

Unit I: Telling the Story

Lesson Two: War's Accoutrements

Time:

3 hours

Objectives & Skills:

Students will understand the evolution and impact of communication-related and war-related devices via research, critical thinking, and debate.

Materials:

Computers with Internet access

Drawing and coloring supplies

Small poster board

Preparations:

Teacher: Assemble some of the tools of the war reporter for display in the classroom: e.g., 35mm camera, pencil and notebook, laptop computer, old manual typewriter.

Internet Links:

<http://griffin.multimedia.edu/~deadmedia/>

www.peg.apc.org/~alonsdale/media/dedmedia.html

<http://mediahistory.com>

<http://www.mtr.org/index.htm>

When Dan worked, he used a Nikon camera and carried a small notebook to write comments about what he'd seen, the kind of film he'd used, and possible captions. These were his essential tools, along with candy and cigarettes to give to people he met. Every journalist has a favorite tool of the trade that he or she most values. Obviously these differ based on whether he or she is a photographer, writer, or video-based journalist, although even within these areas, there are differing opinions on the best equipment.

Likewise, soldiers have their preferences. While wars such as the one in Somalia were fought with semi-automatic rifles and other kinds of modern armaments, machetes and other more rudimentary weapons still play a role in many African conflicts. How a war is fought affects the way journalists cover it--whether they're dodging bombs or carefully avoiding landmines. Where they go, how they get there, even what they wear

(protective flack jackets, for example, were common in Bosnia), all are decided primarily by the location and style of warfare.

We're not going to debate the value of a Nikon versus a Hassleblad here, nor will we get into a more macabre debate regarding mustard gas and bayonets. Rather, this is an opportunity for students to familiarize themselves with some of the basic tools of journalism and warfare, to look at how they've evolved, and to consider how this evolution effects the work of a correspondent.

Premeditation:

- a. Set the following scenario for the class: "You are leaving in two hours to fly to the middle of a war zone. You will be there for two weeks and must cover the story to the best of your ability, sending the information you gather to your employer, a major news organization. You can take one 'tool of the trade' with you, including those assembled in front of the class and others you might know about. What would you take and why?"

Activities:

Step I:

All of the students should have a copy of the handout, *War's Accoutrements: A Survey*. Provide them with 3-5 minutes to rank the list of tools according to the significance each would have to a war correspondent. Take awhile to discuss the rankings as a class. What were some of the rationales for various rankings? Encourage the students to debate their differences. They should keep the list for future comparison.

Step II:

Divide the class into pairs. Assign several of the items from *War's Accoutrements: A Survey* to each pair so that the entire list is assigned. Ask the groups to find the following information for each of their items:

- A date for when the item was either invented or came into general use.
- An explanation as to how this item is relevant to war reportage.

Students can use encyclopedias, history books, almanacs, and other print materials as well as the listed Web sites to aid in their research.

Step III:

Each pair will create individual 8 1/2 x 11-inch flashcards for their items, including a drawing or picture in addition to the information they found. Color code the flashcards so that all of the communication devices appear in one color, and all of the war devices appear in another (e.g., put a red border on communication devices and a black border on war devices). Post the flashcards on one wall in the correct chronological order. The effect should be a time line.

Step IV:

After students have an opportunity to survey the time line, discuss how technological advances in communications and war devices have paralleled each other. Also ask the students how more advanced methods of warfare have affected the work of correspondents. Spend some time analyzing the time line for trends and patterns.

Step V:

Break the class into two groups and debate the following: Would you rather be a war correspondent today or in 1900? Consider the pros and cons offered by each era. You might also break the class into more than two groups and add others eras, such as the pre-computer era (e.g., Vietnam), the pre-TV war (e.g., WWII), pre-radio (e.g., American Civil War), pre-photography (Napoleonic Wars).

Tips for debates:

1. Debates often work best if you assign the group a position rather than allowing them to choose.
2. Begin by having the groups thoroughly discuss the issue amongst themselves so that they are clear on the details of their argument.
3. Ask one member from each group to give an opening statement to the class before a more active debate begins. The statement should outline their position.
4. If maintaining order is an issue, each side can have a "speaker's chair." Have students take turns coming forward to speak from the chair.
5. Require every student to speak at least once.
6. When the debate has finished, be sure to debrief so that students have an opportunity to voice their personal opinions.

Extending the Lesson:

- Let students choose two local events (e.g., political rally, sporting event, civic meeting) to attend and report. For each event, they must use a different form of reporting and they must use it exclusively. For example, they might cover a soccer game as a writer, turning in a brief article about what they saw and learned. The second time around, they could cover a factory strike as a photographer, turning in only a series of photographs which they have taken and selected. After completing the two assignments, ask them to reflect on the kinds of skills and forethought that each form of reporting entailed. Which did they prefer? Which is more difficult? What are the limitations and strengths of each format?
- Interview older members of the community who recall the pre-television era. How do they get their news today as opposed to when they were much younger? What method do they prefer? Do they think television and computers have

improved news coverage?

- Invite students to create a spoof of a famous ancient war, such as the Trojan War. They might choose to tell about the war through the online postings of a cyber-journalist, or they could act as reporters for a 24-hour TV news channel. This exercise should challenge students both to learn a little about the ancient war, and to consider how contemporary news coverage effects our interpretation of events. How would the Trojan horse have played out with the National Enquirer, CNN, and MSNBC all vying for a piece of the action?