

The Blackout

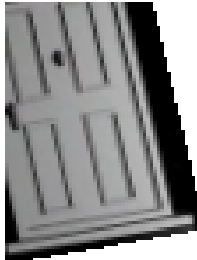
NEWS LITERACY – JRN 101



Date and time Blackout started: _____

Date and time Blackout ended: _____

Your Task:



You are about to enter the “Twilight Zone” and then write about the experience.

Beginning at a time of your choosing, and ending 24 hours later, you will adhere to a strict news blackout. Make no effort to obtain news from any source, including from family and friends. No weather forecasts, no sports scores, no news of any kind, including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter,

YouTube, or other social media.

More importantly, you must take active steps to avoid news that makes its way to you: walk out of the room if the TV is tuned to news, switch stations if news breaks in on your radio, change home pages if news turns up there, leave the table if it comes up at mealtime. The point of this experience is to shut out as much news as possible, whether it is consumed actively or passively.

In a well-crafted response, address the following questions: (1) How difficult was it to stay unplugged? What made it difficult? Or easy? (2) Did news sneak past your defenses? If so, what happened? (3) When your blackout was over, what information did you realize you missed? (4) What did your experience teach you about where and how you get news? Did it teach you anything about the role of news in our lives?

Be as specific as possible in describing your blackout experience. Be sure to discuss what you learned from cutting yourself off from the news. Your response should be about 500 words.

Objective

The Blackout, done correctly, will give you clarity about the information that you take for granted in making decisions large and small. This news deficit will help you weigh the role of news, where you obtain it and how you would fare without it.

If you do an honest job of this, you’ll have more interesting things to say in the rest of this semester’s assignments, which can also improve your overall grade in the course. Be prepared to share and discuss the details of your blackout experience with your classmates.