

Finding out about the world from television news reading passage

Finding out about the world from television news

Throughout *The Ideological Octopus* (1991), Justin Lewis raises an essential point regarding the formal structure of television news. As he points out, television news lacks the narrative element that, in other genres, serves to grab the interest of the audience and encourage viewing. Lewis identifies this as being one of the primary reasons why news reporting fails to engage audiences and explains why. When people do watch it, they frequently cannot grasp it. Lewis makes the argument that one fundamental issue with watching television news is that the storytelling style provides the viewer with the punchline before the joke – because the main point (the headline) is conveyed right at the beginning, thereafter the programme by the understanding of the term deals with fewer and fewer critical matters. Thus, in television news, our curiosity is not sparked by a mystery that is secondary to bring a satisfying resolution, as is so frequently the case in fictional storylines. In Lewis's perspective, there is no mystery in news channels whose explanation will motivate viewers to tune in. As he simply argues, 'If we attempted to create a television broadcast with a framework that would entirely fail to grab an audience's interest, we might (eventually) arrive at the format of the typical television news programme (Lewis 1991).

Lewis also provides a fascinating contrast between the high-status phenomena of news programs and the minimal genre of soap operas in this respect. He notes that the latter has the most extensive usage of effective storytelling patterns. Soap opera, with its multiple storylines, might be viewed, in formal situations, as the most effective form of television for cultivating audience attention, much more so than television news. Part of Lewis's supposition is problematic in this instance. There are counterarguments to his ideas, such as sports news programmes that reflect the problematic shows the role he identifies but is still popular, at least among certain types of listeners. Furthermore, he may overstate the role of structure as opposed to content relevance in creating the foundation for programming appeal. Nonetheless, I would argue that his argument in this regard is quite interesting.

Lewis believes not only that soap opera is more descriptively interesting than news programs in formal terms, but also because the world of television fiction is considerably closer to the lives of the majority of people compared to that of news programs. According to him, this is because the world of television fiction often reflects the actual world. They can quickly connect to the moral difficulties and emotional problems experienced by the actors in their favourite soap opera, for example. In contrast, the world of television news is considerably far in all senses; it is a socially distant world occupied by a different race of exceptional or "elite" individuals, the world of "they" rather than "we." This is also why 'most people feel better capable of assessing TV fiction than Television news,' as it seems closer to their own lives and the world in which they reside, whereas the world of television news may as well have been broadcast in from another planet (Lewis 1991). It appears that the faraway world of "the news" is so divorced from common experience that many viewers are incapable of exercising critical judgement. Therefore, regardless of how far they feel from it, they lack any alternate perspective on the events it depicts.

One result of this, according to Lewis, is that people who feel this type of detachment from 'global news' continue to rely on frameworks to grasp news items that originate inside the news themselves. In the absence of any alternative source of data or opinion, they are compelled to rely on the media's framework, according to his argument. Many viewers are incapable of situating the media's portrayal of events within any other critical framework (from where would they obtain it?). To this extent, argues Lewis. Gerbner, also his colleagues (see Gerbner et al. 1986; Signorielli and Morgan 1990) may be correct in assuming that viewers absorb the dominant perspectives and "associative logics" given by the media simply under their recurrence. This is not to imply that such viewers necessarily believe or explicitly accept these perspectives; rather, it is to point out that they have no other starting point, regardless of how cynical they may be about 'not believing what you see on television,' and they may therefore tend to rely on 'what was said on television. In a way, this may be considered the opposite of Hall's negotiated code. (1980), as taken over from Parkin (1973). Parkin had suggested that many working-class individuals exhibit a split consciousness,' in which they accept ideas from the dominant ideology on an abstract level, but 'bargain' or 'discount' the relevance of these ideological truths to their circumstances. Here, by contrast, we are confronted with a situation in which people frequently express cynicism in general (so that 'not believing what you see in the media is merely common sense), but in any particular case, they are frequently forced to rely on the mainstream media's account of anything beyond the realm of their direct personal experience, simply for lack of an alternative viewpoint.

Finding out about the world from television news reading questions

Question 1– 8

Complete the summary below using words from the box.

Write your answers in boxes 1-8 on your answer sheet.

According to Justin Lewis, television news lacks the **01)**_____ element of other sorts of programming. Consequently, many viewers find it uninteresting and possibly **02)**_____. This is because most **03)**_____ stuff is shown first, followed by **04)**_____ details. In television news, there is no **05)**_____ progression towards a conclusion and nothing **06)**_____ to discover. In fact, he argues that television news is an illustration of how the **07)**_____ process in the television industry may result in something that is **08)**_____ to what makes a compelling broadcast.

controversial	secondary	fast-moving	creative	upsetting
step-by-step	routine	informal	opinionated	contrary
overwhelming	additional	mysterious	story-telling	crucial
	related	diverse	informative	

contusing				repetitive
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Question 9 – 13

Are the following claims consistent with the data presented in the Reading Passage?

Write in boxes 9 - 13 of your answer sheet.

TRUE if the statement agrees with the information

FALSE if the statement contradicts the information

NOT GIVEN if there is no information on this

09) Lewis regrets that audiences prefer soap operas to televised news.

10) Lewis feels that consumers' perceptions of the dependability of television news are inconsistent.

11) According to Parkin, many members of the working class view themselves as exceptions to general ideas.

12) The author of the text feels that viewers should be less responsive to what the media conveys to them.

13) Lewis says that viewers occasionally discover that television news contradicts their worldview.

Question 14

*Complete the sentence below. Write **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** from the passage for each answer.*

14) Lewis is more concerned with the _____ than with their content.