

3 May World Press Freedom Day

World Press Freedom Day came about at UNESCO's General Conference as a means of recognizing that a free, pluralistic and independent press is essential in a democratic society. In December 1993, member states of UNESCO decided that May 3 should be proclaimed World Press Freedom Day to honor those who sacrifice themselves and often die, for freedom of the press.

Thinking about liberty

In groups, read these quotes from different places and times and reflect. Then answer the questions below:

- Wherever books are burned, sooner or later men also are burned.
- **Heinrich Heine, German poet, 1823**
- A free press can be good or bad, but most certainly without freedom it will never be anything but bad. - **Albert Camus, Author, France, 1960**
- A good newspaper, I suppose, is a nation talking to itself.
- **Arthur Miller, playwright, 1961**
- Journalists must seek and speak the truth, for we are the voice of the voiceless millions. - **Razia Bhatti, Journalist, Pakistan, 1994**
- I mourn the loss of books that will never be written, I mourn the voices that will be silenced -- writers' voices, teachers' voices, students' voices -- and all because of fear. - **Judy Blume, writer, 1999**

- a) Why do you think that people who have lived in different countries and historical moments have chosen to write about freedom of expression?
- b) These sentences pertain to writers and journalists. Why do you think these professionals were especially worried about freedom of expression?
- c) Do you think people in other professions also feel affected in that they may not have the right to freedom of expression? How so?
- d) Read each one of the quotes and explain what the author wanted to say.
- e) One of the sentences talks about burning books. Investigate periods in national and world history in which books and other publications were burned. What was happening? Why were they being burned? What characteristics did these governments have and share?
- f) Do you agree that a press without freedom cannot be good? Why?

Photographs that Express

- Read the newspaper for one week. Identify photographs or images of people exercising their right to freedom of expression
- What do these images show? Protests? Speeches? Conferences?
- Do any of these reveal a lack of freedom of expression?
- Which of the photos present problems that you are familiar with?
- Which of the photos present problems that you are unfamiliar with?
- Try to imagine a photo that depicts the problems of freedom of the press or of freedom of expression. You can write down a description of the photograph, draw it, or construct a live scene with other people that re-enacts your imagined event.

Making Yourself Heard

- In your opinion, what are the most efficient methods to make yourself heard?
- In the newspaper, identify examples of people that are trying to make themselves heard. How are they doing this?
- Is there a page, telephone number or email address in the newspaper that tells readers where they can send/express their opinions?
- Identify the most important themes that have appeared in the newspaper this week. Which of these themes would you most like to express your opinion over? Why?
- Express your opinion over the theme you've chosen in a letter and send it to the newspaper.

Freedom on the Front Page

- Imagine that you are the directors of a new newspaper in your community. For its first issue, you want to dedicate the entire front page to freedom of expression and the press.
- Firstly, come up with a name for the newspaper.
- Then decide what headlines you will include on the front page to emphasize the theme you have chosen.
- Discuss and decide what images (photographs, drawings, comic strips, etc) are appropriate.
- Finally, write a small opinion piece in which you explain the value that freedom of expression and the press has for democracy.



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