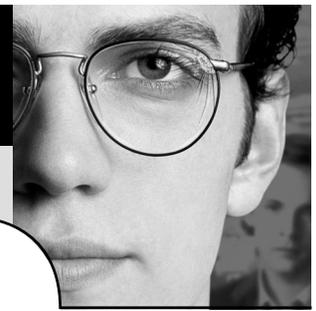


SHATTERED GLASS

Coming to Theaters November 2003
www.shatteredglassmovie.com



The Secret of My Success

The new film, *Shattered Glass*, tells the real-life story of Stephen Glass, a promising young reporter for *The New Republic* whose skyrocketing career came crashing down when it was discovered that most of his stories were based on fiction and fabrication. Taking viewers behind the scenes at one of the nation's most respected news weeklies, *Shattered Glass* raises questions about what it takes to become a journalistic success.

Part 1. Like everyone at *The New Republic*, Stephen Glass was a talented writer and well-qualified for a career in journalism. But, as portrayed in the film, Glass also had something extra – a special talent for winning the trust and respect of his colleagues. In the episodes described below, we see Glass exercising this talent. Imagine that you were a staffer at *The New Republic* when Glass was the rising star. In the space provided, explain how each of these episodes might enhance his reputation in your eyes.



1. At a staff meeting, Glass entertains his colleagues with a story about how he posed as a behavioral psychologist to investigate talk radio coverage of a Mike Tyson fight.

2. On a visit to his old high school, Glass tells a class of journalism students, “A great editor defends his writers. Against anyone. He stands up and fights for you.”

3. When a colleague chides Glass for compromising his career by applying to law school, Glass explains that he has to apply to make his parents happy.

4. Glass offers to resign when it is discovered that he misreported a minor detail in a story about a hotel room orgy at a young conservatives convention.

5. After tearing apart an intern's story for poor reporting, Glass explains, “This is *The New Republic*, remember? Nothing slides here. If you don't have it cold, you don't turn it in. Ever.”

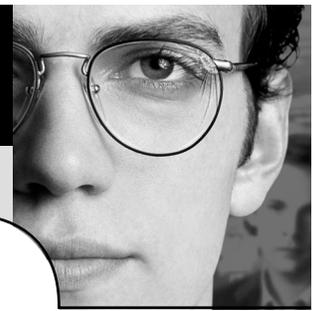
Part 2. Journalists, of course, are supposed to be good judges of character. That's why it is surprising that Stephen Glass managed to deceive his colleagues at *The New Republic* for so long. With this in mind, take a second look at the episodes from *Shattered Glass* described here. Each offers a clue that Stephen Glass was not the model journalist he appeared to be. On the back of this sheet, gather these clues into a paragraph explaining why Glass' behavior should have raised suspicions about his honesty and integrity.

YAHOO! search
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When you see *Shattered Glass*, you'll learn how Yahoo! Search played a part in revealing the truth about Stephen Glass. But before you see the film, use Yahoo! Search yourself to find out more about the real story behind this true-life drama. How was Stephen Glass characterized in the media when his fabrications were exposed in 1998? What are journalists saying about him today? And what has been Glass' own reaction to the storm of controversy he stirred up? Gather the facts with Yahoo! Search, then compare notes in a class discussion about the relationship between good character and good journalism.

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The Editorial Process

How did Stephen Glass get away with reporting fiction as fact? In the new film, **Shattered Glass**, you'll see how major publications like *The New Republic* put every story through an editorial process designed to test every fact and assertion. Senior editors assess the story's quality and content. Fact-checkers verify every detail. Copy editors polish the writing style. Lawyers look for legal problems. And then, once the story is set in type, the whole process is repeated again. It seems a foolproof system, but as Glass explains in the film, there is one loophole: often, the reporter's notes are treated as the factual basis for a story, which means that a reporter willing to fabricate notes could slip a fictitious story into print.

Unfortunately for Glass, this loophole could not protect him from Adam Penenberg, an enterprising reporter at *Forbes* who felt scooped when Glass published a headline-grabbing article about teenage computer hackers. Using Internet tools like Yahoo! Search, Penenberg began an independent fact-check that turned up no trace of the people, events, organizations, or laws named in the Glass story. Suspecting a hoax, Penenberg called *The New Republic* – and the high-flying career of Stephen Glass soon came to a crashing end.

Part 1. Suppose you had been a fact-checker at *The New Republic* when Stephen Glass was on staff. Do you think you would have caught on to his deceptions? Here are three excerpts from Glass articles, as quoted in the new film **Shattered Glass**. Read each one and underline the details that you think need independent verification. Then, in the space provided, explain how you would go about uncovering the real facts.

1. One Chicago-area school for Santas featured a 144-page textbook that provided instruction on everything from going to the bathroom in a Santa suit to rules on how to touch children.

2. Western Union now has a "Stop the Cassini" hotline, 1-888-no-cassini, which forwards anti-Cassini telegrams to the White House for \$10 a pop...and Las Vegas is even taking bets on whether the satellite will malfunction. The approximate odds before lift-off: 1 in 70.

3. Take Joel Carni, whose family business, Four Aces, is one of the nation's largest political novelty manufacturers. This summer, stores will be hit with Carni's newest product, the Monicondom.

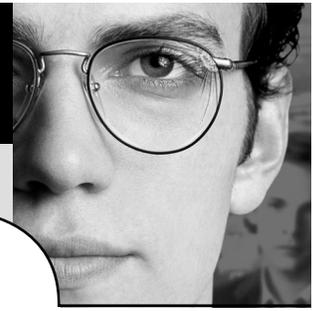
Part 2. Looking back, it is easy to spot suspicious facts in the work of Stephen Glass. One lesson of his story, however, is that every news article should receive this same kind of scrutiny. To sharpen your talent for editorial troubleshooting, take an article from today's paper or a current news weekly, and give it a skeptical reading. Underline every detail that should have substantiation – every fact, quotation, and assertion. Then compare notes in a class discussion. How often do reporters rely on details that an independent fact-checker could not verify? To what extent must we simply believe that reporters are telling the truth?



YAHOO! search
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Online tools like Yahoo! Search add a new dimension to journalism, since they allow reporters to track down all kinds of facts almost instantaneously. With Yahoo! Search, for example, you can search the Web, browse the Yahoo! directory of web sites, skim recent news stories, check business phone directories, even locate images and maps. And sometimes it takes all these resources to get the story right. Just try Yahoo! Search on this imaginary news brief. How many mistaken facts can you find?

WASHINGTON, D.C. (Friday, September 13, 2003) – Scoffing at superstition, protesters gathered outside the Taft Building today to oppose pending federal legislation that would impose new restrictions on SUVs. Blocking the intersection at Constitution and Independence Avenues with an assortment of super-size vehicles – Escapades, Grand Tetons, Liberators – the group called attention to its cause with horn blasts and car alarms that echoed among the cherry trees that line the Mall. Alerted in advance, D.C. police soon dispersed the protesters with help from Anacostia Wrecker Service and other local towing companies, restoring the scene to tranquility and traffic.



Editorial Standards

Journalistic integrity is only one aspect of the story told in *Shattered Glass*. The film also casts a spotlight on the relationship between writers and editors, focusing in particular on the editor's sometimes competing responsibilities to both defend a writer's reputation and uphold the highest editorial standards.

Part 1. Stephen Glass worked under two editors during his years at *The New Republic*, Michael Kelly and Charles Lane. In the film, Glass regards Kelly as his mentor and feels almost betrayed when Kelly is fired over disagreements with the publisher. His replacement is Charles Lane, a staff writer barely more experienced than Glass himself – and nowhere nearly as successful. Though Glass complains bitterly about the injustice of Kelly's dismissal, soon after Lane has moved into the editor's office, we see Glass quickly pledge allegiance to his new leader, recognizing that editorial support is vital to his career.

As portrayed in the film, Kelly and Lane differ somewhat in the ways they provide editorial support to their writers. To gauge this difference, and learn something about your own editorial philosophy, take a look at the episodes from *Shattered Glass* described below. For each episode, explain in the space provided why you agree or disagree with the editor's actions, and if you disagree, explain what you would have done.

1. When Kelly receives a letter charging that Glass fabricated his account of a hotel room orgy during a young conservatives convention, he asks Glass to gather his notes so they can respond. When he learns that Glass did misreport one detail – there was no mini-bar in the room, just a rented mini-fridge, according to Glass – Kelly sends him home, satisfied that the story is solid. But once Glass is gone, Kelly calls the hotel to confirm that guests can rent a mini-fridge as Glass has claimed.

2. When the publisher forces everyone on staff to circle every comma in the last issue, so he can point out what he believes are mistakes, Kelly confronts him. "These people...deserve our thanks, not another one of your world-famous tantrums," he tells the publisher. "I would resign before I'd allow you to bully them like that again." Then, hanging up the phone, Kelly announces, "The Great Comma Debate is history."

3. After Lane and Glass spend hours in a conference call with *Forbes*, during which the facts in Glass' computer hacker story become steadily more and more dubious, Lane sends Glass back to his office and calls the *Forbes* editor privately to ask that they spare his reporter. "You guys have discovered something that a troubled 25-year-old has done," he says. "He could be very hurt by what you guys publish." But when asked if he still stands by the story, Lane answers, off the record, "I'm looking into it..."

4. Finally convinced that Glass faked every shred of evidence for the facts he reported in his computer hacker story, Lane finds himself confronted by other staff members who feel it would be wrong to fire him. "He doctored his notes," Lane tells them, "He lied to his editor." But when they insist that Glass only lied out of panic and needs help, Lane backs down. Instead of firing him, he suspends Glass for two years.



Part 2. When you see *Shattered Glass*, watch for the episodes described here, and other episodes that dramatize the tensions within the editor/writer relationship. You'll probably find that what seemed clear-cut on paper plays out much more complexly on screen. After you see the film, reconsider your ideas about an editor's responsibilities in a class discussion. How far should an editor go in defending a writer? How tough should an editor be in holding a writer to the highest standards? Was there some point at which either of these editors could have (should have) discovered how Glass was manipulating the editorial system?

YAHOO! search

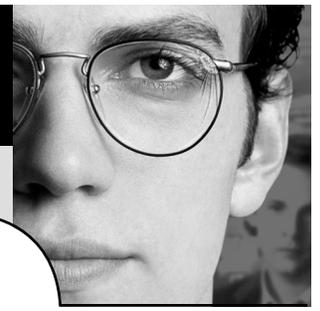
search.yahoo.com

Michael Kelly and Charles Lane were both real people, with careers in journalism that continued long after the events portrayed in *Shattered Glass*. Use Yahoo! Search to find out more about these two editors. You'll learn that Kelly went on to become the editor of *Atlantic Monthly* and a columnist at *The Washington Post* before signing up to cover the Iraq War, where he sadly became the first American journalist killed in the fighting. Charles Lane also joined *The Washington Post*, where he covers the Supreme Court, and recently worked as a consultant to the producers of *Shattered Glass*. Use Yahoo! Search to read articles by both these journalists, then choose one and write a profile summing up his editorial philosophy.

SHATTERED GLASS

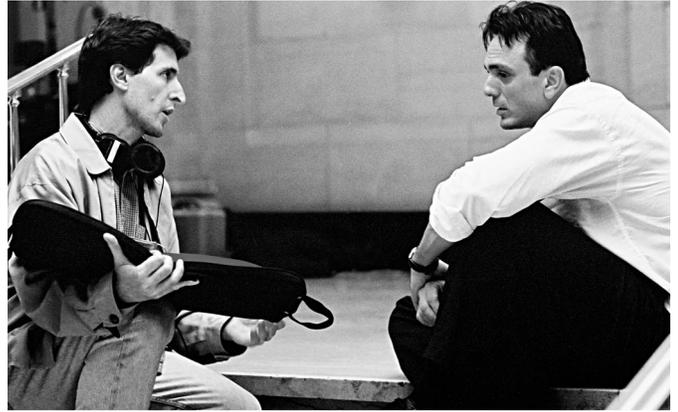
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Credibility and Consequences

Shattered Glass raises ethical questions about journalism and the media that seem to have grown steadily more insistent in recent years, for Stephen Glass is only one in a long line of writers accused of cheating, whether by printing fiction as fact or by taking credit for words and ideas that were not their own. Few question that such behavior is wrong. But there is debate about the impact such incidents can have on the credibility of American journalism and, especially among journalists, disagreement about what the consequences should be for breaking the rules.



Part 2. *Shattered Glass* writer/director Billy Ray calls his film “a cautionary tale – a story about the difference between being a good reporter and a hot one.”

My hope is that people who see **Shattered Glass** will look at the craft of journalism from a different perspective. *The New Republic*, like *The New York Times*, is not an institution...it is a staff of people who are in charge of an institution, and those people can have good judgment or bad judgment. Stephen Glass took advantage of their bad judgment as well as their good nature.

After you have seen the film, talk in class about the lessons you took from this “cautionary tale.” How did **Shattered Glass** change your perspective on the journalistic profession? What did you learn about the relationship between institutions and the people who sustain them?

Part 1. Where do you stand on the ethical questions raised by **Shattered Glass**? Before you answer, take some time to investigate the issues by researching the journalists listed below, each of whom has been accused of fabricating stories like Stephen Glass.

Divide your class into six study groups that will each report on one of the persons listed. Use Yahoo! Search to gather the facts of the case and sample some of the discussion that has surrounded it. To facilitate collaboration, work in the Yahoo! Search IMEnvironment* (at <http://messenger.yahoo.com/imv/search.html>), which uses instant messaging technology to share search results and permit real-time exchange of ideas. Organize your research into a class presentation that explains the incident and what it can teach us about the ethical questions raised in **Shattered Glass**.

Research These Journalists

Julie Amparano
Janet Cooke

Mike Barnicle
Ruth Shalit

Jayson Blair
Patricia Smith

YAHOO!
search
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Journalists are not the only writers facing ethical questions these days. According to *The New York Times*, a recent survey of 18,000 college students found that 38 percent admit to committing “Internet plagiarism” at least once over the past year – that is, copying text from a web site into a term paper without attribution. Use Yahoo! Search to find out more about the problem of academic plagiarism and what schools are doing to prevent it. Then take your own confidential survey. Is plagiarism a problem at your school?