Public opinion is formed from an enormous amount of sources. Some of the more significant ones include the family, schools, opinion leaders, and the mass media. The mass media, because they are such powerful means of communication, tend to overshadow other influences. Children are especially vulnerable to the power of mass media. Study the cartoon below and answer the questions that follow.

Interpreting Political Cartoons

1. What is the common theme of the storefronts and movie theatre shown?
2. Why is the parent’s speech labeled the “hardest lesson to teach our kids”?
3. What is the implied relationship between violence and the media?
4. What is the cartoonist implying about the relationship between the “toughest lobby in Washington” and the other elements of the cartoon?
5. Demonstrating Reasoned Judgment Would you favor a law that allowed the government to censor the amount of violence portrayed in the media? Explain your position.
Public opinion is measured in a variety of ways; one of the more accurate forms is scientific polling. However, no matter how hard pollsters work to get a fair sampling of public opinion, their results cannot be perfect. One problem that occurs, for example, is that people will sometimes give the answers they think the pollster wants to hear. Study the cartoon below and answer the questions that follow.

Interpreting Political Cartoons

1. What polling challenge is illustrated by the behavior of the people inside the house?
2. What obvious elements suggest the opinion of the residents?
3. Polls can be conducted in person, by mail, or by telephone. Do you think in this case an in-person interview is the best way to take the poll? Explain.
4. Identifying Assumptions What is the cartoonist's attitude toward polling? How might a person who disagrees argue against that assumption?