

# good night, and good luck.



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## Lesson Plan 4

### “Two sources = better reporting”

**Overview:** Writer and director George Clooney told Salon.com reporter Kerry Lauerman, when he decided to do a movie about Senator Joseph McCarthy, he talked to his father, a former television news anchor in Cincinnati, and relied on his journalism studies at Northern Kentucky University before he became an actor. Clooney said he decided, “... I have to do this like a reporter would...” His father reminded him he needed “two reliable sources for everything,” and that’s what Clooney used. “We just started double-sourcing everything.”

**Suggested time allotment:** Before students watch the movie, one day to read the Salon.com interview and explore how good reporters corroborate what sources tell

them—they don’t rely on just one source. After watching the movie, one class period for discussion about the value of having multiple sources, how Clooney may have used them in “Good Night, and Good Luck”. and how students can use this technique in their own reporting.

### Objectives

Students will:

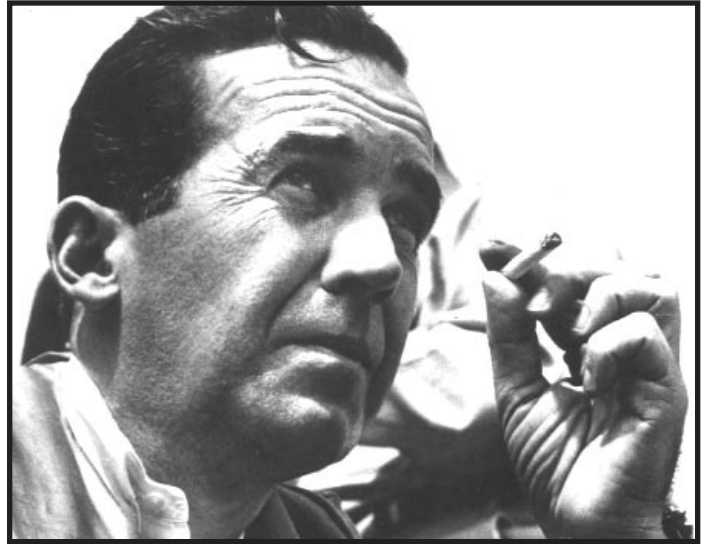
1. Read the interview and information on the websites listed in the Resources and Materials section of this guide.
2. Take notes while they watch the movie

No one can terrorize a whole nation,...

3. Discuss the scenes Clooney would want to be sure are accurate to not slant what he is showing. *(Note: In the interview, he mentions the McCarthy aide trying to give Joe Wershba the file that alleged Murrow was connected to Communism.)*
4. Discuss stories that have been reported in the student newspaper or student news broadcasts. What kind of sources did they use or could they have used to ensure content accuracy? Were the sources reliable? Why? Could they tell a “story” without using fiction?

Standards: National Council of Teachers of English and International Reading Association Standards for English Language Arts:

4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.
5. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.
7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and nonprint texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.
8. Students use a variety of technological and informational resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.
12. Students use spoken, written and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion and the exchange of information).



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**Resources and materials:**

Websites with information:

- Salon.com interview with George Clooney by Kerry Laurerman, Sept. 16, 2005.  
[http://dir.salon.com/story/ent/feature/2005/09/16/george\\_clooney/index1.html?pn=1](http://dir.salon.com/story/ent/feature/2005/09/16/george_clooney/index1.html?pn=1)
- A challenge for today's journalists, whether student, newspaper or, in this case, even a movie writer: Narrative writing—telling a story—is compelling and enjoyable for readers and viewers. But ethics tells us these stories should not be fiction. So how can writers be sure they are sticking to the facts? Chip Scanlon, senior faculty at The Poynter Institute for Media Studies, offers good background and examples in “The First Peril: Fabrication,” posted Aug. 23, 2002, and adapted from “Reporting and Writing: Basics for the 21st Century,” Oxford University Press, 2000.  
[http://www.poynter.org/content/content\\_view.asp?id=9506](http://www.poynter.org/content/content_view.asp?id=9506)
- Finally, for more background in news credibility, read “A Statement of Shared Purpose” on the Journalism.org website, a Project for Excellence in Journalism resource.  
<http://www.journalism.org/resources/guidelines/principles/purpose.asp>