

*"Today on Wall Street, the Nasdaq fell three points after an unexpected drop in earnings..."*

News media helps to shape and define peoples' opinions and perception of America. There are many sources of news media, both in print, on the Internet, and on television. There is also a wide variety in the kinds of news information that may be presented in such media. As a teenager viewing America, all types of news media give me information that I use to formulate my own opinions on what is occurring to and in my country. As a home schooled student, my view of America reflects the influence from the news media more than the views of my public schooled peers might, because I have less people around me on a day to day basis influencing my opinions.

Media touches on every aspect of American life. Journalists search far and wide for stories that touch the heart, inform the mind, or tickle the funny bone. A baby born on 9/9/09 at 9:09 pm was reported this year. That particular story made me laugh. It also showed me that people still care about odd coincidences and funny occurrences, even now, when our country is both at war and in a recession.

News media can not only affect a person's immediate perception of their neighborhood, city, or state, it can sometimes save lives by doing so. For instance, a report of a murderer escaped from a nearby prison may change some people's perception of their neighborhood, prompting them to lock their doors and windows, or to watch out for suspicious persons, whereas they might otherwise have considered the area safe when it in truth was not.

Media affects how I look at America as a nation. I can see America as a caring place, where people reach out to one another to help each other. I still hear and see stories about people who survived Hurricane Katrina a few years ago because of all the help and support they received from other people and from charities. The majority of the people who donated time, energy, or supplies to help the survivors of that hurricane heard about the disaster from the news media, which can be a helpful tool for bringing people together in an emergency.

Sometimes news media paints a very different picture of America. News media often reports

crimes and incidences of violence that show an unsafe nation. They tell about things such as people who, instead of helping in natural disasters, instead, try to take advantage of the disasters to loot houses and stores. Occasionally I see reports of government officials who have broken laws or taken bribes to vote a certain way. These reports show me a broken America where those with money or power can get away with breaking the law.

Media about the political situation in Washington D.C. affects my perspective of the country as well. The media coverage of the laws and bills being passed keep me informed on what I am required to do and what my country will do for me. It also will help to make me an informed voter when I become old enough to vote.

Media is a useful tool, but it also should not be the focus of our world. Media sometimes will portray only one side of a story. Also, media, while infinitely useful and helpful, only tells of the recent past or the future that is close at hand. It can not predict what will happen in fifty or a hundred years with any degree of positivity. It does not teach us history. The best thing to keep in mind when watching, reading, or listening to the news media is that only a small sliver of time is really portrayed in news media. Media is helpful when you take the information gained from it and step back and apply it to what you already know and have learned, and what you will learn in the future.

*“An accident was reported on the I-75 interstate. Traffic has been reduced to one lane on the mile 65 stretch of road. In other news...”*