

Answer keys

Practice Test 3, Writing Task 2

You should spend about 40 minutes on this task.

Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no specialist knowledge of the following topic:

News editors decide what to broadcast on television and what to print in newspapers. What factors do you think influence these decisions? Do we become used to bad news? Would it be better if more good news was reported?

You should write at least 250 words.

Use your own ideas knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Model answer: 300 words

It has often been said that “Good news is bad news” because it does not sell newspapers. A radio station that once decided to present only good news soon found that it had gone out of business for lack of listeners. Bad news on the other hand is so common that in order to cope with it, we often simply ignore it. We have become immune to bad news and the newspapers and radio stations are aware of this.

While newspapers and TV stations may aim to report world events accurately, be they natural or human disasters, political events or the horrors of war, it is also true that their main objective is to sell newspapers and attract listeners and viewers to their stations. For this reason TV and radio stations attempt to reflect the flavour of their station by providing news broadcasts tailor-made to suit their listeners’ preferences. Programmes specialising in pop music or TV soap operas focus more on local news, home issues and up-to-date traffic reports. The more serious stations and newspapers like to provide “so called” objective news reports with editorial comment aimed at analysing the situation.

If it is true, then, that newspapers and TV stations are tailoring their news to their readers’ and viewers’ requirements, how can they possibly be reporting real world events in an honest and objective light? Many radio and TV stations do, in fact, report items of good news but they no longer call this news. They refer to these as human interest stories and package them in programmes specialising, for instance, in consumer affairs or local issues. Good news now comes to us in the form of documentaries the fight against children’s cancer or AIDS, or the latest developments in the fight to save the planet from environmental pollution.