

PRACTICE 9

Questions 1-7. Read the following passage carefully before you choose your answers.
This passage is taken from a contemporary book about the "failure of American television."

- For nearly four decades the polls have reminded the American public that it gets most of its news from television. What they have not told us is that during that period television news has changed—not only in form, but, more important by far, in substance. Even so, most of us need little reminding. We know as well as the news producers that "if it bleeds, it leads."
- Crime news, delivered in excruciating detail, has nosed out all but the most sensational news from elsewhere on the planet. We have all seen the reduction of political news—unless it involves scandalous personal behavior—to a horse race. The coverage of issues is left to PBS, ideological radio, and academic journals. In April 1997, eight universities released the results of a study of news broadcasts in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Miami, Indianapolis, Syracuse, Austin, and Eugene, Oregon, showing that coverage of blood and mayhem exceeded coverage of government, education, and race relations combined by a factor of two to one.
- What should be covered in a newscast? For that matter, what is news anyway? What should it be? We may never satisfactorily answer these questions. Joseph Pulitzer, the legendary turn-of-the-century media baron, defined news for the new managing editor of his *New York World* as "what is original, distinctive, dramatic, romantic, thrilling, unique, curious, quaint, humorous, odd, apt to be talked about without shocking good taste or lowering the general tone, good tone, and above all without impairing the confidence of the people in the truth of the stories or the character of the paper for reliability and scrupulous cleanliness."¹ Sam Zelman, vice president and executive producer of Cable News Network (CNN), looked at the question from an entirely different perspective: "News is what's important because of its impact on society; it's what people need to know and what they want to know."²
- Most thoughtful journalists would vigorously underline Zelman's first clause. But virtually all journalists would agree that the relative emphasis on what people *need* to know and what they *want* to know makes all the difference. As Martin Mayer put it in *Making News*, "All news items are necessarily in competition with all other news items, and the decision on what is 'news' today is a function of the intensity of competition."³

¹ Martin Mayer, *Making News* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1987) 15.

² Julius K. Hunter and Lynne S. Gross, *Broadcast News: The Inside Out* (St. Louis, Mo.: C. V. Mosby, 1980), 125.

³ Mayer, *Making News*, 19.

For about fifteen years after the surveys first began to reveal the primacy of television as a source of news, the news
45 that respondents were referring to was the news gathered, edited, and presented by CBS, NBC, and ABC at 7:00 p.m. on the East and West Coasts, and at 6:00 p.m. in the Midwest. These three news organizations were recognized throughout the world for their resources, credibility, and ubiquity. When
50 major news was breaking, the network news chiefs preempted entertainment programming.

That kind of journalism has virtually disappeared, but not because CNN and other twenty-four-hour news services are now available. Giving the public what it wants to see and hear,
55 not what it needs to know—the philosophy of marketing—is what brought an end to the dominance of the three network news services. Driven by technology, the change was encouraged by misregulation, and it continues to have serious consequences for the American public.

60 For a number of years the industry failed to realize what was happening. Imagine, therefore, how astonished the movers and shakers must have been when they opened their copies of *Broadcasting* in 1971 to find an ad headlined, “It’s News.” The first paragraph read: “The things you’ve been hearing from
65 various researchers and consultants are true. It’s news, your station’s news, that makes the difference between being first and out of the running in your market.”⁴

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70 The games had begun: the era of local news was soon in full flower, and the voice of the consultant was heard in the land. The most obvious effect was the development of the proprietary formats with their sophisticated graphics, distinctive news features, and heavily promoted names, *Action News*, *Eyewitness News*, and so on. The *Eyewitness* format, the
75 most successful, was devised by Al Primo when he was director at ABC-owned WXYZ-TV in Detroit and later at the ABC flagship station, WABC-TV in New York. He ascribed the success of the format to several simple but essential principles.

80 Chief among these was having “the reporters perceived as people telling the viewers about the stories they had covered in a way that viewers could identify with the story and empathize with the people involved, by writing the story so that the details were what the man-in-the-street could recognize.” Primo's
85 second law was every bit as important: “develop[ing] rapport

⁴ Philip McHugh, “The Role of the Consultant,” address to the International Radio and Television Society Fifth Annual Faculty-Industry Seminar, Tarrytown Conference Center, Tarrytown, New York, 12 November 1975, in George Dessart, ed., *Television in the Real World: A Case Study in Broadcast Management* (New York: Hastings House, 1978).

among members of the team so that their interaction [will] not be perceived as contrived.” The harbinger of “happy talk.”

90 Other secrets to the format’s success, according to Primo, included varying the order so that a sports or weather story led off the broadcast when such a story was “what people would be most interested in that night.” He also advocated heavy use of the newly developed ENG—electronic news gathering—
95 equipment, the first portable video cameras. This equipment added “credibility,” he contended, as did having a shot of the reporter involved in the action. Primo also advocated heavy use of “supers” (superimposed names) in the lower third of the screen, “so the guy at the end of the bar, who can’t hear, can identify the newscaster.”⁵ He might also have added that supers increased name recognition of anchors and reporters.

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Ironically, having stolen the national franchise from the networks, local stations soon abandoned it. Except for national stories that feature celebrity and/or salaciousness, there is precious little national news on any local station. National and
105 international news have been reduced to a thirty-second roundup, generally read over a slide bearing an imposing title, such as “Today Around the World,” that pretends to attest to the local broadcaster’s diligence in carrying out its journalistic mandate and maintaining close watch on developing news
110 wherever it may occur.

⁵ Ibid., 104/6.

1. The truth of the sentiment expressed in the adage in lines 6-7 could best be attributed to the
 - (A) increasing level of violence in modern American society
 - (B) backlash against PBS and other outlets that neglect crime news coverage
 - (C) intensity of competition in the television industry
 - (D) difficulty news outlets have in accessing information about non-sensational topics
 - (E) acceptance of priorities dating back to the earliest days of television news

2. The author would most likely view an attempt by broadcasters to cover “what people need to know” (line 33) as
 - (A) conscientious
 - (B) patronizing
 - (C) misguided
 - (D) heroic
 - (E) laughable

3. Which of the following is an accurate reading of footnote 2?
- (A) A book by C. V. Mosby was written in 1980.
 - (B) Julius K. Hunter and Lynne S. Gross edited a book by C. V. Mosby.
 - (C) The quotation in lines 32-34 appears on page 125 of a book co-written by Julius K. Hunter and Lynne S. Gross.
 - (D) *The Inside Out* is an article appearing in a journal entitled *Broadcast News*.
 - (E) C. V. Mosby edited a book written by Julius K. Hunter and Lynne S. Gross.
4. Which of the following is an accurate reading of footnote 4?
- (A) The article "The Role of the Consultant" appears in a book edited by George Dessart.
 - (B) A speech by Philip McHugh is cited in a book edited by George Dessart.
 - (C) Philip McHugh's article "The Role of the Consultant" was published in New York in 1978.
 - (D) A book by George Dessart was mentioned by Philip McHugh in an address in Tarrytown, New York.
 - (E) The speech "The Role of the Consultant" was published in New York on November 12, 1975.
5. The author's statement that "the voice of the consultant was heard in the land" (lines 70-71)
- (A) implies that consultants expressed their views via the mass media
 - (B) suggests that consultants became prophet-like figures
 - (C) reveals that a single consultant's voice led to vast changes
 - (D) underscores the faith the general public placed in the opinions of consultants
 - (E) emphasizes that the discussion in this passage is limited to the United States
6. In line 94, the placement of the word "credibility" in quotation marks primarily emphasizes
- (A) that this is a direct quote from Al Primo
 - (B) the fact that the concept was a critical one
 - (C) the weaknesses of earlier, less credible broadcasts
 - (D) that Al Primo was using the word ironically
 - (E) the author's skepticism about the claim being made
7. The structure of the passage can best be described as a(n)
- (A) comparison of early television news to news after the advent of cable TV
 - (B) movement from particular examples of television news to generalizations about television news
 - (C) claim about television news followed by supporting details
 - (D) introduction followed by a chronological account of a major shift in television news
 - (E) generalization about television news followed by other generalizations