



Using Media to Inform Public Opinion

The Media and the Abolitionist Movement



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Grade Level	8th Grade	Time Frame	2 class period(s)
Subject	Social Studies	Duration	100 minutes
Course	U.S. History		

Essential Question

Can citizens effect change? How can ordinary citizens use the media to influence public opinion? How did the abolitionist movement use media to fight for the end of slavery?

Summary

In this lesson about the use of media to inform public opinion and effect social change, students will begin by viewing two short interviews, then reflecting on their beliefs about the role of journalism in a democratic society. Next, students will analyze 19th-century media by reading excerpts from speeches and newspaper editorials by leading abolitionists—Frederick Douglass and William Lloyd Garrison. Working in groups, students will use evidence from their document analysis to complete a chart showing how abolitionists used the media to fight for the end of slavery. This lesson includes optional modifications for distance learning. Resources for use in Google Classroom are included.

Snapshot

Engage

Students watch two short interviews with journalists. Using the Magnetic Statements strategy, students reflect on their knowledge and beliefs about the role of journalism in a democratic society.

Explore

Using the Sentence-Phrase-Word strategy, students analyze excerpts from 19th-century media (speeches and newspaper editorials) by leading abolitionists Frederick Douglass and William Lloyd Garrison.

Explain

Working in collaborative groups, students use evidence from their document analysis to complete a chart showing how abolitionists used the media to fight for the end of slavery.

Extend

Students connect the work of Frederick Douglass and William Lloyd Garrison to the earlier Magnetic Statements made by modern-day journalists.

Evaluate

The Media and Abolitionist Chart and the Magnetic statements writing activity serve as assessments for this lesson.

Standards

Oklahoma Academic Standards (Social Studies Practices (8th Grade))

8.9.4: Summarize the impact of the Abolitionist Movement including the writings and work of Frederick Douglass and William Lloyd Garrison.

Attachments

- [Abolitionist Speeches and Newspaper Editorials—The Media and the Abolitionist Movement - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Abolitionist Speeches and Newspaper Editorials—The Media and the Abolitionist Movement - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Abolitionist Speeches and Newspaper Editorials—The Media and the Abolitionist Movement.docx](#)
- [Abolitionist Speeches and Newspaper Editorials—The Media and the Abolitionist Movement.pdf](#)
- [Lesson Slides—The Media and the Abolitionist Movement.pptx](#)
- [Magnetic Statement Posters—The Media and the Abolitionist Movement.docx](#)
- [Magnetic Statement Posters—The Media and the Abolitionist Movement.pdf](#)
- [Magnetic Statements \(Answer Key\)—The Media and the Abolitionist Movement.docx](#)
- [Magnetic Statements \(Answer Key\)—The Media and the Abolitionist Movement.pdf](#)
- [Magnetic Statements \(Student Copy\)—The Media and the Abolitionist Movement - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Magnetic Statements \(Student Copy\)—The Media and the Abolitionist Movement - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Magnetic Statements \(Student Copy\)—The Media and the Abolitionist Movement.docx](#)
- [Magnetic Statements \(Student Copy\)—The Media and the Abolitionist Movement.pdf](#)
- [Media Chart \(Answer Key\)—The Media and the Abolitionist Movement.docx](#)
- [Media Chart \(Answer Key\)—The Media and the Abolitionist Movement.pdf](#)
- [Media Chart \(Student Copy\)—The Media and the Abolitionist Movement - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Media Chart \(Student Copy\)—The Media and the Abolitionist Movement - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Media Chart \(Student Copy\)—The Media and the Abolitionist Movement.docx](#)
- [Media Chart \(Student Copy\)—The Media and the Abolitionist Movement.pdf](#)

Materials

- Lesson Slides (attached)
- Magnetic Statement Posters (optional; attached)
- Internet-enabled device for viewing YouTube videos in the Lesson Slides
- Magnetic Statements (Student Copy) (attached; one per student)
- Abolitionist Speeches and Newspaper Editorials (attached; one per group of four students)
- Media Chart (Student Copy) (attached; one per student)
- Media Chart (Answer Key) (attached)
- Magnetic Statements (Answer Key) (attached)

30 minutes

Engage

Teacher's Note: Preparation

Before class, be sure you are able to access the two YouTube videos used in this lesson (embedded below, listed in the Resources section at the end of this lesson, and available on lesson slides 3–4). Prepare copies of the attached handouts and display the Magnetic Statements at different gathering areas around the room using poster board, whiteboard space, or by printing the attached Magnetic Statements Posters.

Begin this lesson by showing students two short videos, embedded below and linked on **slides 3–4** of the attached **Lesson Slides**. These videos introduce the roles of an editor and a columnist who work in news publication. As students watch, ask them to think about what each journalist says, and whether their statements are appealing or not.

Embedded video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DqxNKbwwNo8>

After viewing the videos, pass out the attached **Magnetic Statements (Student Copy)** handout. Move to **slide 5**. Ask students to read the five statements written on the handout, which match the statements hanging around the classroom. These statements are based on ideas discussed in the previous videos. Using the [Magnetic Statements](#) learning strategy, ask students to choose the statement they most agree with and stand next to the sign that displays that statement. After students have gathered by their "magnetic statements," ask the groups to discuss among themselves why they chose that particular statement. Then, after a few minutes of discussion, ask a volunteer from each group to share with the class some reasons their group was attracted to the statement.

Move to **slide 6**. Ask student groups to discuss the question on the slide: *Why is media important to a democratic society?* Students should take into consideration what these two journalists have said as well as the discussion during the Magnetic Statement activity.

Possible Student Responses: Media And Democracy

Students should acknowledge the importance of the media as an avenue for expressing and spreading ideas and how the media can be used to influence public opinion and effect change. "Media" can be thought of here as the communication channels through which news, ideas, and opinions are disseminated to the public (for example, television, newspapers, and various Internet platforms). Students may also mention freedom of the press; similarly, Americans are free to consume a wide variety of information and express many different opinions regarding it. Another important responsibility of the media is to communicate what is happening around the world that the public may not otherwise know about. This allows media consumers to stay aware and be able to make more informed decisions. The purpose of this discussion is to ensure students understand that citizens of a democratic society can use the media to express the first amendment right to free expression (i.e., speech, press, and petition).

Display **slide 7** and invite students to read the three essential questions: *Can citizens effect change?* More specifically, *how can we use the media to influence public opinion in order to create change?* And lastly, *how did the abolitionist movement use media to fight for the end of slavery?* Ask students to think about these questions as they work through this lesson.

Optional Modification for Distance Learning

To make the Magnetic Statements activity accessible in an online or distance learning environment, consider using a website such as [VoiceThread](#). This can allow your students to connect and participate virtually. Upload the statements ahead of time; then, students can choose whether they would like to make a quick video, a voice memo, or a written note to share out why they were attracted to or repelled by that statement. [Download all attachments](#) to use this lesson in [Google Classroom](#).

50 minutes

Explore

Teacher's Note: The Abolitionist Movement

This lesson assumes students are already familiar with the overarching goals of the abolitionist movement. However, if you find it helpful, this would be an appropriate time to review that the abolitionist movement sought to end slavery in the United States. If you do so, consider including the following ideas: all abolitionists believed that slavery should be made illegal, but had a wide array of beliefs as to why. Some more radical abolitionists believed that, not only should slavery end, but that free black people should have the same rights as white people. In any case, making slavery illegal in the United States would require a federal law or amendment.

Explain to students that there was no more passionately debated subject in the United States during the nineteenth century than slavery and its expansion into new U.S. territories. Without mass-media outlets like television, radio, and the Internet, the public's understanding of critical issues like slavery was shaped through the media of the time—most often speeches and newspapers. Speeches were given in public settings and were often reprinted verbatim in newspapers or released as pamphlets to reach an even larger audience. Newspapers, perhaps the most popular way to distribute information, were established and used to influence public opinion. The abolitionist movement used these methods to captivate and persuade the American people to demand an end to the system of slavery and, in some cases, equal rights for black people.

Use **slide 8** to share prominent abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison's background with the class. Move to **slide 9** to show students the masthead of Garrison's newspaper, "The Liberator," if you so choose. Move to **slide 10** to share more information about Frederick Douglass, another prominent abolitionist and escaped slave. Share the masthead of Douglass' newspaper, the North Star, **on slide 11** if you choose.

Optional Scaffolding: Frederick Douglass and William Lloyd Garrison

If students are unfamiliar with Frederick Douglass and/or William Lloyd Garrison, consider scaffolding this lesson by elaborating upon the background information in **slides 8** and **slide 10**. It is especially worth noting that Frederick Douglass was born into slavery, taught himself to read and write, and escaped slavery as a young man. Include other information that you deem important or interesting to your class.

Pass out one copy of the attached **Abolitionist Speeches and Newspaper Editorials packet** to each group. Invite students to explore these 19th-century speeches and newspaper editorials that were contemporary to the abolitionist movement. They were produced by leading abolitionists William Lloyd Garrison and Frederick Douglass to persuade the public to support the abolition of slavery in the United States. Divide the class into groups of four and move to **slide 12**. The packet includes four documents. Assign one student in each group to a document. Ask students to review their document—either a newspaper editorial or a transcribed speech by one of the abolitionists listed above—and analyze it using the [Sentence-Phrase-Word](#) strategy as detailed on **slide 12**.

Optional: Sentence-Phrase-Word Strategy with a Single Copy

If the number of packets required is an issue, you may instead choose to make a class single set of the document packet. Students can write down their sentence, phrase, word and corresponding explanations in a notebook or on a separate sheet of paper.

Once all students have completed analyzing their documents, designate four spaces in the room for students to discuss the source they read—a space for source one, a separate space for source two, and so on. Once students who read the same source have formed groups, ask each group to discuss the sentence, phrase, and word they chose. Students may choose to revise their answers based on these group conversations. Allow about 5–10 minutes for discussion. Then, ask for volunteers from each group to share their source's main ideas, the sentence, phrase, and word they chose, and why. The purpose of this discussion is to reinforce major points made by Garrison and Douglass regarding the abolition of slavery. Students can make changes or additions to their notes based on class discussion. Ask students to keep their source and notes as reference for the next activity.

Sample Student Response: Sentence-Phrase-Word

A volunteer from the group who read source one, "The Meaning of the Fourth of July for the Slave," might explain the sentence *"The rich inheritance of justice, liberty, and independence [given to you] by your fathers, is shared by you, not by me,"* by saying that Douglass argues slavery and racism in the United States are hypocritical given the founding creed in the Declaration of Independence; thus, slavery has no place in the United States. A student who chooses *"whirlwind"* as their word from the same article might point to Douglass's belief that the abolition movement needed to gain enough support to be a whirlwind strong enough to destroy slavery. Answers for this activity will vary widely. As long as students' reasoning makes sense and ties back into the main idea of the texts, any answer is acceptable.

Teacher's Note: Adjusting For Time

Depending on how much time is available, you may choose to have groups share only their sentences, phrases, or words (or let students decide which one they want to share). Class discussion should take at least enough time to cover most or all of the arguments Garrison and Douglass made to further the goals of the Abolition Movement.

Optional Modification for Distance Learning

The Sentence-Phrase-Word activity can be modified for distance learning by assigning groups a Google Doc to serve as a collaborative workspace. Have groups collaborate on these docs, then discuss what they recorded with the whole class. [Download all attachments to use this lesson in Google Classroom.](#)

30 minutes

Explain

Ask students to return to their original groups of four. Pass out a copy of the attached **Media Chart (Student Copy)** to each student. Display **slide 13**. Ask students to follow the directions on the slide and use evidence from all four documents to complete their charts. Students should identify three arguments that Frederick Douglass used to address the abolition of slavery in his speech and editorial and three arguments that William Lloyd Garrison used to address the abolition of slavery in his speech and editorial. During this activity, students can reference any of the documents in the packet, not just the one that they analyzed. For each point on the chart, students should construct 1–2 sentence statements summarizing in their own words an argument of Douglass or Garrison.

Teacher's Note: Scaffolding With Examples

Ask students to be specific—"Douglass thought slavery was bad," is too general. Students should consider the **reasons** Douglass and Garrison gave to explain why and how slavery was bad, as well as how their writings and speeches supported the abolition of slavery. To this end, consider pausing the activity after each group has had time to record at least one argument. Ask a volunteer group to share an example. Briefly discuss this example with the class and clarify any questions students might have about expectations for this activity. Provide a positive example of a response they could record in their chart.

Once students have finished their charts, call on each group at least once to share their findings with the class. This discussion should review the major points Douglass and Garrison made in their speeches and editorials arguing for the abolition of slavery in the United States.

Possible Student Responses: Media Chart

For a list of possible responses, see the attached **Media Chart (Answer Key)**.

Optional: Structured Group Discussion

If additional scaffolding would be helpful for this class discussion, ask each group to prepare to share two arguments from Douglass and two arguments from Garrison supporting the abolition of slavery. The result should be that each member of each group of four assumes responsibility for sharing one argument. Then, during discussion, select a group at a time and ask students to share either an argument from Douglass or Garrison. This way, you should not need to call on every single student, but all students should be prepared to share, thus drawing more students into the discussion.

Optional Modification for Distance Learning

The Media Chart (Student Copy) can be distributed digitally or completed together as a group discussion. [Download all attachments to use this lesson in Google Classroom.](#)

30 minutes

Extend

Move to **slide 14**. Ask students to return to their Magnetic Statements handouts and review the statements again. Invite students to choose two of the five statements and craft a 2–3 sentence statement for each to explain how the work of Frederick Douglass and William Lloyd Garrison relate to journalism today. This portion of the lesson can be done individually or as a group.

Possible Student Responses: Magnetic Statements

For a list of possible responses, see the attached **Magnetic Statements (Answer Key)**.

Once students have finished writing, consider asking volunteers to share one of the connections they made. Take as much time for this discussion as you deem appropriate.

30 minutes

Evaluate

The Media Chart and the Magnetic Statements handouts serve as assessments for this lesson.

Resources

- K20 Center. (n.d.). Google classroom. Tech Tools. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/tech-tool/628>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Magnetic statements. Strategy. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/166>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Sentence-phrase-word. Strategy. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/54>
- The Guardian (November 14, 2018). "'Changing the world for the better:' Katharine Viner tells us about her role." YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DqxNKbwwNo8>
- The Guardian (December 5, 2018). What's the difference between news and opinion? Gary Younge tells us about his role. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jgJlgvLaahg>