

national, regional, local, daily and weekly, morning and evening papers. Some people will buy any paper just because its front page catches their eye but, generally speaking, most people buy the same newspapers, or subscribe to them, that is, have them delivered to their home, every day. Whether we like it or not, newspapers and magazines influence our views and even lives. Perhaps, that is the reason why the press is often referred to as the 'fourth estate'.

Britain is often given as an example of a country that has a national press. The daily circulation of papers in Britain is just over 14 million copies. The British national press is often referred to as *Fleet Street*, although no national press is now produced in this London street.

National newspapers cater for a wide variety of tastes and interests. All **British** papers can be classified into two major groups: quality and popular papers.

A **quality** paper is a serious national paper aiming at the educated reader. Quality papers or 'broadsheets' emphasize detailed news coverage, comment and authoritative editorials; they contain a wide range of topical features written by experts in their field, arts and literary reviews and much professional advertising. Among them are *The Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Independent* and *The Financial Times*. The latter is to be distinguished from the *Times*, because it is an international business paper mainly concerned with economics, but with a good news service. An interesting difference is its colour: it is pink.

As distinct from the quality press a popular paper is a newspaper whose format and content is designed for the undemanding reader. Most popular papers are tabloids, i.e. papers with small-size pages. They carry brief and direct news reports emphasizing facts and a large number of photographs. Emphasis is laid on personal stories, especially when they are sensational, or involving a figure in the public eye such as a member of the royal family. They are distinguished by large illustrations, bold captions and a sensational prose style. Much consideration is given to sports and to entertaining features such as cartoons and contests. Among the 'populars' are *The Sun*, *The Star*, *The Daily Mirror*, *The Daily Mail* and *The Daily Express*. Many dailies have their Sunday supplements.

Ownership of the press in Britain is in the hands of individuals or a

few large publishing groups, it is rather easy to launch a newspaper in Britain provided you have funds and a license. The editors of the newspapers are allowed considerable freedom of expression but that does not mean that newspapers are without political bias. The political tendency of quality newspapers varies from conservative (*The Daily Telegraph*) or independent / conservative (*The Times*, *The Financial Times*) to centre (*The Independent*) and liberal (*The Guardian*). Most popular tabloids usually reflect conservative opinion in their comment and reporting, while *The Daily Mirror* has a more left-wing bias.

No newspaper anywhere can compete with Britain's formidable news agency, *Reuters*. Across the world its name has become an assurance of impartiality, accuracy and reliability. Although run from London, Reuters deliberately avoids the image of being an English institution with English news values. As day progresses, its news file is edited from three different cities, switching time zones from Hong Kong to London and to New York. Its reports are filed in French, German, Arabic and Spanish, as well as English.

(from *The Power To Inform*)

Exercise 5

Work in pairs. Discuss the text making use of your questions.

Exercise 6

Discuss the following with the class. Share your opinions.

1. What did Bevan mean when he called newspapers his 'only form of continuous fiction'?
2. Why is the press often referred to as 'the fourth estate'?
3. What is implied by national press? Is there national press in Russia?
4. Why do you think the press in Britain is referred to as Fleet Street?
5. How do the level of education and the job people do influence their choices of newspapers?
6. Are newspapers dependent in their views on anyone? Who and why?
7. Why do nearly all newspapers publish advertisements?
8. How much are advertisers interested in social classes and their concerns?
9. Should newspapers be politically biased or can they be independent?