

The Post



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A Letter From Liam Neeson



Working in films such as *Michael Collins* and *Schindler's List*, I've seen the power of film not only to entertain, but also to change the way audiences see themselves and the world. When I first met Joanne Ashe, herself the daughter of Holocaust survivors,

she explained to me her vision for a new educational program called *Journeys in Film: Educating for Global Understanding*. I grasped immediately how such a program could transform the use of film in the classroom from a passive viewing activity to an active, integral part of learning.

I have served as the national spokesperson for *Journeys in Film* since its inception because I absolutely believe in the effectiveness of film as an educational tool that can teach our young people to value and respect cultural diversity and to see themselves as individuals who can make a difference. *Journeys in Film* uses interdisciplinary, standards-aligned lesson plans that can support and enrich classroom programs in English, social studies, math, science, and the arts. Using films as a teaching tool is invaluable, and *Journeys in Film* has succeeded in creating outstanding film-based curricula integrated into core academic subjects.

By using carefully selected documentary and international films that depict life in other countries and cultures around the globe, combined with interdisciplinary curricula to transform entertainment media into educational media, we can use the classroom to bring the world to every student. Our film program dispels myths and misconceptions, enabling students to overcome biases; it connects the future leaders of the world with each other. As we provide teachers with lessons aligned to Common Core Standards, we are also laying a foundation for understanding, acceptance, trust, and peace.

Please share my vision of a more harmonious world where cross-cultural understanding and the ability to converse about complex issues are keys to a healthy present and a peaceful future. Whether you are a student, an educator, a filmmaker, or a financial supporter, I encourage you to participate in the *Journeys in Film* program.

Please join this vital journey for our kids' future. They are counting on us. *Journeys in Film* gets them ready for the world.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Liam Neeson".

A Letter From Steven Spielberg



Dear friends,

After the U.S. Constitution was created, it became clear that in order to ensure democracy in this fledgling, experimental country, amendments were needed to the original document. First, although checks and balances

were technically in place among the three branches of government, it was felt that a “fourth estate” should exist — a free press, which would report about the government itself.

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press...

Katharine “Kay” Graham’s pivotal decision to publish the Pentagon Papers in the *Washington Post* may have happened in 1971, but the story about the crisis of conscience that led her to do so is timeless — and timely. We live in an age when our press is attacked for doing its job. After I read Liz Hannah and Josh Singer’s screenplay about Kay’s story, I knew it had to become a film. So much so that I interrupted my work on *Ready Player One* to film it.

The Pentagon Papers provided undeniable proof of a vast government conspiracy to cover up the truth about the Vietnam War. Publishing them did exactly what the First Amendment asks for — the freedom of the people to learn truths about its government, however unpalatable the truths might be.

Although she’d worked at the *Post*, which her father had purchased decades earlier, Kay never imagined she would one day run the paper. And she certainly never envisioned herself publishing a nation-shocking exposé — especially since its source was a story about the Pentagon Papers that came from a rival, the *New York Times*. The White House had banned the *Times* from publishing anything further on the subject. Consequently, Kay’s decision to publish text from the actual Pentagon Papers was extraordinary, since doing so put the reputation of the *Post*, and that of everyone working there, in the crosshairs.

I was fortunate in assembling a dream cast and crew to bring this story to life in *The Post*. Not only are Meryl Streep, Tom Hanks, Janusz Kaminski, Rick Carter, Ann Roth and the rest of the team some of our finest working talents today, but a number of them lived through the era during which the film is set. The meticulous care they took to embody the characters they portrayed and to recreate the look and feel of the 1970s, is evident.

Besides caring about this courageous woman’s journey, those of us involved in making *The Post* hope it stands as a testament to the dignity, power and importance of a free press. I’m honored that *The Post* is included in your course of study.

Respectfully,

Steven Spielberg

Introducing *The Post*

Containment.

The domino theory.

Mutually assured destruction.

These catchwords from the post-World War II era still defined the foreign policy of the United States in 1971. The world was divided into the First World (the United States and other Western-style democracies), the Communist World (the Soviet Union, China, and their satellite nations), and the Third World (every other nation on Earth, seen by the first two as territory to be dominated.) The long-running war in Vietnam was part of this struggle for dominance.

That war in Southeast Asia had actually begun immediately after the surrender of Japan, when France tried to reassume its control over its prewar colonies. With the French surrender at Dien Bien Phu in 1954 and the split of Vietnam into a Communist North and non-Communist South, it appeared to the Eisenhower administration that another domino was about to fall. U.S. advisors in increasing numbers moved in to support the government of South Vietnam. The number of troops increased very dramatically under Lyndon Johnson. The Tet Offensive of 1968 and the ongoing military draft combined to create resistance, especially among young Americans; by 1971 protest marches were a common phenomenon.

In this explosive situation, the *New York Times* lit the fuse. Daniel Ellsberg, a researcher with the RAND Corporation, secretly photocopied a top-secret military report, amounting eventually to 47 volumes of historical analysis and government documents, that came to be called simply “the Pentagon Papers.” Failing to get members of Congress to release it, he turned to the media, hoping to show how the government had deceived Americans in its desire to win the war. The *Times* published stories based on excerpts, and the government moved in, securing an injunction to prevent the newspaper from further publication of anything based on the stolen report. Ellsberg, who had acted out of a sense of conscience and was willing to accept the consequences, was charged with conspiracy, espionage, and theft of government property.

This is where things stand at the beginning of the film *The Post*. Ben Bradlee (Tom Hanks), editor of the *Washington Post*, is ready, even eager, to pick up the story from the newspaper’s silenced competitor. Publisher Katharine Graham (Meryl Streep) is sympathetic, but also reluctant to incur the hostility of the White House. She has inherited her role after the deaths of her father and her husband; she is new to her position as publisher; she is trying to strengthen the paper’s financial viability by taking it public; most of all, she is a woman in a world dominated by strong men. In the Georgetown social set which has been her life to this point, she is even a friend of Robert McNamara, architect of the Vietnam policy.

This story, set almost fifty years ago, is still terribly relevant today. The traditional media of television, radio, newspapers, and newsmagazines now compete with cable channel pundits and social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and more. Americans tend to listen to media that reflect their own political stance, so that we move further into our “silos” and consequently farther apart. Our social media can be manipulated by those who publish false news stories and doctored images, which then spread exponentially. Mainstream media outlets have been attacked for doing their job, and reporters from those outlets have been labelled “enemies of the people.” *The Post* stands as a bulwark against these trends, showcasing the hard work, intelligence, conscientiousness, and honor of those committed to bringing the truth to the American people.

Film credits

TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX
DREAMWORKS PICTURES
and RELIANCE ENTERTAINMENT
Present

An AMBLIN ENTERTAINMENT / PASCAL PICTURES
Production

A STEVEN SPIELBERG Film

MERYL STREEP

TOM HANKS

“THE POST”

SARAH PAULSON, BOB ODENKIRK, TRACY LETTS

BRADLEY WHITFORD, BRUCE GREENWOOD,
MATTHEW RHYS

Casting by ELLEN LEWIS

Costume Designer ANN ROTH

Music by JOHN WILLIAMS

Film Editors MICHAEL KAHN, ACE,
SARAH BROSHAR

Production Designer RICK CARTER

Director of Photography JANUSZ KAMINSKI

Executive Producers

TIM WHITE

TREVOR WHITE

ADAM SOMNER

TOM KARNOWSKI

JOSH SINGER

Produced by AMY PASCAL, p.g.a.

STEVEN SPIELBERG, p.g.a.

KRISTIE MACOSKO KRIEGER, p.g.a.

Written by LIZ HANNAH and JOSH SINGER

Directed by STEVEN SPIELBERG

Journalism Ethics and “Fake News”

Enduring Understandings

- Bias occurs in various news outlets, whether print or broadcast; therefore, it is important for the citizen to evaluate the source of news.
- A responsible journalist will strive for accuracy, independence, and fairness.
- Responsible journalists will be aware of the impact of their reporting and accept responsibility for it.
- Social media is unregulated with respect to the principles of ethical journalism.

Essential Questions

- What is “fake news”?
- What is ethical journalism?
- How does one evaluate whether a news source follows the rules of ethical journalism?
- Should journalistic ethics apply to those on social media?

Notes to the Teacher

Politicians sometimes charge that stories about them in the press are “fake news.” In this lesson, students will focus on the implications of the term “fake news” and deepen their understanding of ethical journalism by evaluating popular news sources, as well as considering the impact of social media on the way news is consumed.

Part 1 of the lesson teaches students some signs of “fake news” to look for in evaluating news articles online. It is important that the teacher has a clear understanding of both “fake news” and ethical journalism for this lesson. “Fake news” is defined by the Cambridge dictionary as “false stories that appear to be news, spread on the internet or using other media, usually created to influence political views or as a joke.”⁷

Ethical journalism is essentially the opposite of this. There are five key principles to ethical journalism according to the Ethical Journalism Network:⁸

1. Journalists write with truth and accuracy.
2. Journalists act independently of special interests.
3. Journalists maintain fairness and impartiality
4. Journalists have a sense of humanity and are aware of the potential impact of their reports.
5. Journalists accept responsibility for what they report, correcting and apologizing for any errors.

⁷ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/fake-news>

⁸ <https://web.archive.org/web/20201208055439/https://ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/who-we-are/5-principles-of-journalism>

Once students have a good understanding of these two terms, they will survey various journalistic outlets, both print and television, to evaluate whether or not they are following ethical principles. After they present their evaluations, the class will discuss the relative merits of the various formats from which people get their knowledge of news events.

The last part of the lesson deals with social media. Students “vote with their feet” to take positions on a series of questions about social media. Then they debate whether or not the same principles should apply to social media users who generally report independently of a publication or established news outlet. How does the average Twitter user, blogger, Facebook commenter, etc., have an impact on the news?

Common Core Standards addressed by this lesson

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.1

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.2

Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.8

Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.A

Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.4

Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.5

Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

Lesson (JOURNALISM)



Duration of Lesson

3–4 one-hour class periods

Assessments

Participation in the class discussion about fake news and journalistic ethics

Completion of the presentation and evaluation of a news outlet

Completion of notes sheet on the various presentations

Participation in the debate about ethical journalism in social media

Completed reflection paragraph on class debate about ethical journalism in social media

Materials needed

Access to the internet via computers, tablets, or smart phones for the following sites:

“How to Spot Fake News” at <https://www.factcheck.org/2016/11/how-to-spot-fake-news/>

List of 5 principles of journalism at <http://ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/who-we-are/5-principles-of-journalism>

Snopes.com at <https://www.snopes.com/about-snopes/>

http://www.independent.co.uk/news/long_reads/social-media-logan-paul-regulation-laws-legal-protection-youtuber-facebook-twitter-blogger-vlogger-a8191346.html

Handout 1: Spotting Fake News

Handout 2: The Five Principles of Ethical Journalism

Handout 3: Organizer for News Outlet Presentation

Handout 4: News Outlet Ratings

Procedure

Part 1: What Is Good Journalism?

1. Once students have taken their seats and have computer access, direct students to the website for “How to Spot Fake News” on www.factcheck.org and distribute **Handout 1: Spotting Fake News**. Have students read the article on their own or as a class. Ask them to complete the notes sheet while they read.
2. After completing the sheet, discuss their responses with the students. After they finish, introduce them to the idea of “ethical journalism.”
3. Distribute **Handout 2: The Five Principles of Ethical Journalism**. Have students then access <http://ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/who-we-are/5-principles-of-journalism> to fill in the five basic principles as a class, in small groups, or individually.
4. If there is time, begin a discussion that asks students to compare the idea of “fake news” to these principles. Some possible questions for discussion:
 - a. What is the purpose of fake news?
 - b. Why do some people feel it is acceptable to ignore journalistic ethics?
 - c. Which principle do you feel is most important for high-quality journalism?
 - d. Why do many people turn to unevaluated news sites for their knowledge of current events?

5. For homework, ask students to bring in an example of a news story that follows the principles of ethical journalism and one that is “fake news” to the next class. They can use any news source available to them (print, on-line, television, etc.)

Part 2: Evaluating the News

1. Have students share the stories they found for homework. Once the class is finished, introduce the next phase of the lesson to them. Explain that they will create short, five-minute presentations about a news outlet of their choice. The purpose of the presentations is to get a sense of how well different news outlets follow the principles of ethical journalism. Students can choose from any news source (print, on-line, or television) for their presentations. They may make PowerPoint slides, create a video, create their own newspaper “exposing” the news source, or use any other means to address how well their chosen news outlet addresses the five principles of ethical journalism.
2. Students should use websites like www.snopes.com, www.factcheck.org, www.politifact.com, and the *Washington Post* Fact Checker at www.washingtonpost.com to assist them with creating their presentations. Distribute copies of **Handout 3: Organizer for News Outlet Presentation** to help them gather their information and rate their news outlet.
3. Allow students the remainder of the class to select their outlet and begin their research. (Try not to have any duplicates, if possible.) Give them a deadline for the handout that provides sufficient time to evaluate their chosen news source adequately.

4. After students have had sufficient time to complete **Handout 3**, distribute **Handout 4: News Outlet Ratings**. Have students present their findings while other students record the ratings.
 5. Once the presentations are finished, lead a class discussion that asks students to think about the results of their findings. Does one type of news seem to be more reliable than another? Were students surprised by their findings? Are they frustrated by their findings? Will this change anything about the way they watch, read, or listen to the news in the future?
 6. After the discussion, tell students that in their next class they will be debating the use of the five principles of ethical journalism in social media. Have the students read the following article and instruct them to come to class prepared to discuss both the information in the article and their own opinions about the information presented: http://www.independent.co.uk/news/long_reads/social-media-logan-paul-regulation-laws-legal-protection-youtuber-facebook-twitter-blogger-vlogger-a8191346.html
- Part 3: Social Media**
1. Divide the room into two sides by placing the desks or tables in your classroom so that they are facing each other. You may want to leave a couple of desks in the middle of the room for those who aren't sure which "side" to pick. One side of the room should be "Strongly agree" while the other side of the room is "strongly disagree." Allow students to fall anywhere on this spectrum.
 2. Let your students know that they may move from side to side during the exercise depending on the questions asked.
 3. Read the following statements to the students and allow them time to move from one side of the room to the other as they make their decisions. Ask for a few people to share why they are standing or sitting where they are. If students would like to ask each other questions about their decision, encourage this, but remember that your role as the facilitator is to make sure all opinions are heard. Encourage students to use the materials they have read in the last few classes to support their choices. (Feel free to include any additional statements of your own that reflect recent discussions in class.)
 - a. There is no place for journalistic ethics in social media.
 - b. Individuals who post a story on social media should be accountable in some way for their words, videos, or images.
 - c. People should be punished for misinformation posted to any social media account.
 - d. People should have to apologize or set the record straight when they post something false, whether they did so intentionally or not.
 - e. Social media sites like Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram should be accountable for what their users post and face punishment if too many people are allowed to post untrue or hurtful things.
 - f. Calling something "fake news" is another way to spread politically correct speech in society.
 - g. All news should be neutral, without taking sides.

4. For homework or if class time allows, ask students to choose which statement made them think the most and then write a paragraph explaining what made their response to that one so complicated. They should submit these paragraphs at the start of the next class.

Lesson (JOURNALISM)

Handout 1

Directions:

After reading the article from Factcheck.org at <https://www.factcheck.org/2016/11/how-to-spot-fake-news/>, answer the following questions:

1. How do you define “fake news”? Use quotes from the article to support your answer.

2. List some of the ways to determine if news is fake or not.

3. After reading this article, do you think you have ever been fooled by fake news? If so, when? How does that make you feel?

4. Whose responsibility is it to distinguish fake news from real news? Do members of the public need to be more cautious and aware of what they are reading or should anyone who publishes anything false be held accountable?

Handout 2

The 5 Principles of Ethical Journalism

According to the Ethical Journalism Network, there are five basic principles that define ethical journalism. Go to their website at <http://ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/who-we-are/5-principles-of-journalism> and read the article you find there. In the chart below, fill in notes on those principles and explain what they mean in your own words. Do not just copy the explanation given on the website—that would be unethical!

Principle	Explanation and Example(s)
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	



Handout 3 • p. 1

Organizer for News Outlet
Presentation

Student name _____

Name of News Organization: _____

Type of News Organization (print, television, online, Twitter) _____

Principle	Grade (A-F)	Explanation for your evaluation	Evidence
Truth and Accuracy			Quote or example:
			Title of story:
Independence			Quote or example:
			Title of story:



Handout 3 • p. 2

Spotting Fake News

Principle	Grade (A-F)	Explanation for your evaluation	Evidence
Fairness and impartiality			Quote or example:
			Title of story:
Sense of humanity and awareness of potential impact			Quote or example:
			Title of story:
Maintain accountability and responsibility for what is reported			Quote or example:
			Title of story:

Spotting Fake News

Principle Ratings

[illegible]

Educating for Global Understanding

www.journeysinfilm.org

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