Probing the Dark Side of Camelot

At night, before we’d go to sleep, Jack liked to play some records; and the song he loved most came at the very end of this record. The lines he loved to hear were: Don’t let it be forgot, that once there was a spot, for one brief shining moment that was known as Camelot. There’ll be great Presidents again... but there’ll never be another Camelot again.

—Jacqueline Kennedy in Life, Dec. 6, 1963

THE DARK SIDE OF CAMELOT, a “radioactive” new book by Pulitzer-prizewinning author Seymour Hersh, unleashes a torrent of accusations against John F. Kennedy. Hersh’s scathing portrait of the Camelot era provides an opportunity for students to evaluate President Kennedy’s legacy themselves—and to think critically about the value of “uncovering dirt” on public figures.

Before Reading
What are your impressions of John F. Kennedy as a President, as a man and as a cultural figure? On what historical events and media depictions are these impressions based? Discuss as a class.

For Discussion
1. Now read Smashing Camelot on page 40. What impression of JFK emerges from the article? How does it differ from the impressions you came up with as a class?
2. What was Seymour Hersh’s goal in writing his new book? In your opinion, does Hersh’s book present information that is important for the American public to know?

For Further Exploration
1. Devise a set of guidelines. Imagine that you are the editor of a newspaper or magazine. What guidelines would you give reporters on how far to go in “uncovering dirt” on public figures? What topics, if any, would you place off-limits? Why? How would you define what is “newsworthy” versus what is not fit to be printed? How would you answer critics who accuse you of censorship?
2. Dig deeper into the Kennedy legacy. Read and review one of the books listed in the chart on pages 44 and 45. What were JFK’s strengths and weaknesses, according to the assessment offered in this book? How does the view of JFK presented in this book compare to Hersh’s?
Too Many Brave Souls
Page 4 As Veterans Day approaches, Jamie Malanowski walks through the cemetery at West Point and reflects on the ironic lessons to be learned there.

Sharpening Your Focus
1. What is irony? As a class, draft a definition and write it on the board.
2. Re-read the column’s second paragraph aloud. What does the writer find ironic about this group of headstones?
3. Re-read the fourth paragraph. What irony does the writer find in the stories of these men?
4. What does the writer think we can all learn from a walk through the cemetery at West Point? Does he state this lesson explicitly? How is his main idea expressed?

For Further Exploration
Write your own reflective essay. In a cemetery, Jamie Malanowski writes, there is a “collision between what once was and what is no more.” Where else can you find a similar “collision”? Recall or visit such a place and then sit down to write about it. What do you see, feel and think of in this place? What does it have to teach?

Sharpening Your Focus
1. What is El Niño? What had you heard or read about El Niño before reading this article?
2. What do scientists know for certain about this year? Is the public perception supported by solid scientific evidence and observation?
3. According to the article, what is the public perception of how El Niño will affect the weather in the future?
4. What factors make animation such a lucrative business? How has the animated film industry changed over the years?
5. What does the writer think we can all learn from El Niño? Charles Krauthammer reflects on a walk through the cemetery at West Point and reflects on the ironic lessons to be learned there. He finds that “part of a price which must be paid for things of great value.” How, and for what, will you make sacrifices in your life for “things of great value”? Write about sacrifices you have already made, or speculate on choices you will face in the future.

Hell, High Water and Hype
Page 86 What do we have to fear from El Niño? Charles Krauthammer thinks public hysteria is out of line with hard science.

Sharpening Your Focus
1. What is El Niño? What had you heard or read about El Niño before reading this article?
2. What do scientists know for certain about this year’s El Niño? What do they speculate may happen as a result of this phenomenon?
3. According to the article, what is the public perception of how El Niño will affect the weather this year? Is the public perception supported by solid scientific evidence and observation? According to the article, what influences are behind exaggerated fears about El Niño’s effects?
4. What does this article teach you about how scientific information filters down to the general public? If the public is ill-informed, who is to blame? What needs to change?

For Further Exploration
Recall or visit such a place and then sit down to write about it. What do you see, feel and think of in this place? What does it have to teach?

Research press coverage of El Niño 1997. Conduct an online search to see how the popular press has covered the El Niño phenomenon. Is the coverage balanced or over-dramatized? Do you see any evidence of El Niño being distorted as part of larger public and environmental policy debates, as the Time article suggests it has been? How good a job has the press done of bringing the observations and conclusions of meteorological scientists to the public?

There’s Tumult in Toon Town
Page 88 Anastasia, the new animated film from Fox, follows in the footsteps, and formula, of the high-grossing Disney classics. Can Disney’s success be copied? Will animated films ever break free of the Disney mold? Read and discuss these questions with your raised-on-Disney students.

Sharpening Your Focus
1. Before assigning the article, read the two lead paragraphs aloud. Predict: what will this article be about? Does the lead draw you into the article?
2. How much have full-length animated films changed over the years since Snow White? Does Richard Corliss think such films will change in the future? Do you?
3. What seem to be “the rules” for the plot, characters and content of animated films? (For example, many films revolve around a young character who comes of age.) As a class, come up with a list of rules and see how many of the classic Disney films fall under them.
4. What factors make animation such a lucrative business? How has the animated film industry begun to change?
5. Reread the last sentence of the article. In your own words, explain what Corliss is suggesting about the future of animated film.

For Further Exploration
Recall a Disney classic. Tell about a Disney movie you have seen. How old were you when you saw it? What do you remember about it? Did you ever have, or wish for, merchandise sold in connection with the film? Would you like to see it again? Would you show a videotape of this movie to your own children someday? Does your writing reveal anything about why Disney films have been so financially successful over the years?

Review Anastasia. When it is released in your area, see the new Fox film Anastasia. Write a review in which you appraise the movie’s appeal, its quality and your reaction to it. Then predict how much others may enjoy it, and why. Where appropriate, make comparisons to earlier films from the Disney studios against which Anastasia will be measured.

Note to Instructor: On this page we offer a broad range of ideas for activities and assignments keyed to selected articles in the current issue of Time. All exercises can be modified to suit the needs of your students. The symbols below provide an approximation of the time required to complete each assignment:

Brief assignment; can be completed in class or as a homework exercise.
Mid-range assignment; can be completed during several class or homework sessions.
Long-term assignment; may involve extensive library research and/or multiple revisions.

Quiz Answers
Available only in printed version of teacher’s guide, sent weekly to TIME Education Program subscribers.

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The weekly teacher’s guide is available on the World Wide Web @ http://time.com/reports/timeteach
At the Who, What and Where of the News: Identify the person, place or term that best fits each of the following descriptions. Write the letter of the item in the space provided. The number in parentheses indicates the first page of the Time story in which the answer will be found. (Note: Not all items will be used.)

A. opioids  
B. Terry Nichols  
C. Levi Strauss  
D. Chicago  
E. Myles Connor  
F. La Niña  
G. ITT  
H. zip strips  
I. sales taxes  
J. Qian Qichen  
K. Ted Kaczynski  
L. New Orleans  
M. Noboyuki Idei  
N. Fox  
O. El Niño  
P. precursors  
Q. Sam Giancana  
R. hormones  
S. Seymour Hersh  
T. Richard Butler  
U. property taxes  
V. John Calley  
W. Sony  
X. Boston  
Y. Jeffrey Katzenberg  
Z. slot cards

1. Company that is producing the new animated feature Anastasia (p. 88)
2. Defendant whose refusal to be examined by prosecution psychiatrists may seriously weaken a defense on grounds of insanity or mental illness (p. 52)
3. Some 3,000 tons of these were destroyed in Iraq under the supervision of a U.N. Special Commission but the committee believes 4,000 tons more remain hidden (p. 54)
4. The part of a normal cycle in which the Pacific Ocean’s waters grow warmer (p. 86)
5. Chairman of Sony Pictures Entertainment (p. 62)
6. Company that Hilton Hotels and Starwood Lodging Trust are battling to acquire (p. 64)
7. Site of the largest art heist in American history (p. 74)
8. Release of these substances into the central nervous system may in part account for the effectiveness of acupuncture (p. 84)
9. According to a recent survey, the most respected brand in America (p. 56)
10. Author of a new book exploring the darker side of the Kennedy presidency (p. 40)
11. Company that last week announced it is closing 11 factories and laying off 34 percent of its North American workforce (p. 66)
12. Former Walt Disney chairman who is suing the company for a promised share of profits that could be worth $250 million or more (p. 93)
13. Firefighters of Engine Company 16 serve as role models for children in an economically depressed neighborhood here (p. 72)
14. Chairman of U.N. Special Commission searching for Iraqi weapons (p. 54)
15. The part of a normal cycle in which the Pacific Ocean’s waters grow cooler (p. 86)
16. Chief who says he knows who stole art worth $300 million and who claims he can find out where it is (p. 74)
17. Mob leader who supposedly had ties to John F. Kennedy (p. 40)
18. President of the Sony Corporation (p. 56)
19. Source of half the revenue for the states in this country (p. 114)
20. Tools used by Harrah’s Entertainment to build up databases on its frequent customers (p. 68)

Distinguishing Fact and Opinion: Read the following statements from the article Smashing Camelot that begins on page 40. In the spaces provided, write F if the statement is a fact, O if it is an opinion and M if it is a mixture of fact and opinion.

21. His publisher, Little, Brown—which is a subsidiary of Time Inc., the publisher of this magazine—is rolling out a sizable first printing of 350,000 copies.
22. Kennedy was a turning point in American life, a President who restarted the nation’s psychic engines and brought it successfully through some of the worst predicaments of the cold war.
24. As the “what ifs” on one page become the self-evident conclusions of a few pages later, large leaps of judgment—on the 1960 election, Vietnam and the Bay of Pigs—are made from shaky perches.

Writing About Foreign Policy: Review the article Hidden Killers that begins on page 54. It describes efforts to keep U.N. inspectors from finding and destroying Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction. What should the United States do if Iraq continues to thwart U.N. inspections? Form an alliance and attack Iraq as it did in the Gulf War? Target selected sites for missile attacks? Impose harsher trade sanctions? Do nothing? Present your suggestions for a U.S. policy and the reasons for it in the form of a letter you might send to President Clinton.

*Late-breaking stories may cause changes in pagination.*
Making Your Voice Heard Through Letters

Last week, Time received 1,251 letters to the editor via post, fax and E-mail. Among them were 250 responses to the Oct. 27 cover story “What Makes a Good School.” While the majority of correspondents lauded Time’s coverage, others offered criticism. Several readers used a letter to the editor to share their views of American education and to tell about their own positive and negative experiences with schools.

As Time’s weekly volume of mail proves, even in an age of instant and mass communication, the letter remains a popular medium through which to transmit ideas. Take the time to read this week’s Letters section and examine how this versatile, popular and powerful form of writing works.

Read the Letters section carefully. As you do so, circle those entries that sound like letters you might write to Time yourself, either because you share the views expressed or because the style and language remind you of your own manner of writing.

Varieties of Purpose
What reasons did Time readers have for writing to the editors this week? To elaborate, to complain, to correct, to argue? Choose six letters, number them in your copy of this week’s issue, and list each writer’s purpose in the space below:

1. ____________________________
2. ____________________________
3. ____________________________
4. ____________________________
5. ____________________________
6. ____________________________

Evidence and Argument
1. Which letter offers the strongest evidence in support of its main idea? Cite one strong piece of evidence.

2. Which letter contains the most persuasive argument? Cite a specific phrase or sentence that shows its argumentative strength.

3. Which letter gives the weakest argument or evidence in support of its main idea? Choose a line or sentence that shows its weakness.

4. Select a letter that expresses an opinion you disagree with. Offer one sentence of counter-evidence or counter-argument in reply.

Forms of Writing
How does a letter to the editor compare in style or content to other forms of written expression? Compare a letter to the editor to each of the following:

1. An academic essay

2. An editorial

3. A narrative

4. A personal letter

5. Now select the letters in this week’s issue that most closely resemble an academic essay, an editorial, a narrative and a personal letter, respectively. Label each accordingly in your magazine, and compare your selections to those of your classmates.

For Writing
Your assignment: Get published! Write your own letter to the editors of Time in response to any article in this week’s issue. Pay attention to the quality of your argument, and take full advantage of the flexibility of the letter form, writing in your own style and for your own particular purpose. Instructors should mail your letters directly to the Time Education Program at the address on page 2. We will forward copies to the Time Letters editor, and we will also publish a selection of the letters we receive in the Time Student Forum on this page. We look forward to hearing from you.