



Does a Free Press Support Democracy?

A free press plays a key role in supporting democracy. It provides citizens with access to different viewpoints and information. In a constitutional democracy like the United States, a free press holds those in power accountable and helps the people know about government actions and policies. A free press alerts the public to important issues through journalism and analysis and informs citizen decisions so that they can participate actively in civic life.

Understanding the role of a free press in a democracy requires media-literacy skills. Media literacy involves critically analyzing and evaluating the information presented in media sources, including newspapers, television, radio, and digital platforms. Students can develop media-literacy skills by asking questions and thinking carefully about information.

Activity: Democracy and Media-Literacy Exploration Gallery Walk

Consider the importance of critically analyzing news sources and engaging with diverse perspectives in a democratic society.

1. In groups of three, brainstorm the question, “Does a free press support democracy?” Write down as many ways you can think of in which a free press supports democracy.
2. Using chart paper or something similar, post your group’s answers on the wall or lay them out on your desks.
3. Walk around the class space and look at the ideas written by other groups. See whether there are any ideas you had not thought of before. You may take notes as you observe the other groups’ ideas.
4. Return to your group and discuss the ideas you gathered during the gallery walk. Talk about which ideas you think are the most important and why.
5. Written reflection: reflect on your understanding of how a free press supports democracy.
 - A. What is a free press?
 - B. How does the free press contribute to informing citizens about issues relevant to democracy?
 - C. In what ways does the free press help hold government officials and institutions accountable?
 - D. How does access to diverse news sources and perspectives enhance democratic participation and decision making?