Your notes

GCSE Citizenship Studies: revision notes

The media and a free press

Contents

1. The role of the media
2. Regulation
3. Limits and problems
4. Key terms
5. Quick questions
6. What to do next

The role of the media

- The media includes newspapers, TV, radio, websites and social media. It informs the public, holds the powerful to account, provides a forum for debate and entertains.
- A **free press** can report without government control. It is essential to democracy, because it lets citizens find out about and criticise those in power.
- Investigative journalism has exposed wrongdoing, such as the 2009 MPs' expenses scandal.

Regulation

- **Ofcom** regulates TV, radio and online services. TV and radio news must be **impartial** (balanced).
- Most newspapers are regulated by **IPSO** (the Independent Press Standards Organisation). Newspapers can support a political party.
- The Leveson Inquiry (2011 to 2012) examined press behaviour after the phone-hacking scandal.
- The Online Safety Act 2023 requires online platforms to protect users, especially children, from harmful content.
- The **Freedom of Information Act** 2000 gives the public the right to request information from public bodies.

Limits and problems

- Press freedom is balanced against privacy, the right to a fair trial and national security. Newspapers can be sued for **defamation** (publishing false, damaging claims).
- Problems include bias, fake news and **misinformation**, and ownership by a few powerful people.

- Social media lets anyone share news and campaign, but spreads **misinformation** quickly and can create **echo chambers**.

Your notes

Key terms

Free press	A press that can report without government control.
Impartial	Balanced and not favouring one side.
Ofcom	The regulator for TV, radio and online services.
IPSO	The regulator for most newspapers.
Defamation	Publishing false claims that damage someone's reputation.
Misinformation	False or misleading information.
Echo chamber	An online space where people only see views like their own.
Freedom of Information Act	A law giving the public the right to request information from public bodies.

Quick questions

Cover the answers and test yourself: remembering is what makes it stick.

1. Why is a free press important in a democracy?
2. Which organisation regulates TV and radio in the UK?
3. Which organisation regulates most newspapers?
4. What must TV and radio news be?
5. What is defamation?
6. What was the Leveson Inquiry about?
7. What does the Freedom of Information Act 2000 allow?
8. What is an echo chamber?

Answers

1. It lets citizens find out about and criticise those in power
2. Ofcom
3. IPSO
4. Impartial
5. Publishing false claims that damage someone's reputation
6. Press behaviour after phone hacking
7. The public to request information from public bodies
8. An online space where people only see views like their own

What to do next

Practise 10 questions on this topic

Try 3 exam questions, with mark schemes

Read the lesson, one step at a time

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