

Title of Session: SSForum - PBS Film "Reporting America at War"

Moderator: Michael Hutchison

Guest Speaker: Ferne, Senior Director of Outreach and Education for WETA TV

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MichaelH: Hello, everyone, welcome to tonight's Social Studies forum...

MichaelH: tonight's topic is a really interesting one, where we will be showing a lot of great resources that we can use in the classroom

MichaelH: we'll be looking at the new PBS Film, "Reporting America at War"...

MichaelH: as we always do, let's start with introductions...

MichaelH: would anyone like to let us know who you are?

GaindaS: hi I'm Gainda I am a UH PUMA student

AmandaN: I am a fifth grade social studies teacher and a grad student

LeticiaC: I'm a pre-service teacher at the University of Houston

MaryVR: I'm preservice at University of Houston

RiannH: Student Teacher in Humble ISD, TX

DelfinoG: I'm Delfino Guillen, preservice teacher from Houston, Tx.

RamonaGst22: High school English ~ Greenville, SC

LourdesA: My name is Lourdes and I'm a preservice teacher at UH

StaceyFou: Hello, I'm a 3rd grade teacher

SarathS: Sarath M Ed Student

LisaGst19: I'm Lisa Greeves, a former English and Journalism teacher in Virginia.

MichaelH: I'm a technology curriculum facilitator in southwestern Indiana

SamiraH: Hi, I'm a preservice teacher

MichaelH: Ferne?

FerneGst24: Hi. I'm the senior director of outreach and education for WETA TV

SamiraH: OK, sorry, this is my first time at TappedIn, and I was feeling a little lost

MichaelH: As I mentioned, we're going to discuss "Reporting America at War" this evening, and the resources and lessons that are part of the web site...

MichaelH: Ferne, would you like to start with a short introduction to RAW... what it is about?

SamiraH: Great! What grade level is this geared toward?

MichaelH: we'll get to that Samira...

SamiraH: thanks

FerneGst24: Reporting America at War is a three part documentary film that chronicles American journalists who have witnessed and reported news from the battlefield. From San Juan Hill, WWII, Vietnam to the Persian Gulf, filmmaker Stephen Ives tells the dramatic stories and challenges of frontline reporting.

MichaelH knows it's a powerful film...

SamiraH: Is the documentary accessible online?

MichaelH: Samira, it's currently airing on many PBS stations

SamiraH: thank you

MichaelH: Ferne, who are some of the correspondents who are featured in the film?

FerneGst24: In addition to profiles of such distinguished historical figures as Richard Harding Davis, Edward Murrow and Ernie Pyle, the documentary features conversations with some of the most influential correspondents of our time.

FerneGst24: Some of the correspondents include Christiane Amanpour, Peter Arnett, Walter Cronkite, David Halberstam, Chris Hedges, Andy Rooney and Morley Safer

MichaelH: would you like me to show them the web site next, and then we can discuss some of the resources and lessons?

FerneGst24: Part one of the documentary aired last week and part two will air tonight tonight at 9 p.m.

LisaGst19: yes!

MichaelH: Ok, here's how we'll show you all the web site.

MichaelH: I'll post the web address... and you can click it in the chat window... you'll see the web site load in a separate window.

MichaelH: remember only look at the site for a few minutes, and then come back here to continue the discussion...

MichaelH: here's the URL

MichaelH: <http://www.pbs.org/weta/reportingamericaatwar>

MichaelH: look at it for just a couple of minutes, and come back here

LeticiaC: Thompson our technology teacher

LeticiaC: oops sorry

MichaelH reminds all that all the web addresses will be in the transcript of tonight's session as well

RiannH left the room (signed off).

MichaelH will give everyone just a moment to get an overview of the site, and then we'll get back to our session

FerneGst24: The documentary is co-produced by Insignia Films and WETA TV. Stephen Ives is the producer of the documentary. His works include Emmy Award-winning PBS documentary, "Seabiscuit," the series, "The West," and "Amato: Love Affair with Opera." He also co-produced "The Civil War" and "Lindbergh" for PBS's American Experience series

MichaelH: everyone back and ready to go with some more of the site?

SarathS: yes

LeticiaC: yes

MaryVR: yes

LourdesA: yes

AmandaN: yes

MichaelH: ok...

MichaelH: Ferne, shall we tell everyone a little about the classroom resources?

GaindaS: I notice that the lessons and activities are for high school teachers

MichaelH: I have the "Contributing to the Story" lesson ready to show them when you are ready

FerneGst24: yes as well as discussion questions that can be used in the college journalism classes

GaindaS: is there anything for early childhood?

FerneGst24: No only high school

MichaelH: Gainda, probably not... we're talking about war correspondents... and most likely that would be a little higher grade level...

MichaelH: although you might be able to adapt some of the Ernie Pyle stuff to middle school

FerneGst24: The activities have been designed to be used in social studies, journalism, english and media classes

GaindaS: oh ok

FerneGst24: All of the activities also support the themes in the documentary

FerneGst24: Michael, why don't talk a little about the Murrow piece

MichaelH: ok... just a sec

SamiraH: Michael, can some of the issues be discussed in the fourth or fifth grade? I realize the video may be too much for them, but topics like "should journalism be censored during wartime" can be simplified

MichaelH: are any of you familiar with Ed Murrow?

MichaelH: well, Samira, that's a possibility

LeticiaC: Oklahoma City building?

MaryVR: not so much

SamiraH: I was thinking along the lines of integrating this into a first amendment freedom of speech issue

MichaelH: Edward R. Murrow was one of the greatest electronic journalists of all time...

MichaelH: radio and TV...

MichaelH: he had a wonderful ability to paint word pictures of events in war time that is unmatched, even by today's journalists

MichaelH: many of the biggest names in broadcast journalism were "Murrow's Boys"

LisaGst19: Samira, as a former journalism teacher, I think you could definitely do that.

SamiraH: thank you

MichaelH: "Orchestrated Hell" is a great example of what Murrow was able to do with words... it's a description of his accompanying a bombing raid in December, 1943

LeticiaC: Michael, what are some things he has done that we might know?

MichaelH: here's the link... take a couple of minutes to look at this, and then we can discuss it...

MichaelH:

<http://www.pbs.org/weta/reportingamericaatwar/teachers/orchestratedhell.html>

MichaelH: getting back to the question of adapting lessons for younger grades... I think you can do that, but I would be ready to make sure that the students have some basic concepts about the bill of rights, press freedom, and the need for some censorship during wartime

LisaGst19: As well as the basic objectives of the press in the first place.

MichaelH: and of course, Lisa, the way that lesson is written, it would probably be above the level of early elementary school... it's a formal debate

MichaelH: everyone back yet?

LeticiaC: yes

SamiraH: yes

DelfinoG: Yes

GaindaS: so this site is basically for students to gain an understanding of how communicators are important, for example their roles and how they viewed/experienced war

SamiraH: thank you Michael and Lisa for your input

MichaelH: did anyone look at the transcript for "Orchestrated Hell"?

LisaGst19: absolutely. I don't know if a debate would work on a younger level. But maybe some of the other issues that we discuss in some of the other plans on the site could work in some basic capacity.

RamonaGst22: Here.

SamiraH: yes, I can see why he was such a powerful voice

LourdesA: back

MichaelH: Murrow was a master at words... I still get chills thinking about seeing in my mind what he saw for real...

MichaelH: and of course, that continued into TV journalism as well

SamiraH: his words are filled with powerful imagery and the details are phenomenal

MichaelH: . o O ("See It Now", "Person to Person"...)

MichaelH: this is an example of a lesson which highlights a primary historic source.

MichaelH: anyone know what a primary source is?

SamiraH: straight from the horse's mouth

MichaelH: yep

LeticiaC: exactly

MichaelH: Murrow was an eyewitness to history

RamonaGst22: Yes~

MichaelH: Ferne, which lesson would you like me to show next... how about Lisa's?

FerneGst24: Sounds good to me. Okay, Lisa

LisaGst19: sounds good.

MichaelH: Lisa, ok to do Contributing to the Story

MichaelH: or would you like another one?

LisaGst19: no, that one is fine!

KanakoK joined the room.

MichaelH: ok.. why don't you give a little intro to it, and then I'll show everyone the address

KanakoK: I am Kanako from Houston. Nice to see you!

LisaGst19: OK, one of the major issues that I got from this great documentary is how close reporters are to what they are writing about. And, one of the greatest, deepest issues that journalists must deal with is: is their actual reporting contributing to the story, contributing to history? Is there mere presence altering history???

GaindaS: I think that their presence is contributing to the story because they see what is happening firsthand

MichaelH: here's the web address for the story... take a minute to look at it, then scurry back here and let's discuss it

MichaelH: <http://www.pbs.org/weta/reportingamericaatwar/teachers/contributing.html>

AmandaN: Good point - I even teach my fifth grade students that they have to consider the source of the information.

LeticiaC: I think so, like Murrow we need a master of words to describe to us what we can't see

LisaGst19: So, this plan hones in on some of the really wonderful speculation by some of the reporters in that documentary, highlights their musings about it and their reflections at being very, very closely involved in these war scenes, and gives teachers ideas about how to take those ideas into class discussion and into an analysis of their own high school news.

GaindaS: well, now that I read the overview, it does make sense...I think reporters should know their place because they obviously can alter things just by being there

LisaGst19: When you have a chance to view the documentary, really think about what Mal Browne is saying about the monk who set himself on fire as a protest of war and Browne's ponderings about whether his presence at the scene as a reporter, taking pictures, etc. contributed to the monk's decisions to do the act. Very powerful, some reflection that will really make kids think.

MichaelH: of course, some journalists became celebrities simply because of their war coverage... thinking of Peter Arnett, Bernard Shaw during the Gulf War for example

LisaGst19: Absolutely! And that realization must be balanced with the weight of reporting to the people about a war that they can't see or participate in and whatever the government's views might be on it.

LisaGst19: Absolutely! I remember watching them on CNN during the Gulf War. They've both gone very far b/c of that.

FerneGst24: We also have to remember that technology has played a dramatic role in helping them to where they are today.

LisaGst19: But anyway, the reflection by the reporters in this documentary is golden for journalism/first amendment/and even government class lessons. Really, really deep. So much can be done with the reporters' own words and thoughts from this piece. This lesson is only one example.

MichaelH: and of course, in the case of Arnett and Rivera... sometimes they might have compromised the war effort or endangered troops

GaindaS: I think reporters do impact what happens. I say this because people (from other countries) might want to get their point across and they will do anything, (if they see reporters) such as burning themselves so that the reporters will write about it.

LeticiaC: yes, Michael, I agree because then you go into the issue of censoring

LisaGst19: That's part of the balancing act that I think they have to maneuver. And sometimes, hopefully not too often, they fall off the tightrope.

MichaelH: absolutely... I can remember a lot of the controversy about coverage during Vietnam

LisaGst19: And another lesson plan from this site, the one about reporting from the Korean War to the Gulf War, leads the teacher through an exploration of the documentary's coverage of censorship over time.

SamiraH: I believe in this day of high speed technology, reporters have even more responsibility to be as free from personal biases as possible. It is impossible to detach oneself completely from what is being reported, however. We can all remember the media wars happening during the initial phase of the "war on terror" in Iraq.

LisaGst19: Right, and I think that could very well be a good theme to explore in a class discussion in some way, particularly on the high school level. Kids will definitely have an opinion on it, b/c it's something they've watched personally.

LeticiaC: Michael, Vietnam was over thirty years ago and the reporters back then did not have the technology capabilities as we do now

KanakoK: Technology makes our lives change dramatically. So we need to be careful to use that.

MichaelH: Leticia, that is true,... but all you have to do is look at Morely Safer's report at Cam Ne, and you get an idea of how powerful the influence of the press was then

LeticiaC: It would have been interesting if we had been able to see all that really happened

LisaGst19: Right, but Vietnam was the first war where reporters really showed video footage in the viewer's living room. Some serious video footage.

FerneGst24: But ultimately with the change in technology, reporters are struggling to do the same job -- somehow transmit the reality of war in a way that is still palatable to the American public

MichaelH: I'm thinking of Walter Cronkite's report on Vietnam in 1968... many believe that was a great turning point in policy

LisaGst19: When he stated his opinion?

GaindaS: since I am an early childhood teacher, I think many of these lessons could be altered to fit within their curriculum. Although I wish there were more lesson ideas for the younger kids, not necessarily on war, but on reporters, what they do, technology they use, etc.

MichaelH: yes

SamiraH: How can we tell students that media coverage is often what the media wants us to know? I am thinking about the American media versus Al-Jazeera network, as well as the minister of "misinformation" in Iraq.

LisaGst19: That's a very interesting point, Gainda. I do think that there are some good, solid basic issues that could definitely be explored here on the younger level.

MichaelH: Gainda, it is very difficult to do that, mainly because of the more mature subject matter... for example, how do you tell a young child about a Buddhist monk immolating himself?

KanakoK: Do you think it is good to teach mass media control?

LisaGst19: Ugh, that's true.

FerneGst24: But what is surprising about Vietnam was even with that freedom and a long and unpopular war, it took the press until the Tet Offensive to really turn against the war. In doing so, the press revealed that they more often reflect public opinion than make it

GaindaS: well as I said, you wouldn't go into that

GaindaS: you would keep the discussion on their level

MichaelH: that's true... and satellite technology did make the war immediate (at least by a few hours)

MichaelH: Ferne, which lesson next?

FerneGst24: Ernie Pyle

MichaelH: ok

GaindaS: well not mass media control, just media

MichaelH: Can anyone tell me anything about Ernie Pyle?

MichaelH: (Ferne and Lisa not included...)

FerneGst24: gosh

GaindaS: never heard of him

KanakoK: me too.

AmandaN: The school of journalism is named for him at Indiana University.

LisaGst19: Well, Samira, I think you have to first explore the basics of journalism ethics, and the code of responsibility that journalists are supposed to adhere to. Every publication and media outlet has one. Then, when students understand the parameters that journalists are supposed to abide by, then a really interesting discussion about what you just said can really ensue.

MichaelH: do you know why, Amanda?

AmandaN: I assume he was a famous journalist but I didn't take any journalism classes while at IU.

MichaelH: Ernie Pyle attended Indiana University, but never graduated from there

LisaGst19: B/c he was awesome. oops.....

MichaelH: he was a reporter for the Scripps-Howard newspaper chain

KanakoK: how?

MichaelH: started by writing interesting pieces, al a Charles Kuralt, and soon, though, he turned his focus to war journalism

KanakoK: What did he do? what is his famous article or books?

MichaelH: he was the "GI's journalist..." he told the story of the war in the eyes of the common, everyday soldier.

RamonaGst22: I studied one summer at IU in the building, but I didn't know why it was named for him. This is great info.

MichaelH: his columns are wonderful

MichaelH: . o O (Pyle lived about 75 miles north of where I am...)

LisaGst19: cool!

MichaelH: one of his best is called "The Death of Captain Waskow"...

KanakoK: wow, I am interested in war journalism. I should read his columns.

MichaelH: written in 1944, it is very powerful, and very poignant

MichaelH: Kanako, many of his columns are on the IU School of Journalism site, and some on the RAW site, too

KanakoK: I think one of the purpose of war journalism is to express how brutal war is to the public.

LisaGst19: Just as an aside, I think that his columns would also work wonderfully in an English classroom in a creative writing lesson or in a writing lesson of any sort, really.

LeticiaC: Did he only cover WWII?

GaindaS: common, everyday soldier? how is that different from any other book written that talks about how soldiers view war?

KanakoK: Michael, Thank you!

FerneGst24: There is a link on the RAW site to his column "The Death of Captain Waskow"

MichaelH: he was shot and killed by a Japanese sniper in April, 1945

MichaelH: here's the link

MichaelH: <http://www.pbs.org/weta/reportingamericaatwar/teachers/captwaskow.html>

MichaelH: be sure to read Pyle's column

MichaelH: Ferne, by the way, the way it's read in the film is fantastic

DelfinoG: I was just going to ask for the link. It sounds very interesting.

FerneGst24: I agree. We are very proud of it.

RamonaGst22: Really helpful ~ thanks.

LeticiaC: Good question, Ginda

LisaGst19: Ginda, b/c he was one of the first to report in this folksy way. He got close to the guys. He wrote simply, but powerfully.

MichaelH: Ginda, read the column, and you'll see exactly what Lisa means

KanakoK: Michael, I did not know that even though I am Japanese. Do you know where and when he was shot by Japanese sniper?

MichaelH: yes,

MichaelH: April 18, 1945, on the island of Ie Shima right off of Okinawa

FerneGst24: Also on the RAW site is an in-depth profile of Ernie Pyle as well as other notable war correspondents

LisaGst19: He had a way with detail that was very, very strong. Few words, but they painted a scene that you, the reader back home, could envision. A lot in common with Hemingway actually.

MichaelH: Ferne, speaking of books, what's the name of Tobin's book on Ernie Pyle?

MichaelH: Is it "Ernie Pyle's War"?

FerneGst24: Reporting America at War

MichaelH: right, but didn't he write another book about Ernie Pyle specifically?

MichaelH: there also is a compendium of Ernie's columns called "Ernie's War"... released about 1988 or so

FerneGst24: He did but I can't remember it at the moment but it is listed on the web site

LisaGst19: And speaking of Hemingway, any Hemingway fans out there will be happy to know that this documentary mentions him lots and interviews his companion, Martha Gellhorn, lots!!! And her reflections are wonderful

LeticiaC: Hemingway was another great writer of the war

KanakoK: It seems interesting to compare Ernie Pyle's view of war and Japanese view's of the war. Did he use any technologies such as photograph to express his view's about war?

MichaelH: I felt Pyle was a little better than Hemingway... of course I am prejudiced, but I think Pyle was more realistic to what war was really like

FerneGst24: Biographical sketches of these two as well as dispatches from the frontlines available on the web as well

MichaelH: Kanako, written word only

LisaGst19: The journalism teacher in me loves Pyle. The English teacher in me loves Hemingway!!

MichaelH: Ferne and I discussed this... there's precious little film of Ernie speaking at all..

FerneGst24: Two different styles

DelfinoG: Leti, I really like Hemingway also.

MichaelH: there's a short clip in RAW of him talking, but not much

MichaelH: it was in the first part

GindaS: you're right, his writing is simple but very complex at the same time.

MichaelH: I'm thinking that Ernie Pyle's death was so significant that it was announced by Harry Truman

KanakoK: Robert CAPA is also war journalist who used technology and his photography was attractive to many people.

MichaelH: right... his photos on D-Day are unbelievable

FerneGst24: he is also featured in the documentary and on the web site

FerneGst24: we have a photo gallery of some of Robert Capa's most famous combat photographs online

SamiraH: Do you know which reporters are being covered in tonight's broadcast?

MichaelH: Ferne, interested teachers can purchase the series from Shop PBS for Teachers, right?

MichaelH: Samira, I think it's Korea and Vietnam

KanakoK: How much are they being covered?

FerneGst24: David Halberstam, Peter Arnett, Mal Brown, Homer Bigart, Morley Safer, Chris Hedges

MichaelH: well, of course, there might be more coverage on Vietnam..

SamiraH: Is it starting right now?

MichaelH: yes

MichaelH: at least, on my PBS station

FerneGst24: Also, there is a segment on the war in Iraq

FerneGst24: You can purchase the video or DVD at www.pbs.org. Cost is \$34.98

MichaelH: and of course, the lessons will be on the site for a long time

SamiraH: ok, then this is farewell, thank you all for the great links and program information. I'm going to go watch the program!

DelfinoG left the room (signed off).

MaryVR: bye, thanks for the resource

MaryVR left the room (signed off).

MichaelH: Ferne, Lisa, anything else before we sign off?

AmandaN: Thank you - this was very interesting.

FerneGst24: Also on site in an interactive, multimedia timeline that traces the development of war reporting and the changing relationship between the media and the military

LeticiaC left the room (signed off).

AmandaN left the room (signed off).

KanakoK: Thank you, guys.

FerneGst24: Check out the web site -- lots of great resource material for classrooms

LisaGst19: no, I'm typed out.

MichaelH: <http://www.pbs.org/weta/reportingamericaatwar/index.html>

MichaelH: me too

LisaGst19: I bet!!!

FerneGst24: Thanks everyone . I'm typed out too

MichaelH: although that's a heck of a thing for two journalism teachers to say...

LisaGst19: ha!!!

KanakoK: so .. how can we know the truth of the news?

GaindaS left the room (signed off).

LourdesA: Thanks for all the info.

MichaelH: well, Kanako, that is a good question

MichaelH: I suppose there has to be an element of trust

LisaGst19: what do you mean, exactly?

MichaelH: and of course, there is more than one outlet

FerneGst24: And as time goes on the sources will only increase

LisaGst19: definitely, there's a huge element of trust. and, if you happen to peruse any publications code of ethics, you'll see exactly what sort of philosophies govern a reporter.

KanakoK: Can I tell that as a teacher? like...DO not trust all news?

MichaelH: well, I think a person should at least have some means of discerning what might be biased versus unbiased coverage

MichaelH: for example, it bugs me when I see reports on news shows about upcoming entertainment shows and movies on the same network...

MichaelH: "Today" is bad about that

LisaGst19: I think you can in a careful way. And if you explore issues like the recent Jayson Blair or Rick Bragg things, you can do that. But, you can and should also explore the other side, the side of the reporters striving so hard to uncover and tell the truth...like Woodward and Bernstein with Watergate, and how the government didn't want the truth to be told.

FerneGst24: And that is why we developed the media literacy lessons and are teaching our students at an early age to be very critical about what they read, hear and see

MichaelH: Of course, Lisa, there were a lot of people who believed that Watergate was a personal vendetta by Katharine Graham and Ben Bradlee against Nixon, too

LisaGst19: Critical is a good word. Teaching students to analyze is a good strategy. They need to be able to pick out the good reporting strategies as well as the bad.

KanakoK: Ferne, Yes! This is the reason why we teach children critical thinking.

LisaGst19: True, they did. And that is something that should be addressed. But, to answer the question that was asked, I think that you can teach kids not to believe everything that is written for a reason, but only after guidelines and ethic codes are understood and some stories from both sides of the coin are shown.

MichaelH: BJ is getting some information for Kanako about a media literacy listserv

BJ: <http://www.med.sc.edu:1081/>

KanakoK: and I will have student research multiple perspectives of the news and conclude their own answers.

FerneGst24: Also Kanako, if you email me eod@weta.com I can send you lots of information on media literacy

KanakoK: Thank you, BJ.

LisaGst19: I like your phrasing of "multiple perspectives". that's good!

KanakoK: Thank you, Ferne!

MichaelH: Ferne, Lisa, don't want to keep you if you have things to do...

FerneGst24: So do I

MichaelH: . o O (Ferne's still at work...)

LisaGst19: ok, we're done? poor Ferne!

MichaelH: We were in overtime, Lisa

LisaGst19: oh!

MichaelH: it's ok...:)

LisaGst19: gotta go!

MichaelH: it was a lot of fun... and an interesting topic

MichaelH: gotta go , too

MichaelH waves to all..

FerneGst24: Kanako - check out the lesson plans on the RAW site that deal with media literacy

MichaelH: thank you for joining us

KanakoK: me, too. I enjoyed a lot even though the topic is difficult.

FerneGst24: Bye everyone