

Media Literacy Mini-Lesson #11

MEDIA OWNERSHIP

Who gets to tell the story of an event or something that happened? The journalist, right? Sure, a reporter can give an account of an event, but they don't necessarily get the final say on how that story gets told.

News organizations have owners, and most are for-profit businesses



This usually means that at least part of their purpose is to make money for owners and shareholders.



For example...

Today, Amazon's billionaire founder and chairman Jeff Bezos owns the *Washington Post*. And the family of Australian-born billionaire Rupert Murdoch owns many huge global media outlets, including Fox News and the *Wall Street Journal*. Owners' motivations and perspectives can and do affect how media companies report on and analyze stories.

In the 1890s, newspaper owners William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer used sensational headlines and scandal-mongering to sell millions of papers. Katharine Graham led her family's newspaper, the *Washington Post*, for almost three decades, including its coverage of Watergate in the 1970s, which eventually led to the resignation of President Richard Nixon.

Editors

Besides owners or publishers, journalists' reporting is also checked by their editors. Editors review articles and usually have the last word on what gets published or broadcast.

Journalists can (and do!) make changes before they give approval for that. But just like owners or publishers, editors have their own priorities or biases that can shape these decisions. This is not necessarily a bad thing; editors have a different job and different responsibilities than reporters do.



Read the the source on the next page and answer the questions that follow.

The following source, written by Rev. G.H. Hulin and Rev. J.A. Avery, editors of the *Recorder* in upstate New York, serves as an introduction to the newspaper's publication of the "Declaration of Sentiments." The document was issued by the first women's rights convention held in the United States in Seneca Falls, New York in 1848.

The following is from the Declaration of Sentiments made at the Woman's Rights Convention, held at Seneca Falls, on the 19th and 20th [of last month]. The "Declaration" adapts the language of that of "Independence" to the grievous bondage of woman in the nineteenth century. We need not say we think the movement excessively silly: nevertheless many of our readers will have the curiosity to run through this formidable document.

"Woman's Rights" *The Recorder*, Syracuse, NY. August 3, 1848. Library of Congress

Describe what is happening in the excerpt. What did you notice or wonder about?

Even though the editors' introduction is hardly an article, what does it tell us about how they view the movement for women's rights? Look for clues including punctuation and the words they use.

How do the editors think their readers see the movement for women's rights?