

An analysis of the ways in which two non-fiction texts present a biased account o...



In this essay I will be analysing two biased sources of information, the first, a newspaper article and the second a film presenting an account of what happened. The newspaper account focuses on the death of the detective by alleged gangsters, whilst the film focuses on the unjust hanging of an innocent man with learning difficulties. The newspaper article is lifted from the Daily mail printed on the 3rd of November 1952, a right wing tabloid newspaper.

This longstanding right wing newspaper was popular with the Conservative supporting public and its readers would mostly have been on the side of law and order, the police and other authorities. It would not have been liberal or sympathetic views about the perpetrators of the crime or been interested in what drove them to committing such a crime, as some liberal or left wing newspaper do today.

The newspaper article is headlined " Chicago gun battle in London: gangsters with machine guns on roof kill detective, wound another", this headline immediately seeds in peoples minds thoughts of; gangsters fighting and bandits with machine guns. The word Chicago brings to mind a very rough and violent place in America that people would have seen in films about Al Capone. The headline also tells readers that a detective has been murdered and another wounded whilst doing their duty, this makes the readers feel sympathetic towards the dead detective and his wounded colleague and assume that they were shot by violent and brutal gangsters.

The article goes on to use key words and phrases such as; the London crime wave, battle of Sidney street, bandits, gangsters, Sten gun and gunmen.

These words and phrases raise feeling of anger and fear in the reader towards the two young men who were involved in the armed robbery. In the last two paragraphs the article highlights the bravery and courage of the two officers, detective constable Miles and PC Frederick Fairfax.

Printing their names and rank conveys to the reader a picture of two young men fighting crime to protect the public. It goes further to tell us that detective constable Miles was married with two children; it states “ he was killed” which immediately makes us picture a grieving widow and two fatherless children, fuelling the readers anger even more. This article was printed without the facts being known, it exaggerates greatly using melodramatic language like; gangsters and bandits when they were just youths causing trouble.

It calls the gun a machine gun and suggests that there is more than one gun when the truth is it was only one hand gun. It also calls the incident a battle which makes readers picture many gangsters fighting the two lone officers, when the reality is only one of the boys, Christopher Craig, had a gun. In 1952 most people only had a wireless in their homes, not many people had televisions, so newspaper were one of the only sources of information available to the public and people tended to believe that what was printed was the truth.

The whole tone of the article evokes in the reader feelings of vengeance and retribution which in 1952 worked against Derek Bentley and made have lead someway towards him being hanged. The film ‘ Let him have it’ was made in the mid nineties and released in 1997. At this time Derek Bentleys family

were still campaigning for his pardon; this was granted posthumously, one year after the film's release. After watching the film I felt very sympathetic towards Derek Bentley and his family.

The film gave a totally different view to the newspapers, after reading the newspaper article I felt more compassionate towards the police officers and their grieving families. The opening of the film is a long shot of fire and destruction. There then is a close up of Derek's teddy bear lying in a puddle, this makes the audience think that the film is going to be about loss and misfortune. The close up of Derek's head wound suggests to the audience that this is the reason for all of Derek's future troubles.

The first time we are introduced to the character of Derek he is shown as the main focus. The whole first scene is shown with him in it. As he is the main character, he will become well-known to us, so in the end our sympathy will be placed on him. The music played when Derek is on the screen contains a harp. The harp is linked with purity and angels which suggests to the audience that Derek is innocent. Derek's favourite song that he listens to over and over in the film is called 'wheel of fortune', and the lyrics refer to a fortunate destiny for the singer.

The song shows us that Derek feels hopeful about his future, but the audience knows the sad and unjust destiny does await him. The lighting used by the camera man is very suggestive of good and evil; shots of Derek are lit brightly by white light, while Craig is filmed with a much shadowy lighting. This is very clever because physiologically we associate bright light with all

that is good, and shadows and darkness with evil and badness. The director uses this technique very well on the audience.

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