

Part 3: Dissecting President Bush's 2003 State of the Union Address

TIME: DVD Chapter 3 VHS – 17:25

Questions/Activities:

Before screening this section, you may wish to download a copy of President Bush's 2003 State of the Union Address here:

www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/01/20030128-19.html

Have students read the last portion of the State of the Union which contains passages relevant to the Iraqi War.

(Note: you can read passages out loud together as a class, or ask students to read passages for homework, and then discuss as a class).

What arguments does President Bush make to justify the U.S. invasion of Iraq? What persuasive and emotional language does he use? (appeals to nationalism, name calling, fear, etc.) Make a list of them at the board. Then, after discussion, proceed with this section of the film.

What criticisms do *Uncovered's* experts offer of President Bush's arguments justifying war in Iraq? Make a list of specific criticisms at the board. Ask students: which criticisms seem strong, and which seem weaker in their minds, and why? Which of Mr. Bush's justifications are ignored by *Uncovered's* experts?

John Dean explains that "it is a federal felony, a crime to mislead and distort information to present to Congress." What are the implications of this statement, if the Bush administration is in fact distorting evidence related to the Iraq War?

Part 4A: Dissecting Colin Powell's February 5, 2003 UN Address

TIME: DVD Chapter 4 VHS – 24:33

Questions/Activities:

Before screening this section, you may wish to download a transcript, audio, or video copy of Mr. Powell's remarks to the UN here:

www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2003/17300.htm

Have students read Powell's remarks. *(Note: you can read passages out loud together as a class, or ask students to read passages for homework, and then discuss as a class).*

What arguments does Mr. Powell make to justify the US invasion of Iraq? What kinds of persuasive and emotional language does he use? Make a list of techniques (fear, nationalism, scientific evidence, etc.) at the board. Then, after discussion, proceed with this section of the film.

What criticisms do *Uncovered's* experts offer of Mr. Powell's arguments justifying war in Iraq? Make a list of specific criticisms at the board. Ask students: which criticisms seem strong, and which seem weaker in their minds, and why? Which of Mr. Powell's justifications are ignored by *Uncovered's* experts?

Images can be very powerful forms of persuasion. Download a simple *LA Times* slideshow of Powell's images during his U.N. speech here: www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/iraq/la-020503ungallery.0,4081921.photogallery?coll=la-mininav-world&index=1



Ray McGovern refers to Powell's debut as an imagery analyst as "highly embarrassing." Why does he say this?

Patrick Eddington explains that the UN weapons inspections process destroyed "90 to probably 95% of the Iraqi arsenal," and Bill Christison argues that, "by 1998 at the latest, most of the weapons of mass destruction and the Iraqi programs at that point were essentially at an end." How does this evidence conflict with Bush administration claims of Iraq as an immediate threat to US security?

Part 4B: The Bush Administration Orders Invasion of Iraq—March 19, 2003

TIME: DVD Middle of Chapter 4 VHS – 32:38

Questions/Activities:

By featuring short repeated sound bite interviews with Bush administration officials, this section of the film is trying to make a point. What is the point here? Is the point believable? What media techniques do *Uncovered's* producers use to get the point across? (Repetition, humor, straw man, card stacking, selective editing...)

At one point in this section, Mr. Bush exclaims "Over time, the truth will come out." Based on what we know now, what is the truth about Iraq and weapons of mass destruction? (See, for example, former Bush administration chief weapons inspector David Kay's January 2004 remarks here: www.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/meast/01/25/sprj.nirq.kay/)

Part 5A: How Much Does the Iraq War Cost?

TIME: DVD Chapter 5 VHS – 36:50

Questions/Activities:

A. When asked about how much an Iraq invasion would cost, former Bush Press Secretary Ari Fleischer commented, "I'm just not going to get into any speculation about numbers." Let's do the work for him. Have students investigate this web site, based on Congressional Budget Office numbers, to determine how much the Iraqi invasion costs in dollars: www.costofwar.com/

B. Have students investigate this web site to determine how much the Iraqi invasion costs in U.S. service persons' lives. How did the web site creator count the U.S. dead? What media sources are used? Does this seem like an accurate way to gauge Iraqi lives lost? Why or why not? www.ac.wvu.edu/~stephan/USfatalities.html

C. Have students investigate this web site to determine how much the Iraqi invasion costs in terms in Iraqi lives. How did the web site creator count the Iraqi dead? What media sources are used? Does this seem like an accurate way to gauge U.S. lives lost? Why or why not? www.iraqbodycount.net/

D. What other "opportunity costs" of the Iraqi War might be important to consider? (Diplomatic costs, environmental costs, social costs – students can make a list and conduct research to discover specifics here.) What could \$200 billion buy for Americans, other than a funding a war overseas? (Again, see www.costofwar.com/)

Part 5B: ‘Sixteen Words’—The Enriched Uranium/Niger Forgery

TIME: DVD Middle of Chapter 5 VHS – 38:04

Questions/Activities:

Download a copy of Joe Wilson’s official statement on the enriched uranium controversy here:

www.commondreams.org/views03/0706-02.htm

Read Wilson’s statement out loud with your students. Pay special attention to the last two paragraphs. What arguments does Wilson make to suggest that the Bush administration overstated the case for war in Iraq?

What happened to Wilson’s wife, a CIA agent, after Wilson criticized Bush administration policy? Who does *Uncovered* point to as generating the smear campaign against Wilson and his family? What are the political and legal implications of this smear campaign?

Part 6A: Terrorism After the War

TIME: DVD Chapter 6 VHS – 44:55

Questions/Activities:

Rand Beers argues that “It is fair to say that the Iraq war was a diversion from the war on terrorism.” What evidence do *Uncovered*’s experts provide to support his statement in this section of the film? Make a list at the board.

Download analysis of Mr. Bush’s triumphal aircraft carrier landing here:

www.cnn.com/2003/ALLPOLITICS/10/28/mission.accomplished/

What questions does the article raise about the mission accomplished message? Have students do research into the debates surrounding the mission accomplished photo opportunity, and present their findings to the class.



Have students research the current situation in Afghanistan, including how much money the US government has spent on the war there, how many Afghani and US lives have been lost, and what the benefits and costs of US occupation have been. Ask students: what might be reasons why we don’t hear about any of this information in the mainstream news?

“The only tool in the toolbox of the Bush administration is military force. Military force is a very blunt instrument, it just doesn’t work. We created more terrorists in Iraq, and we haven’t even solved the problems in Afghanistan.” What does *Uncovered* mean by this statement? Has the Bush administration used other tools besides military force to undermine terrorist organizations?

(Note: This statement is one of the few examples of hyperbole in the film – you may wish to have students explore other non-military ways the Bush (and Clinton) administrations have combated the war on terror – freezing financial assets of known terrorist groups, for example.)

Part 6B: Reflections on Patriotism

TIME: DVD Middle of Chapter 6 VHS – 50:45

Questions/Activities:

Ask students: How do you define patriotism? Make a list of their definitions at the board.

How do *Uncovered's* experts define patriotism? In what ways do their definitions conflict with the Bush administration agenda?

Milt Bearden suggests that it is possible to support U.S. troops in the field while still criticizing the US government's position on war. Ask your students: To what extent do you agree with this?

"When the emperor has no clothes," Ray McGovern explains, "You have to have the presence of mind and the courage to stand up and say – the emperor has no clothes." What does McGovern mean by this?

Conclusion: Candidate Bush Explains 'The United States Must be Humble'

TIME: DVD End of Chapter 6 VHS – 55:00

Questions/Activities:

It is worth listening to Candidate Bush in the 2000 Gore/Bush debates discuss freedom and humility as the closing credits roll. How do his remarks undermine subsequent Bush administration policy in Iraq? How might you account for this shift in Bush's thinking? (Some might say: "Well, he simply changed his mind once he became president. Others might say: "Well, he lied as a candidate to get people to elect him." What are some other explanations?)

IV. Taking Action: Post-Screening Activities

Uncovered Extra Features: Listen to director Robert Greenwald's interview, as well as the extended interviews with the film's experts. How do these interviews shed more light on the making of the film, as well as the film's key arguments?

Reflective Writing: Have students write reflective essays in which they react to *Uncovered's* claims. Encourage students to publish their reflections in school or community newspapers, or on the web.

Analytical Writing: Have students write analytical essays in which they discuss and/or debate *Uncovered's* claims. Students, for example, could examine the pros and cons of the film's main critiques—WMDs or the Al Qaeda/Hussein relationship—by further exploring the observations made by *Uncovered's* experts.

Uncovered Film Review: Have students write short film reviews for the school or community newspaper, and encourage students to submit them for publication.

School/Community Screenings: Encourage students to arrange for a screening of *Uncovered* in their school or community. Invite both critics and supporters of the Bush administration, and, if possible, assemble a panel to discuss and debate the film after the screening.

Formal Debate: Have students organize a formal debate on the question – “*Resolved: The Bush administration was justified in waging a preemptive unilateral war against Iraq.*” Invite local political leaders from different sides of the aisle as judges, and provide time for them to express their views on the question.

Further Research: *Uncovered* offers numerous possibilities for extended research: the UN’s role in Iraq; the relationship between US-based defense contractors such as Halliburton and post-war US government policy; Media ownership and the ways in which various media outlets reported the war, both in the United States and globally. Encourage students to pursue research in areas of interest to them. Organize a research project around various aspects of the US/Iraq War, and provide students with venues—school hallways, newspaper space, etc.—to air their findings and educate other classmates and community members about their findings.

Video/Multimedia Projects: Encourage students to design video or multimedia projects that educate people about *Uncovered* or other aspects of the US/Iraq War. Download a Kai Curry’s powerful *Remind Us* by way of example here: www.kaicurry.com/gwbush/remindus.swf

Politician Invitation: Have students invite local, state, or federal government officials to class or community to speak on the US/Iraq War, and answer questions from students about the way government works, as well as how students may get involved.

Iraq Now: Have students research life in Iraq now, one year after the invasion. Try and find as many sources of information as possible in collecting stories. Has life improved for the average Iraqi? What unforeseen circumstances did the US invasion of Iraq create, and what have been the benefits of the US invasion? Make a list of benefits and costs and then evaluate the relative worth of the invasion from Iraq’s perspective. (You may wish to consider: post-Hussein Iraq as a base for terrorist organizations and religious extremism; the possibility of civil war; the costs of rebuilding Iraq; the new interim government and Iraqi constitution, etc...)

Iraq and Sovereignty: Have students track the ongoing debates surrounding Iraq’s new constitution, as well as the timing for an anticipated US military exit from Iraq. Here’s a sample story from the BBC: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3495996.stm

Additional Resources

Center for Media and Democracy, *Weapons of Mass Deception: The Uses of Propaganda in Bush’s War On Iraq*, by John Stauber and Sheldon Rampton. For a FREE curriculum guide, visit www.prwatch.org/books/wmd.html

Media Education Foundation offers FREE study guides on their films:

Beyond the Frame: Alternative Perspective on the War on Terrorism
www.mediaed.org/videos/CommercialismPoliticsAndMedia/BeyondtheFrame

Beyond Good and Evil: Children, Media and Violent Times
www.mediaed.org/videos/CommercialismPoliticsAndMedia/BeyondGoodAndEvil

Hijacking Catastrophe: 9/11, Fear and the Selling of American Empire
www.mediaed.org/hijacking/hijacking_catastrophe