When Warnings Spread

How mass media changes a community's response

S.8.4 "Describe how the role of the mass media has changed over time and project what changes might occur in the future."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline how flood news reaches people in each time period, and circle a phrase showing who selects or shares the news in each period. Number two predictions about future media.

A Flood Warning Through Time

1 Imagine a river rising near an American town in 1913. A newspaper could report the danger, but its next printed edition might not reach readers until morning. Editors chose which reports to print, and a delivery network carried those choices to many homes. Neighbors might also pass along news by word of mouth, yet a single paper could make one account widely visible. This was an important role of mass media: turning scattered events into a shared public story. Its reach helped people recognize a common problem, while its printing schedule limited how quickly new warnings could spread.

2 By the mid-twentieth century, radio and television had changed that role. During a flood, a radio station could interrupt a program to announce an evacuation, and television could show images that made damage visible beyond the flooded streets. Broadcasters still decided what went on the air, but they could reach large audiences at nearly the same moment. That speed could help people act together, such as heading to shelters or sending supplies. Yet people without a working radio or television might miss the alert, and a short broadcast might leave out details important to one neighborhood.

3 Today, phones can carry flood alerts, live streams, and posts from residents as events unfold. A neighbor can share a flooded street's location before a newsroom arrives, while journalists can check claims and give them wider context. Unlike a printed edition or a scheduled broadcast, online updates can change minute by minute. But false posts can spread just as fast, and platforms may show different users different messages. In the future, AI tools might turn verified warnings into translations tailored to each neighborhood. If that happens, media could reach more people, but communities would still need ways to check who made each warning and whether it is accurate.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did radio change the speed and reach of flood warnings compared with a newspaper in 1913?

2. How has the role of the person who first shares flood news changed from the broadcast era to today?

3. How could both broadcast news and today's online news help people respond together to a flood? Give one difference in how they do it.

4. What future change does the passage predict for flood warnings, and what concern might remain?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a flood-reporting tool in 2035 that the passage does not name. In one paragraph, explain how it would change who creates or receives news compared with one earlier medium, then predict one benefit and one risk.

ANSWER KEY

When Warnings Spread

HIGH SCHOOL · S.8.4

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline how flood news reaches people in each time period, and circle a phrase showing who selects or shares the news in each period. Number two predictions about future media. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did radio change the speed and reach of flood warnings compared with a newspaper in 1913?	**Radio could interrupt a program and reach many listeners at nearly the same moment. A printed newspaper might not reach readers until morning.**
2	How has the role of the person who first shares flood news changed from the broadcast era to today?	**Broadcasters decided what went on the air. Today, a resident can post a report before a newsroom arrives.**
3	How could both broadcast news and today's online news help people respond together to a flood? Give one difference in how they do it.	**Both can spread information that helps people act. A broadcast can reach a large audience at once, while online posts can provide updates minute by minute.**
4	What future change does the passage predict for flood warnings, and what concern might remain?	**AI tools might translate verified warnings for each neighborhood, helping media reach more people. People would still need to check who made a warning and whether it is accurate.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In 2035, solar-powered street displays could show flood reports sent by residents and checked by local emergency workers. Unlike a radio broadcast, each display could show information for the nearby blocks. Residents would help create the news instead of only receiving a message chosen by broadcasters. This could help people find a safe route even if they do not have a phone. A risk is that a display might lose power or show an old report. Each message should show when it was checked.

Accept other plausible future tools if the response compares their media role with an earlier medium and explains a specific benefit and risk. For question 3, students may use shelter trips, supply efforts, or another shared response supported by the passage.