Not the Normal News

Track 13

Newspapers and television news programs always seem to report about the bad things happening in **society**. However, there is a place where readers can find some good news. That place is the website called *HappyNews*.

The man behind *HappyNews* is Byron Reese. Reese set up *HappyNews* because he thought other news sources were giving people an **unbalanced** view of the world. Reese said about *HappyNews*, "The **news media** gives you a **distorted** view of the world by **exaggerating** bad news, **misery**, and **despair**. We're trying to balance out the scale."

Not everyone agrees with Reese's view, though. Many people think that news sources have a responsibility to provide news that is helpful to people. People need to know about issues or problems in today's society. Then people are better able to make informed decisions about things that affect their daily lives. Reese said that *HappyNews* is not trying to stop people from learning about issues or problems. *HappyNews* is just trying to provide a balanced picture of today's world.

By the end of its first month online, *HappyNews* had more than 70,000 unique readers. About 60 percent of those readers were women. Something else unique makes *HappyNews* different from any of the other news or information websites that are on the Internet. Unlike many other websites, *HappyNews* gets **fan mail** from its readers on a daily basis.



Reading Time _____ minutes _____ seconds 230 words

2 *society*: a body of individuals living as members of a community

5 *unbalanced*: not equal; one-sided

6 *news media*: newspapers, magazines, TV news shows, etc.

6 *distort*: to not truly represent the facts; to be false

7 *exaggerate*: to describe something as larger or more extreme than it is

7 *misery*: suffering; sadness

7 *despair*: without hope; extreme sadness

22 *fan mail*: letters or notes from people who enjoy or support something

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Reading Comprehension

Choose the best answer.

1. What is another possible title for the reading?
   a. "Byron Reese Tells People How to Be Happy"
   b. "Good News for a Change"
   c. "Newspapers vs. Online News"
   d. "Why Women Like *HappyNews*"

2. How is *HappyNews* different than other news sources?
   a. All of the stories are written by Reese.
   b. *HappyNews* does not exaggerate its stories.
   c. Its stories are not about bad things.
   d. The website only has stories about women.

3. Why might some people NOT like *HappyNews*?
   a. It doesn't tell them about important issues or problems.
   b. Reese's stories are about misery and despair.
   c. Some sources give a balanced view.
   d. The stories are from around the world.

4. Which of the following is NOT true about *HappyNews* after its first month online?
   a. It had thousands of readers.
   b. Most of its readers were women.
   c. Readers sent in nice letters about it every day.
   d. Reese used it to create other websites.

5. What does "unique" mean in this reading?
   a. Different
   b. Interesting
   c. One of a kind
   d. Awful

Idiomatic Expressions

Find these idioms in the reading.

- **set up** [to create; to start]
  Henry Ford set up his car company in 1903.
- **agree with** [to have the same idea or opinion as someone]
  I agree with you. Last night's homework was very difficult.
- **on a daily basis** [every day]
  Do you exercise on a daily basis?

Fill in the blank with one of the above idioms. Change its form if necessary.

1. It is important to practice your English _____.
2. Not all of the reports _____ each other about the facts of the court case.
3. The artist _____ her new studio in her basement.

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Summary

Fill in the blanks with the correct words or phrases.

agrees with	**balanced**	**reports**
responsibility	**set up**	

A man named Byron Reese 1 _____ an online source of news information. Reese's website is different from other news media because his website only 2 _____ happy news. Reese believes that he can provide a more 3 _____ view of today's society by reporting stories that don't focus on bad things. Others believe that the news media has the 4 _____ to report on issues that people need to know about. Reese 5 _____ them, but he also thinks people get a distorted view of the world if they only hear about bad news all the time.



Listening

Sources of the News

Track 14 Listen to the dialog and choose the best answer.

1. Who reviews news stories before they are posted on *HappyNews*?

a. Byron Reese
b. *HappyNews* editors
c. *HappyNews* readers
d. Other news sources

2. Which of the following statements is true according to the dialog?

a. Both speakers have written stories for *HappyNews*.
b. *HappyNews* stories cannot be found in other news sources.
c. Regular people can write stories for *HappyNews*.
d. The *HappyNews* editors rewrite stories from other news sources.

3. What should a writer be sure to include with his or her story?

a. Extra copies
b. Other media
c. Photographs
d. Sources

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Vocabulary and Idiom Review

A. Choose the best word or phrase to fill in the blank.

1. Do you know when people _____ how to make concrete?
   a. discovered b. prevented c. provided d. reported

2. He used only his personal money to _____ his new company.
   a. agree with b. set up c. shut down d. move around

3. No one told me that locking the door at night was my _____.
   a. activity b. diversity c. misery d. responsibility

4. Sometimes I am not sure if I can really trust the information reported by the _____.
   a. fan mail b. news media c. role model d. view

5. The essay was too one-sided. It did not give a _____ presentation of the situation.
   a. balanced b. complex c. daily d. distorted

6. When people live together in a _____, they have to agree on certain rules to follow.
   a. behavior b. despair c. society d. stress

7. The _____ that you heard was just rain hitting the window.
   a. benefit b. issue c. noise d. source

B. Choose the correct form of the word to fill in the blank.

8. I don't think all teenagers are _____. Some of them are quite mature and hard-working.
   a. responsibility b. responsible c. irresponsible

9. Lots of people these days belong to _____ networking websites.
   a. society b. social c. socially

10. The fish could not have been that big. You are _____.
    a. exaggeration b. exaggerating c. exaggerated

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