

# REPORTING AMERICA AT WAR

## CLASSROOM MATERIALS

### Reporting on War from Korea to the Persian Gulf

**SUBJECT:**  
Journalism

**ESTIMATED  
TIME REQUIRED:**

#### OVERVIEW:

In Episode 2 of *Reporting America at War*, veteran reporters recall how reporting practices started in the Korean War, and how vivid, powerful and influential reporting became during the Vietnam War. They also reflect on how sanitized and controlled reporting was during the Gulf War. In this project, students will explore the reporting practices from these three wars in more depth, and assess how reporting techniques were similar, how they differed and how each of them may have contributed to the reporting practices from the war in Iraq..

#### RESOURCES FOR THIS LESSON:

Copy of Episode 2 *Reporting America at War*

Internet access or library time

Handout #1: "Possible Research Questions"

Handout #2: "Excerpted Passages"

Reporting from the Front Line war timeline

[http://www.usnewsclassroom.com/resources/activities/war\\_reporting/timeline/](http://www.usnewsclassroom.com/resources/activities/war_reporting/timeline/)

#### SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES FOR THIS LESSON:

Newseum "War Stories" exhibit

[www.newseum.org/warstories](http://www.newseum.org/warstories)

The Poynter Institute

[www.poynter.org](http://www.poynter.org)

High School Journalism presented by ASNE

[www.highschooljournalism.org](http://www.highschooljournalism.org)

The Newshour with Jim Lehrer

[www.newshour.org](http://www.newshour.org)

#### STRATEGY FOR THIS LESSON:

**1)** View Episode 2 of *Reporting America at War* with your class. Afterward, provide students with a list of the below quotes. Have them select one quote to write their reaction to in their notebooks for five minutes.

*"If you're a journalist there is no bigger story than war. War has blood, it has death, it has the fate of nations. Reputations are made during war. The greatest work in journalism is often done during war. Journalism is most important during war, because the most is at stake during war."*  
**Mitchell Stephens**

*"Over time, the nature of the media changed the way in which the media expected to get the story, and the way in which the military had to deal with them."* **Colonel Jay Parker**

*"You are urged to remember...that you have an important responsibility in the matter of psycho-*

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*logical warfare." General Douglas MacArthur*

*"You can't take an audience that has existing beliefs and existing attitudes and somehow by showing them one story or giving them one opinion change everything they've based their lives on. It doesn't happen that way. The media is powerful when it touches beliefs and ideas that we already hold." Colonel Jay Parker*

After students have completed their assignment, invite them to share some of their reactions aloud with the class. They might choose to summarize what they wrote or to read the text in its entirety to the class. Either way, use the quotes and students' reactions as a springboard to encourage the group to express their opinions about the documentary.

2) Provide students with copies of the timeline "Reporting From the Front Lines" Discuss. Remind students to pay particular attention to the notes about the Korean and Persian Gulf Wars. When looking at the timeline, ask students what points they would like to include in the section on the war in Iraq.

3) Divide the class into three small groups. Assign each group to research media reporting techniques for one of the following conflicts: the Korean War, the Vietnam War and the Persian Gulf War. Provide students with library time or internet access to aid them in their research. Distribute copies of Handout #1, "Possible Research Questions" to each group to jumpstart their research.

Encourage each group to create PowerPoint presentations, charts, graphs, maps, or to use illustrations of some sort to enhance their presentation.

Provide copies of Handout #2, "Excerpted Passages" to each group to provide some motivational, and often controversial points from Episode 2 to consider for their research. Encourage students to examine the issues these passages raise, and to use the issues (censorship, expression of opinion, deceit, etc.) as points of exploration for their own research.

Designate a class period where the three groups will present their findings to the class for discussion. Encourage students to follow-up each group's presentation with questions.

4) After listening to all three presentations, assign students to write a reaction essay to the following prompt:

How would you describe the historical build-up of wartime journalistic practices from the Korean War to the present? How has reporting changed, improved, deteriorated, or stayed the same?

### Discussion Questions:

- 1) How does the government's view of journalists seem to have changed throughout these wars?
- 2) What are some ethical concerns for journalists to consider that emerged from the Vietnam War?
- 3) Debate the different opinions surrounding this passage from Walter Cronkite:

*"There are some in the military who claim that the press, particularly television, lost the war in Vietnam. That if we had supported the war more, had not reported some of the things which our correspondents were seeing out there, maybe they could've held on long enough." Which side do you agree with, the military view or the journalists' view?*

- 4) After listening to reporters discuss their experiences and after witnessing firsthand the media coverage of the recent war in Iraq, how do you feel that reporting has changed over the years? Obviously technology has allowed

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the practice to evolve to a higher level, but how does the profession seem to have changed philosophically?

### EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Obtain copies of your local or regional newspaper from the archives or microfiche at your area library. Select articles from the newspaper that covered the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the Persian Gulf War. Share copies of the articles with your students and have them do a comparison and contrast assignment where everyone reads, critiques, and compares the coverage.

### RELEVANT STANDARDS:

This lesson meets the following standards for high school journalism set forth by NCTE:

**Standard 1:** Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

**Standard 4:** Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

**Standard 7:** Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.

**Standard 8:** Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge

**Standard 11:** Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Lisa Greeves has taught high school English and Journalism classes for two Virginia school systems: Fairfax County Public Schools and Rockbridge County Schools. She has a bachelor's degree in English and Communication from James Madison University and a Master's Degree in English from Virginia Commonwealth University. She recently had a chapter published in the 2002 NCTE publication *Applying NCTE/IRA Standards in Classroom Journalism Projects*.

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### HANDOUT #1: POSSIBLE RESEARCH QUESTIONS (PAGE 1 OF 2)

1. How many reporters reported from the front lines?
2. Where were reporters stationed in order to obtain their stories? (You may want to provide maps with locations of reporters indicated as a visual aid.)
3. How many reporters were assigned to cover this war?
4. What kind of reporting technology did reporters have at their disposal during this war?
5. How involved was television in daily reporting?
6. How do relations seem to be between government and the press?

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### HANDOUT #1: POSSIBLE RESEARCH QUESTIONS (PAGE 1 OF 2)

7. How many articles on the war tended to appear in the national daily newspapers?

8. What were some of the major hurdles that reporters had to overcome while reporting on this war?

9. What was the official tally of reporters wounded or killed during this war?

10. Explore and identify some of the most notable and visible reporters from this war.

11. What kinds of things did reporters get in trouble for during this war?

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### HANDOUT #2: EXCERPTED PASSAGES FROM EPISODE 2 REGARDING EACH WAR: (PAGE 1 OF 2)

#### KOREAN WAR

"And though reporters were arriving in Korea daily, no official press policy had been devised. Correspondents were simply asked to follow voluntary guidelines, designed to safeguard military security."

"But in the absence of formal censorship, the U.S. military's problems in Korea continued to make front page news."

"On December 21st, 1950 the U.S. Army finally cracked down on the press, imposing rigorous censorship restrictions on all news from Korea. It was time for the correspondents to get on the team, and "stop helping the Reds."

"For his Korean reporting, he had won his second Pulitzer prize – and the lasting animosity of U.S. Army officials, who publicly denounced him and his colleagues for coverage they called "biased, prejudiced and inaccurate."

#### VIETNAM WAR

"All the journalists in Saigon had established was a news gathering operation that was, 24/7 as we say now. Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. From the beginning, it was a very close-knit environment, and working conditions which were most uncomfortable. The air conditioning in our small office often failed, the bathroom was taken over by our photographer, who turned it into a developing room so if you wanted to go to the head, you had to walk through, you know, through coils of drying film, but, in fact, there was an incredible enthusiasm and intense desire by the journalists in Saigon to find out really what was going on." -- Peter Arnett

"Censorship wasn't really practical for a couple of reasons. One of them that the U.S. was formally a guest of the South Vietnamese and you'd have to have given the South Vietnamese control over the censorship. The other reason is that the administration wanted to deny that there was a real war here and to impose censorship...is one of those signs that the country is really going to war." -- Daniel Hallin

"There was no censorship. Of course you were called in and reproached if your coverage was deemed slightly too negative. But reproached in the most sort of nonchalant way. You were urged to see the brighter side of things." -- Gloria Emerson

"At the end of the day, at five o'clock, the military briefers would get up with their charts and their bar graphs, and they'd tell us about how the war was going. And it was very clear. Their descriptions were very clear, they were so clear that you knew that they couldn't possibly be accurate. The number of enemy dead in any given week never ended in the figure 0 or 5. In other words, it was always an odd number. Never 65 people killed, 64. Never 60, 59, or 69, or 71. And it didn't bear much relation to the truth, but there it was." -- Ward Just

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### HANDOUT #2: EXCERPTED PASSAGES FROM EPISODE 2 REGARDING EACH WAR: (PAGE 2 OF 2)

"Tet was very dramatic in the sense that that was the first time that the war really looked like it was out of control, on television." -- Daniel Hallin

"You've got to look back at journalism in the sixties. Reporters were not meant to have opinions, and...I think that what made Cronkite's opinion so important is that he did express it." -- Peter Arnett

#### PERSIAN GULF WAR

"Before being granted access to the staging areas in Saudi Arabia, pool reporters were required to agree in writing to the Pentagon's ground rules."

"I was so frustrated at one point, that I joined the Saudi press pool, too, because I knew I had a better chance of getting into combat." -- Mal Browne

"There is the belief that the media, because it's a business and you want to get the story first, and get the story that grabs people's attention, is going to go out and grab a story even when there isn't one there, and is going to seize on whatever small shred of information they have. And if that means stretching problems of security and secrecy to get the story, well, it's the people's right to know." -- Colonel Jay Parker

"I believe there should be censorship in wartime; I believe it absolutely firmly. It should be intelligent censorship. It should be—it should be civilian-controlled, but on the other hand, correspondents should be with the troops everywhere the troops are." -- Walter Cronkite

"On January 16th, in an unprecedented live audio broadcast from behind enemy lines in Baghdad, CNN reported that the war had begun – beating the Pentagon's official statement by nearly half an hour. Shortly after the first air strikes, Iraqi officials ordered U.S. television reporters out of Baghdad...Only CNN's Peter Arnett was allowed to stay. He would be the first American TV correspondent to cover a war from behind enemy lines."

"We have no independent film of the Persian Gulf War, none, because our film crews were not permitted to go out on the front with the troops. They should have been...That history is lost to us." -- Walter Cronkite