

Advanced-Level Activity

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to

- compare portrayals of individual soldiers to depictions of battle scenes and discuss the impact of each on viewers;
- analyze **rhetorical** strategies in two newspaper articles about a current war;
- write two different newspaper articles about a current war from different viewpoints;
- create digitally or manually manipulated photographs.

Materials

- Reproduction of *Alexander Fights in the Town of the Sudracae*, attributed to the Master of the Jardin de vertueuse consolation
- Background Information and Questions for Teaching about the illumination
- VHS or DVD player and VHS or DVD of a war movie such as *Saving Private Ryan* (rated R), *Apocalypse Now* (rated R), *All Quiet on the Western Front* (not rated), *Platoon* (rated R), *Three Kings* (rated R), *Letters from Iwo Jima* (rated R), *Glory* (rated R), *Stop-Loss* (rated R), or *In the Valley of Elah* (rated R) (optional) (Note: Screen all movies before viewing them with students.)
- Photocopies of a reproduction of *Alexander Fights in the Town of the Sudracae*
- Interactive Web page: *Alexander Fights in the Town of the Sudracae* zoom feature on the Getty Museum Web site (www.getty.edu/art/exhibitions/violence/fight.html) (optional)
- 3 x 5 inch index cards (one per student)
- Magnifying glasses (one per student)
- Student Handout: *Background about "Book of the Deeds of Alexander the Great"*
- Photocopies of two different articles about a war representing two different perspectives
- Student Handout: *Two Articles, Two Perspectives*
- Microsoft® Word software

Lesson Steps

1. Ask students to think of examples of movies with battle scenes. You may wish to view excerpts of movies such as those listed in the Materials section. Discuss the following questions:
 - How do you feel when an extra is killed in a battle versus a leading character? Why do you feel this way?
 - What does the film director or screenwriter do to make you feel this way?
 - List examples of main characters who survive battle scenes. List examples of main characters who do not survive battle scenes. Why do you think main characters often survive battles in movies?

Discuss the fact that many battle scenes—whether in movies or in artworks—depict groups of people, and it is possible for viewers to feel detached from the effects of war on individual lives. What do students think life is really like for soldiers in the midst of battle? Ask students if they know of anyone who is fighting in a current war. How did they feel when the individual was sent to participate in the war? How do they feel about soldiers risking their lives, especially those who are barely eighteen years old?



2. Display *Alexander Fights in the Town of the Sudraeae*. Refer to questions in steps 5–6 of the Intermediate-Level Activity to lead a discussion about the image. Ask students what their reactions are to the image. Do they have sympathy for the slain soldiers? Why or why not? Point out that both armies—the Macedonian and Indian soldiers—are outfitted in the battle gear of the **illuminator's** time, with little attention paid to distinguishing between the two armies, either in weaponry or in ethnicity. Ask students to speculate how this illumination would affect a fifteenth-century European reader who might be called upon to serve in a war. How would this reader feel differently if the leaf depicted a close-up of one wounded soldier?
3. Give each student a photocopy of *Alexander Fights in the Town of the Sudraeae*. You may wish to show students details of the picture by using the zoom feature on the Interactive Web page *Alexander Fights in the Town of the Sudraeae* on the Getty Museum Web site (www.getty.edu/art/exhibitions/violence/fight.html). Ask students to choose one figure depicted in the illumination. Pass out 3 x 5 inch index cards. Instruct students to draw the figure of their choice, but the drawing cannot be larger than 1 1/2 inches tall (approximately the size of the figure of Alexander in the original image). Point out how illuminators used very tiny brushes to create the fine details in manuscripts. Pass out magnifying glasses so students can see the details in the illumination and re-create the details in their own drawings. Tell students that their sketches should include as many details of the original figure as they can.
4. Instruct students to look closely at their figure's gestures and observe how the figure is interacting (or not interacting) with others in the image. On the back of the index card, have students write a brief **narrative** about the battle from the perspective of the individual. Ask for volunteers to read their short narratives aloud. Next, ask the class how the individual narratives affected their reaction to the image.
5. Pass out the handout *Background about "Book of the Deeds of Alexander the Great"* and allow students time to read the information. Ask students if it is possible to provide an account of history that is completely objective. Can there be a "true history"? Point out to students that even Vasco's historical account is imbued with the author's personal beliefs. Vasco's Christian views cast **Alexander the Great** as a morally flawed individual whose military conquests were admirable, but who ultimately faced certain damnation for the millions of people he killed.
6. Ask students whether they think that modern-day newspapers and news stories are objective. Why or why not? Choose a current war that fits into your curriculum, and find two articles about the war representing different perspectives. For example, you could compare an article in a domestic newspaper such as the *Los Angeles Times* (www.latimes.com) with an article from an international broadcasting corporation such as the BBC (www.bbc.co.uk). Or you could compare an article in a liberal political magazine such as *The Nation* (www.thenation.com) with an article from the more conservative Fox News (www.foxnews.com). Pass out the handout *Two Articles, Two Perspectives* and ask students to compare and contrast the articles by answering the questions in the handout.

HISTORICAL WITNESS

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7. Instruct students to write two different articles about a current war. The articles should represent different viewpoints, such as a civilian's blog versus an article written by a government-planted journalist. Instruct students to take inspiration from the articles they discussed in class. For their own articles, they should pick and choose which sources would be appropriate. Students should also include a photograph that represents the perspective of each article. Instruct students to digitally manipulate a photograph that already exists so that it corresponds to the purpose of the article (see step 12 of the Intermediate-Level Activity for steps on image manipulation, including an alternate activity if students do not have access to the appropriate software). Instruct students to use a newspaper layout when designing their articles. In Microsoft® Word, students can create columns by highlighting the text that they want to be in columns, then clicking on Format in the main menu, and then choosing Columns from the drop-down menu.

Assessment

Assess students' abilities to represent two different perspectives about a current war in well-written news articles. Assess students' photographs on the successful use of digital manipulation or mixed media to demonstrate different perspectives.

Extensions

1. Have students compare war photographs by Timothy O'Sullivan, Robert Capa (see Related Works of Art), and Larry Burrows (see Related Works of Art). How do the style and clarity of these photographs differ? Have students share their observations and speculate about how cameras have changed over time. Discuss how innovations in camera technology have allowed new ways of portraying war.
2. Discuss the persuasive tactics of military recruiters and ask students how the recruiters appeal to individuals in high school. What motivates individuals to join the military today? How are these motivations similar to or different from reasons people joined the army in years past, for example, at the time that Greuze made his drawing? Discuss with students whether military recruiters should be allowed on high school campuses. Instruct students to conduct a schoolwide poll by asking their classmates their opinions on this topic.

