

Headline English

2011, week 11 *Learn English through reading on current world affairs*

1 **Gary Younge**

2 **Of what we think and what we know**

3 original at:

4 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/feb/27/republican-attack-unions-class-wisconsin>

5 Polls last year showed that in the US 61% think the country spends too
6 much on foreign aid. This makes sense once you understand that the
7 average American is under the illusion that 25% of the federal budget
8 goes on foreign aid (the real figure is 1%).

9 Similarly, a poll in Britain in 2002 revealed that more than a third of the
10 country thought there were too many immigrants. Little wonder. The
11 mean estimate was that immigrants comprise 23% of the country; the
12 actual number was about 4%.

13 Broadly speaking, these inconsistencies do not reflect malice or wilful
14 ignorance but people's attempts to make sense of the world they
15 experience through the distorting filters of media representation, popular
16 prejudice and national myths.

17 The way we see things is simply affected by what we know and what we
18 believe. And you can tell a great deal about a nation's anxieties and
19 aspirations by the discrepancy between reality and popular perception.

Questions

- 1) Why does the American public think that the US spends too much on foreign aid?
- 2) What is the difference between the real and the perceived proportion of immigrants in total UK population?
- 3) What kind of similarities between the perceptions of the public in the UK and in the US did the polls referred to in the article reveal?
- 4) What is, according to the article, the root cause of the issue the article is examining?
- 5) Explain the meaning of 'media representation' (line 15; the vocabulary section includes a little hint on the surrounding context)?
- 6) What conclusion does the article draw?
- 7) What is your opinion of the media? Should we pay more attention to their bias? Or do you think that they offer a fair picture of reality?

Vocabulary

mean (line 11) – a quantity having a value intermediate between the values of other quantities; an average, especially the arithmetic mean.

comprise (line 11) – to include or contain

distorting (line 15) – making crooked, deformed or generally untrue or false

anxieties (line 18) – distress or uneasiness of mind caused by fear of danger or misfortune

You can find additional explanation and more examples to help you understand and use English words and phrases at <http://dictionary.reference.com>, <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/>, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/> or <http://www.ldoceonline.com/>

Přejeme Vám mnoho studijních úspěchů.

Tým jazykové skupiny Spěváček:

