

# Is this news?

## Discussion

Look at two people's opinions on television news. Which person do you most agree with?

"The public has a right to know what's happening. I think they should not cut out anything. People are mature enough to take in the reality of what happens in the world every day."

"TV news sometimes seems more like a show. They want a bigger audience so they show shocking or provocative images. TV news should report the news, not try to shock people."

Can you think of a recent example of something sensational appearing on the news?

## Reading

Read the letter and answer this question:

Does the writer have a point or is (s)he being too sensitive?

### TO THE PRODUCER(S) AT CHANNEL 8

Dear Sirs,

I must say that I was shocked and outraged by your broadcast of the images of the Concorde crash last week. Was it really necessary to show the plane actually going down? This was prime-time television. Did it not occur to you that there are children watching at 8 o'clock in the evening? My 7-year-old little girl didn't sleep for three nights! The images still haunt me now as they will for a long time, I am sure. How dare you traumatise people's lives like that!

I am a responsible parent who believes that it is the job of news agencies to report the news without showing unnecessarily sensational or graphic images simply to attract viewers. The terrible things that happen in the world are not meant to be used as entertainment nor to increase your ratings.

You can be sure that I will no longer be watching your television news broadcast and I will be encouraging all my friends and relatives to boycott it too.

Yours faithfully,  
Chris Hale

## Discussion

1. Which one of the factors below do you think most motivated the parent to write the letter?

*The time of the broadcast.*

*The fact that the images showed people dying.*

*The fact that children were watching.*

*The fact that the images were unnecessary.*

*The suspicion that the images were used to improve the station's ratings.*

2. Would the same factor have motivated you to write a letter?

3. Do you agree with the parent? Why/why not?

4. Do you think a letter like this one would have any effect on the producers of the news programme?

5. Do you think the parent who wrote the letter is a father or a mother? Why?

## Discussion

Work in groups of three or four. You are a team of news editors at a national television station. The news programme is broadcast during prime time when children will be watching. Look at today's possible stories and decide together whether the images should be broadcast or not. If they cannot be broadcast at prime time, could they be shown in the late news, or should the film clips be censored completely?

1. Protest: images of protesters and activists being excessively beaten by police.
2. Fashion show: hot fashion designer, Roberto Nudo, shows his new line of transparent evening wear – most of the models' bodies can be seen – almost as if they were wearing nothing.
3. Report on violence in films: examples of violent scenes from current blockbuster movies which have been criticised for having too much violence.
4. Suicide: a relatively unknown politician commits suicide by shooting himself in the head – all caught on film.
5. War: fighting breaks out in a sensitive region of the world, graphic images of casualties on both sides.
6. Prison riot: a riot erupts in a large overcrowded prison; images include the decapitation of three inmates.
7. Special report on drinking and driving: film clips of the scene of serious accidents caused by drunken drivers, including images of dead bodies and families of the victims.
8. Bank robbery caught on film: policeman shot dead. The camera shows a pool of blood on the floor of the bank next to the body.
9. Middle East conflict: child shot dead when caught in crossfire between Israeli and Palestinian soldiers – pictures of the dead child being carried by his father and mother.
10. Freak weather: a large wave drags ten people into the sea – caught on home-video.
11. Report on the safety of the meat trade: scenes showing pigs, cows and sheep being slaughtered in abattoirs.
12. Ice hockey: a player is left blind in one eye after an attack by another player. The slow-motion camera shows exactly how it happened in graphic detail.

Report your decisions to the class.

## Language

Complete these expressions with words from above:

- |                                       |                              |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| a. excessively . . . . . by police    | g. shot . . . . .            |
| b. a relatively . . . . . politician  | h. caught in . . . . .       |
| c. fighting . . . . . out             | i. freak . . . . .           |
| d. a sensitive . . . . . of the world | j. the meat . . . . .        |
| e. a large . . . . . prison           | k. left . . . . . in one eye |
| f. . . . . clips                      | l. in . . . . . detail       |

## Discussion

Which countries today have censorship of the press and television? Why?

Has your country ever had censorship? When? Why?

Do you think the internet will make censorship a thing of the past?