headlines? Were the headlines mainly positive or negative? What was positive/negative about them? Who writes the stories? Why are groups such as young people or the Traveller community represented in particular ways? How does this affect different groups? How would you feel if the headlines were about you? Do you have a right to object? To whom?



DID YOU KNOW? Research carried out by NYCI and the Equality Authority in Ireland in 2006 showed that 44% of news stories about young men were related to crime and violence. What effect does that have on young men? On all young people? On our communities? Find the research entitled 'Inequality and the Stereotyping of Young People' on www.youth.ie/publications/

If you have a complaint about an image or message received on TV/Radio/Newspaper in Ireland, you can lodge your complaint with the Press Ombudsman: <http://www.pressombudsman.ie/> or the Broadcasting Authority: <http://www.bci.ie/>]



DID YOU KNOW? During the 1980's, Irish people in the UK launched a campaign to combat anti-Irish racism. The anti-Irish insults included cartoons and headlines calling people 'thick Paddies' and stating that Irish people were a 'different race'. The Greater London Authority supported the campaign by publishing a resource in 1984 which criticised anti-Irish feeling in British politics, press and society.

Remember, if you feel strongly about a news story which is unfair to young people, contact the news editor to explain why the story is unfair. Use the statistics from the NYCI research to help you. In response to an article called 'Teen tribes' printed in the Independent Newspaper (15 August 2005), one teenager had their response printed:

<http://www.independent.ie/opinion/letters/dont-classify-teenagers-245327.html>



Action Idea! Come up with positive headlines about the young people in your area. Make them into posters and hang them in your youth club. Write a 'good news' story about young people and send it to a newspaper and ask them to print it.