

Topic: The media and public opinion

Lesson: The view of the media	KS or Year Group: Year 9
Resources: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Resource 1 – World map2. SKY video 13. SKY video 24. Resource 2 - news article on inflation in Zimbabwe5. Resource 3 - Zimbabwe factsheet	Outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students learn about the role of the media.• Students begin to appreciate different cultures and countries.• Students learn the positive and the negative aspects of media coverage.

National Curriculum

Key Processes: 2.1a, 2.1c

Range and Content: 3d

Lesson

This lesson looks at the role of the media in portraying countries and cultures in a certain way. In particular, it focuses on the negative and positive aspects of media coverage of African news stories.

Extended starter

- Where is Zimbabwe? Using **Resource 1 – World map**, get students to attempt to highlight which continent it is in.
- Ask students to ‘brainstorm’ what words come to mind when they hear the word Africa. Write ten words up on the board. Pull out the most common words or concepts and highlight that this is their ‘preconception’ of life in Africa. Define ‘preconception’ as a set of opinions or beliefs that are not necessarily based on proven facts, first-hand knowledge or balanced information and may therefore be inaccurate.

Main activity

Activity 1:

- Ask the students to try and mention famous Africans. See how many they can name that are not sportsmen. Give them two minutes to do this themselves and see who can name the most.
- Ask the students to think of words associated with Africa or Zimbabwe that are only positive. Give them two minutes to do this themselves and see who can name the most.
- Hold a brief class discussion on why it is harder to think of positive images. Try and get the students to think of where they might get their limited and negative impressions from (i.e. the media).
- View **SKY video 1**. What impression does this video about war in the Congo give about Africa in general? Images of Africa in the media tend to be overwhelmingly negative. Do they think this is an accurate reflection of life in Africa or do they think we are possibly getting a distorted view? Why might the media be prone to giving a distorted view?
- Now ask students to think in general terms about what the media does well. Put them up on the board.
- View **SKY video 2**. This report exposes failures in the government's promise to rid hospitals of superbugs. It does a valuable service to the public by bringing an important story to light.

Activity 2:

- Read **Resource 2 – news article on inflation in Zimbabwe**.
- Do they think this news article is presenting a distorted view of Zimbabwe or bringing an important story to light? Or both? Emphasise that this is an important and difficult question and it is impossible to come up with a quick answer. Nevertheless, the media undoubtedly plays an important role in showing the world what is happening inside an unstable country like Zimbabwe.

Plenary

Ask the students to summarise the main findings, which should include discussion of the way the media concentrates on negative images but also plays a vital part in showing what is wrong in the world.

Aim higher

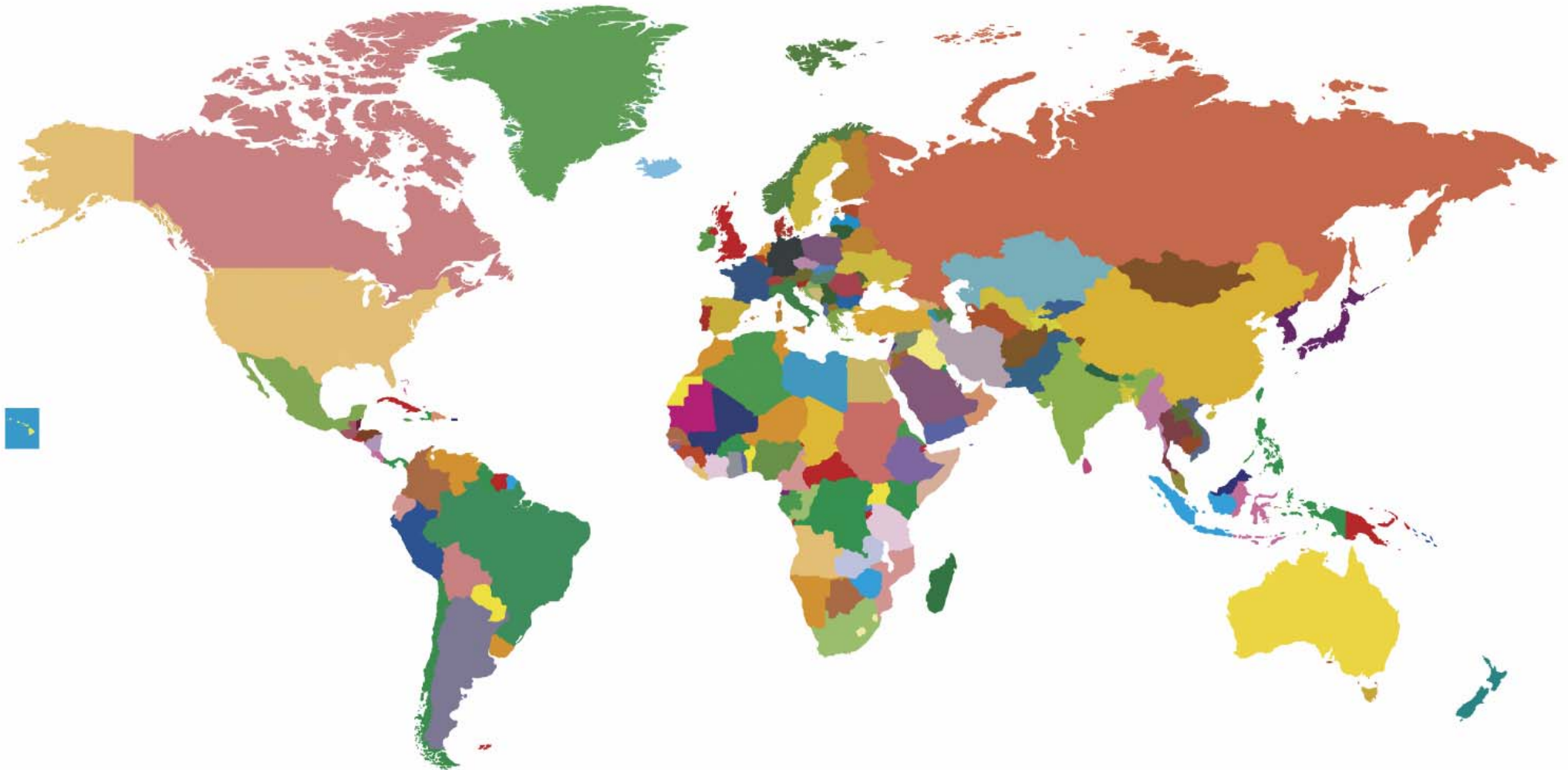
Ask the students to attempt the following extension activity at home. Using **Resource 3 - Zimbabwe factsheet**, pick the five most interesting things from the US State Department's factfile on Zimbabwe and ask the students to assess the value-judgements inherent in the source. What tone is taken towards these facts by the US government? How objective would they consider this factsheet? What is their own opinion of the partiality of the US government's angle on Zimbabwean affairs? How might it be justified?

This exercise could form the starting point of a discussion on how governments and powerful institutions can in turn shape the media's view of news stories.

Summary of key learning

- Students learn key ideas about the role of the media.
- Students develop understanding about other cultures.

Resource 1 - World map



Resource 2 – news article on inflation in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe Inflation Rockets Out Of Control

Zimbabwe's inflation will rocket to 1.5m% before the end of the year as the country "commits regime change on itself", the US ambassador to Harare has predicted.

Christopher Dell has forecast massive disruption and instability that will eventually drive President Robert Mugabe from office.

He says prices are going up twice a day, sapping popular confidence in a government that is now "committing regime change on itself".

Zimbabwe's official inflation is 4,500% but independent economists and retailers say it is actually above 11,000% and picking up speed.

Mr Dell said: "I believe inflation will hit 1.5m% by the end of 2007. I know that sounds stratospheric but, looking at the way things are going, I believe it is a modest forecast."

He added: "People have completely lost faith in the currency and that means they have lost faith in the government that issues it.

"By carrying out disastrous economic policies, the Mugabe government is committing regime change upon itself.

"Things have reached a critical point. I believe the excitement will come in a matter of months, if not weeks. The Mugabe government is reaching end game, it is running out of options."

Supermarkets' trollies lie idle as few can afford to buy more than a handful of goods.

At golf courses, players pay for their drinks before they set off on their round – because the price will have gone up by the time they have finished the 18th hole.

One individual was recently told by a pension company that it would no longer send him statements as his fund was worth less than the price of a stamp.

Tony Hawkins, Professor of Economics at the University of Zimbabwe, said that no one holds cash in the country any more. "People spend it as soon as they get it.

"Goods hold their value, not money. The government has run out of solutions."

Courtesy of SKY News

Resource 3 – Zimbabwe fact sheet

US State Department one-pager on human rights, democracy in Zimbabwe

U.S. Department of State
Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor
Bureau of Public Affairs
December 3, 2007

ZIMBABWE: ESCALATING VIOLENCE

“In Zimbabwe, ordinary citizens suffer under a tyrannical regime. The government has cracked down on peaceful calls for reform and forced millions to flee their homeland. The behavior of the Mugabe regime is an assault on its people -- and an affront to the principles of the Universal Declaration.”

– President George W. Bush

REGIME CRACKDOWN: 2007 is the worst year yet for defenders of freedom in Zimbabwe. Despite recent efforts by regional leaders to resolve the ongoing crisis, the assault against human rights and democracy by Robert Mugabe’s government has accelerated.

THE CONSENSUS: Numerous internationally recognized organizations agree that the Mugabe regime has failed to respect the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and note that human rights abuses, particularly political violence, are on the rise. Further, Amnesty International, Article 19, Human Rights Watch, the International Bar Association, and Redress, among others, contend that the Mugabe government has failed to protect rights set forth in the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights.

THE VICTIMS: The Mugabe regime has used Zimbabwean security and intelligence forces and youth militias to intensify its campaign against peaceful citizens exercising their rights to freedom of expression, assembly, and association. Zimbabweans from all walks of life have been targeted, including the political opposition, democracy and human rights activists, religious leaders, labor unions, women’s groups, journalists, and students. Victims are attacked at locations across the country, including homes, workplaces, shopping centers, university campuses, peaceful rallies, and police stations.

6,000 VIOLATIONS AND COUNTING: Recent reporting from Zimbabwean NGOs suggests an appalling trend: Over 6,000 instances of human rights abuse have been reported since the beginning of 2007, with at least 500 violations occurring each month/2 and over 1,400 attacks against students alone.

- Disappearances and abductions: Over 90 reports of politically motivated kidnapping and disappearance.
- Torture and assault: 3,463 victims of torture and assault received medical treatment in 2007, nearly triple the 1,185 victims recorded in 2006. Victims report beatings with whips and cables, suspension, and electric shock.
- Arrests and detention: More than 1,200 cases, though few go to trial or result in conviction.

The view of the media

- Harassment and intimidation: Over 3,000 incidents have targeted the political opposition, civil society, and ordinary citizens.
- Denial of basic needs: The Mugabe regime's interference with humanitarian activities, partisan distribution of food, and refusal of medical treatment to victims of politically motivated violence continues.
- Ongoing repression: With over 2,000 complaints recorded, broad restrictions on freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly, and association persist.

Sources:

1/Zimbabwe: Human Rights in Crisis, Shadow Report to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, Amnesty International, May 2007

2/Zimbabwe Peace Project

3/Students Solidarity Trust

4/Zimbabwe Association of Doctors for Human Rights

5/Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum

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