
The Hurt Locker

**GCSE Component 1 - Section C: US Independent Film
Focus on Specialist Film Writing**

Mr Warrington - Film Studies



The Iraq War: 2003-2010

Following the events of 11th September 2001 the American government engaged in a 'War on Terror'. They invaded Afghanistan and Iraq in an attempt to find and kill Osama Bin-Laden and the Al-Qaeda terrorist organisation. Here is a timeline of key events.

2001

11/09 - A series of co-ordinated terror strikes take place against multiple targets on the American West coast. Most visible were the World Trade Centre towers. Terrorist organisation Al-Qaeda, backed by Osama Bin-Laden claimed responsibility. Nearly 3,000 people died.

07/10 - British and American forces begin airstrikes in Afghanistan after the ruling party (The Taliban) refuse to hand over Osama Bin-Laden.

7/12 - Taliban stronghold Kandahar falls. Bin Laden escapes. (The Afghan war is still ongoing to this day)

2003

20/03 - The United States begins the invasion of Iraq; coordinating a satellite-guided tomahawk cruise missile strike on Baghdad. American, British, Australian, Polish, and Danish military operations begin; ground troops move into Iraq.

10/04 - The fall of Baghdad.

01/05 - US President George W. Bush declares major combat operations over.

07/08 - Jordanian Embassy is car bombed. First car bomb of the conflict.

19/08 - Canal Hotel bombing: Truck bomb at the United Nations headquarters kills the top UN envoy, Sergio Vieira de Mello, and 21 others.

2004

01/02 - Two suicide bombers strike Kurdish political offices in the northern city of Arbil, killing 117 and injuring 133.

02/03 - Multiple bombings in Baghdad and Karbala at the climax of the Shi'a festival of Aashurah kill nearly 200, the deadliest attacks up to that time.

18/04 - Abu Ghraib torture and prisoner abuse; Beginning of the diffusion of images of humiliated Iraqi detainees by US soldiers in Abu Ghraib.

30/09 - A car bomb strikes an American Humvee handing out candy to children, killing up to 35 children.

2005

28/02 - 2005 Al Hillah bombing: In the deadliest single blast up to that time, a car bomb kills 127 in Hillah; the identity of the bomber as a Jordanian caused a diplomatic row between Iraq and Jordan.

14/09 - In the deadliest day of the insurgency in Baghdad, bombs kill 160 and injure more than 500.

14/12 - U.S. President George W. Bush says that the decision to invade Iraq in 2003 was the result of faulty intelligence, and accepts responsibility for that decision. He maintains that his decision was still justified.

2006

22/02 - The al-Askari Mosque bombing (2006): The Al Askari Mosque is bombed, sparking a wave of sectarian violence.

24/04 - Hamdania incident. Marines allegedly abduct an Iraqi civilian from a house, kill him, and place components and spent AK-47 cartridges near his body to make it appear he was planting an IED.

23/11 - Sadr City bombings kill more than 200 Shias in Sadr City.

2007

10/01 - The Iraq War troop surge of 2007 is announced.

27/03 - A bombing in Tal Afar, which killed 152, set off Shia retaliation which left 70 Sunnis dead.

14/08 - 2007 Yazidi communities bombings. In the most deadly insurgent strikes to date, four bombings in Kahtaniya and Jazeera, in northern Iraq, strike Yazidi communities, killing 796 people and injuring more than 1,500.

2008

21/02 - 2008 Turkish incursion into northern Iraq. Turkey launches an offensive in northern Iraq against PKK (Kurdish) rebels.

November - Despite continued fighting throughout the year the U.S.-Iraq Status of Forces Agreement, which stipulates that U.S. troops will be out of Iraq by the end of 2011, is approved and ratified by the Iraqi Parliament.

2009

January - A total of 191 Iraqis were killed in violence during January, the lowest monthly toll since the US-led invasion of March 2003. Sixteen U.S. troops died in Iraq during this month.

28/05 - The last of the UK's combat troops are withdrawn from Iraq.

2010

18/08 - American combat operations in Iraq end as its last combat brigade departs for Kuwait.

Video Timeline

Questions:

1. What does the length of this timeline suggest about the war?
2. Can you figure out from the timeline why bombs became a successful method of fighting the war.
3. Who were the main victims of the bombs? (Highlight each section that refers to casualties in this list - try using one colour for Iraqis and one for non-Iraqis)
4. Based on the information you have and looking at a map of the middle-east, what do you think the Iraq war achieved/did for the middle-east?

UK/US Attitudes to War

The following is an extract from an article from Pew Research Centre about US attitudes to the Iraq War, the article was written in 2008, two years before the US finally pulled troops out of Iraq.

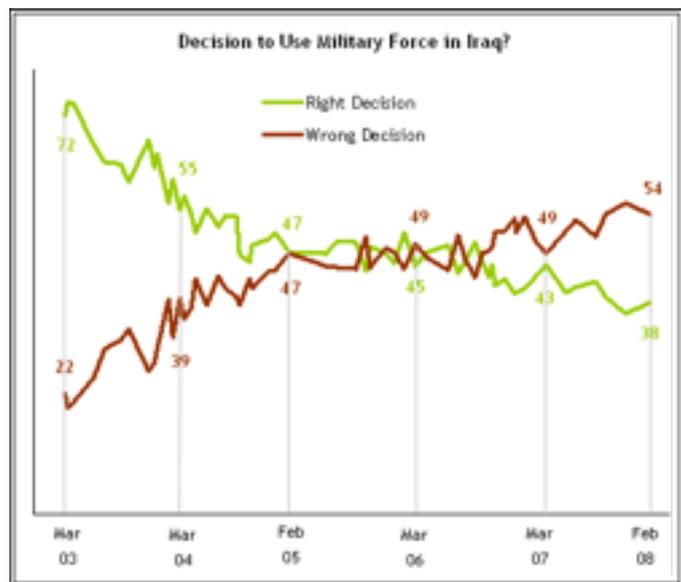
Public Attitudes to the War in Iraq: 2003-2008

Five years after the start of the conflict in Iraq, many public evaluations of the situation in Iraq have turned more positive. But there has been no turnaround in the public's opinion about the original decision to take military action in Iraq. While ratings of how things are going in Iraq have improved over the past year and more Americans now say the United States should keep troops there, the proportion saying the initial decision to go to war was wrong has increased since the spring of 2007.

In Pew's latest national survey, conducted Feb. 20-24 among 1,508 adults, a 54% majority said the U.S. made the wrong decision in using military force in Iraq, while 38% said it was the right decision.

The decrease in support for the decision to go to war has occurred despite a dramatically improved perception of how the effort in Iraq is going. In Pew's latest survey, as many Americans say the military situation in Iraq is going well as say it is not going well (48% each).

Americans continue to be divided on whether to keep troops in Iraq or bring them home. A slim plurality of Americans (49%) now supports bringing the troops home as soon as possible, while 47% favor maintaining troops in Iraq until the situation there is stabilized. A year ago, a narrow majority (52%) favored a troop withdrawal as soon as possible, compared with 43% who favored keeping the troops in Iraq. Public support for a troop pullout peaked at 56% in June 2007. The percentage favoring withdrawing the troops as soon as possible is at its lowest level since mid-January 2007 (48%).



The next article is about UK attitudes to the Iraq War and is from the polling agency yougov.co.uk.

To many British people it now feels unimaginable that we ever supported the Iraq war – but most people did

Opposing the Iraq war has been called Charles Kennedy's finest hour, and in the end the public were on his side. For many people, Iraq is all they can remember about the Labour government of 1997-2010. It has tainted Tony Blair's legacy, and in the run up to the 2015 general election it made Labour cautious of defending its record.

Though it has been controversial for over a decade, the invasion was actually popular at the time. In 2003, YouGov conducted 21 polls from March to December asking British people whether they thought the decision by the US and the UK to go to war was right or wrong, and on average 54% said it was right.

But more than 10 years of opposition is a long time, and many people now remember things differently. Now only 37% of the public say they believed military action against Saddam Hussein was right at the time, instead of the 54% recorded at the time.

The two groups do not completely overlap – respondents younger than 30 today would have been under 18 in 2003 and so were not surveyed by YouGov at the time, and another segment of the population will have passed away since then. However, in the 2015 survey young

people do not fall clearly on either side of the debate, and the age groups who were represented in 2003 now all tend to say the war was wrong.

Recent research by YouGov America reveals an even more dramatic effect in the US. 63% favoured sending ground troops into Iraq according to a February 2003 Gallup poll, however in 2015 only 38% recall supporting the military operation.

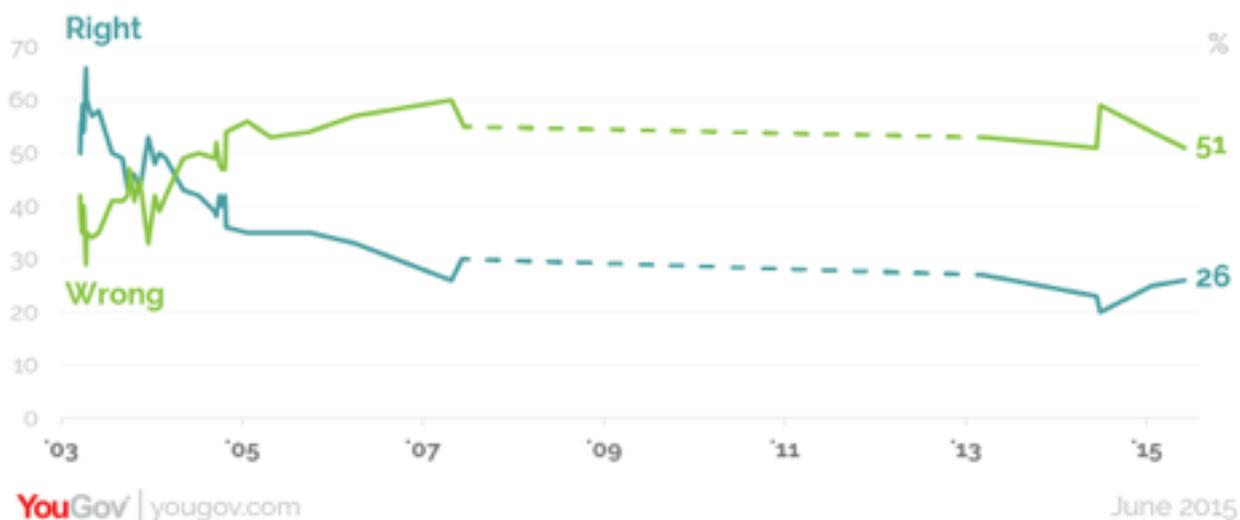


PUBLIC OPINION AND IRAQ

During the Hutton Inquiry into the mysterious death in July 2003 of former UN weapons inspector David Kelly, British people became divided about the war. The capture of Saddam Hussein in December temporarily boosted support, but began falling again – never to recover – after the Butler Review concluded in July 2004 that the intelligence used to justify the war had been unreliable.

Support for military action in Iraq

Do you think the United States and Britain are/were right or wrong to take military action against Iraq?



Questions:

1. What do you think from the information in the timeline and from the articles made the public think that it was a good idea to invade Iraq at the time?
2. What changed over the course of the war to change people's opinions?

Research Work:

Find an article about 'public attitudes to the Iraq war' print it and bring it in to class. Make sure you have read the article and you understand it!

IEDs in Iraq

The following is an edited extract from a US Navy report, available online, about the use of IEDs (Improvised Explosive Devices) in Iraq.

Improvised explosive devices (IEDs) are responsible for many of the more than 2,000 deaths and numerous casualties suffered by U.S. and coalition forces since the invasion of Iraq.

The bombs have been hidden behind signs and guardrails, under roadside debris, or inside animal carcasses, and encounters with IEDs are becoming more numerous and deadly. The threat has expanded to include vehicle-borne IEDs, where insurgents drive cars laden with explosives directly into a targeted group of service members.

Background

Improvised explosive devices, or IEDs, now cause about half of all the American combat casualties in Iraq, both killed-in-action and wounded.

An IED is currently characterized as a low-technology exploding mine, usually "homemade", that is usually hidden beside a roadway and set off using a variety of trigger mechanisms. IEDs can utilize commercial, military, or homemade explosives, and often the IED builder has had to construct the IED with the materials at hand.

Insurgents have constructed IEDs powerful enough to kill soldiers inside 22-ton Bradley Fighting Vehicles. In one incident in 2004, after a Bradley ran over a large IED, the armored bottom plate of the vehicle was reportedly found some 60 yards from the site of the explosion.

Triggering methods for IEDs may include using a cell phone, a garage door opener, or a child's remote-control toy, or may even be as simple as running over a rubber hose to produce enough air pressure to activate a switch for a mine. At other times, the insurgent may remain concealed and trigger an IED manually. The following techniques describe how insurgents can deploy IEDs to increase the damage:

- **Boosting, Coupling, and Daisy-Chaining.** Buried mines can be stacked on top of one another to increase the force of a blast. Coupling is a method of linking one mine or explosive device to another, to expand the area covered by explosions. With Daisy-Chaining, a vehicle with a heavy mine roller passes over a first, unfused device and sets off a second fused device. This in turn detonates the overpassed device underneath the vehicle.
- **Shaped Charges.** A cylindrical container is packed with explosive, and capped by a conical piece of metal that becomes a molten projectile when the device is detonated. The shaped charge concentrates blast energy to

punch through armor plating and propel the molten metal into the target vehicle's cabin.

- **Complex Multi-Staged Ambush.** Insurgents attack a patrol with IEDs, inflicting casualties. When other First Responders arrive to help, or when a medevac helicopter touches down on a nearby landing zone, the insurgents then trigger other pre-placed bombs, or begin a follow-on attack with rifles or grenades.

According to press reports, approximately 10,000 High-Mobility Multi-Purpose Wheeled Vehicles (HMMWV, or Humvees) that were not armored for combat conditions are now in Iraq. Some of these vehicles are currently re-enforced using steel plates that may still be inadequate to withstand the explosives being used by the insurgents. In addition, in an apparent response to the use of heavier armor, insurgents have developed even more powerful IEDs, along with more sophisticated methods for deploying and triggering them.

Countermeasures

The "Talon" is a bomb-disposal Unmanned Ground Vehicle (UGV), or robot, that comes equipped with a mechanical arm to inspect and relocate suspected IEDs. More than a hundred of the remote-control robots are now being used in Iraq and Afghanistan, with an equal amount on order. Another robot, called the "PackBot" has also been used by the Army to clear bombs and explore suspected terrorist hideouts.

Comprehension Questions:

1. What is an 'IED'? What does it do?
2. Name three possible ways to set off an IED.
3. Why would you 'daisy-chain' two bombs together?
4. What is a 'Talon' and why do you think it is used?

Context of Production: The Indie Film

The Hurt Locker is an American ‘Indie’ movie. For more information on what an ‘Indie’ movie is, you can read Appendix A. For now we’ll say that it is a film that is made outside the main Hollywood studio system, with financing from other sources.

Undercover Indies: Kathryn Bigelow’s ‘The Hurt Locker’ Blows Up Awards-Season Expectations

<https://www.filmindependent.org/blog/undercover-indies-kathryn-bigelows-the-hurt-locker-blows-up-awards-season-expectations/>

Although some larger distributors such as Lionsgate and Universal picked up The Hurt Locker for distribution, the relatively small Voltage Pictures funded the film’s production—one of the company’s first-ever projects. The film cost \$15 million, which (believe it or not) is still considered a small budget by Hollywood standards, sitting right in the range of a typical indie hit. And the budget is especially small compared to its biggest award season competition that year, Avatar, which broke records with its price tag of \$425 million.

In true indie fashion, The Hurt Locker premiered at the Venice Film Festival (where it won Best Picture) and went on to screen at the Toronto International Film Festival, Montreal Festival, SXSW, AFI Dallas, Philadelphia and Seattle International Film Festival before its limited US release, and continued to make festival appearances through 2010—nearly two years after its initial theatrical release.

Just as it was recognized in its mainstream award season run, the indie world was sure to recognize The Hurt Locker as well. Our very own Film Independent Spirit Awards nominated Jeremy Renner for Best Actor, and Anthony Mackie for Best Supporting Actor.

It’s not hard to see The Hurt Locker as the indie antithesis to the ultra-popular Avatar—both were highly buzzed-about and big awards season contenders. But Avatar couldn’t have been more ingrained in the Hollywood system, with

flashy new technologies and the biggest production budget of any film to date.

But for those not exactly enamored with sci-fi spectacle, *The Hurt Locker* provided a refreshing alternative. To add an extra layer of intrigue, Bigelow was (and is) the ex-wife of *Avatar* auteur James Cameron. And apparently, Bigelow even shared the film with her ex- early on, whose only feedback, according to interviews, was: “don’t change a damn thing.”



Discussion Task:

1. What is an 'indie' movie?
2. What advantages might 'indie' film producers have over mainstream film-makers?
3. What disadvantages might 'indie' film producers have compared to their Hollywood counterparts?

Research Task

Write down a selection of five/ten films you've seen recently. Now try to find out if they were produced by a major studio or if they could be called an 'indie' film.

Context of Production: War Cinema

Within the genre of 'War Cinema' there are a several different sub-genres, sometimes arranged by the particular conflict (Vietnam films/World War II films etc) and sometimes arranged by the attitude to war, or the message they send about war. Sometimes the two types of classification overlap: a lot of Vietnam war films are very critical of the war itself and show the participants suffering and becoming degenerate themselves in a 'War is Hell' way, films like *Casualties of War*, *Platoon* and *Full Metal Jacket*.

In your books we'll be writing a definition for different types of War Cinema after we've watched a couple of trailers for the films. You'll need to say what the main message of these films is and how they might try and get that message across.

War as Action/Adventure

The Dirty Dozen

War is Hell:

Come and See (Idi I Smotri)

Platoon

Apocalypse Now

War as Comedy

Kelly's Heroes

MASH

War as Modern Action Film

Black Hawk Down

Love in War

A Very Long Engagement

Discussion Task:

Can you think of any examples in your groups? We'll make notes on as many as we can.

Context of Production: Iraq War Cinema

The Iraq War is the second war that has taken place where US-lead soldiers invaded Iraq. Often referred to as 'The Gulf War', this relatively short conflict (August 1990-February 1991) has had very few films made about it. Here is one...

Three Kings

Discussion Task:

What kind of war film is this? Is it more than one kind?

Why do you think there are so few films about this conflict?

Teacher - Explain the reason for the conflict, does this help?

Now we're going to look at how the Iraq war has been covered in cinema by looking at three different approaches.

The Valley of Elah

Green Zone

Taxi to the Dark Side

Discussion Task:

These films look very different from the one above. Can you categorise them based on our look at War Cinema?

Is there an over-arching theme to these films? What do they suggest about the attitudes to war that might be different from earlier types of War Cinema?

The Hurt Locker: Jargon

Kit and Cans	n. 9mm handgun. Standard issue sidearm.
Hajji	n. Improvised Explosive Device. A home-made bomb.
Cord	n. A person who stays on the FOB (Forward Operations Base).
'Most Wanted' deck of cards	n. A metaphor for a place of extreme pain and suffering.
Camel	n. A world famous footballer.
Barrett .50 Caliber	n. The radio headset and tools used by EOD soldiers.
9	n. A name used by US soldiers to describe thieves, insurgents and looters.
Beckham	n. The group of soldiers in the Explosive Ordnance Disposal team.
EOD team	n. A sniper rifle.
IED	n. US military produced deck of cards featuring high ranking Iraqi officials.
Hurt Locker	n. The wires that connect bombs.
Ali Baba	n. Derogatory name used for people of middle eastern ethnicity
Fobbit	n. Water carrying backpack used by soldiers.

Watching The Hurt Locker

Below are a series of notes for watching The Hurt Locker, they aren't comprehensive or full but they should help to frame the film and start discussions and notes when you are studying the scenes of the film in more detail.

It is worth reading these notes before your first watch of the film and then attempting the tasks at the bottom after you've seen the film.

Cinematography (including lighting)

Virtually all the scenes in Iraq are shot and edited in a verité style similar to news or documentary footage. Barry Ackroyd, the cinematographer, shot each scene using four handheld HD cameras, with operators shooting numerous extreme CU and CU of character's faces, as well as extreme LS (often to show the POV of James' increasingly frustrated support team or civilians). The camera movement is jerky and 'nervy', often using 'crash zooms' and 'zip pans' to create an agitated, anxious atmosphere as well as a sense of immersion (one critic said the camera and editing makes the viewer the "4th member" of the team). The use of extreme CU is often in shadow and uses very shallow focus to reflect the intense concentration of the soldiers and the clarity (despite the danger) they need to complete their task.

Mise-en-Scène

Colour scheme of browns and oranges conveys the oppressive heat; the fine dust that covers every surface compliments this and creates a sense of discomfort. The shots of litter and rubbish on the streets and of Iraqi bystanders, creates a sense of threat; especially after the opening sequence where we see how both could be sources of danger. There always seem to be people watching from a distance with the camera unable to portray them as hostile or friendly.

The bomb disposal suit itself resembles a spaceman's suit, emphasising the sense that the soldiers are in a hostile, 'alien' world.

Editing

The film opens with an epigram about “war as a drug.” This is an insight into Sgt James’ character, who does seem ‘addicted’ to the adrenaline rush of his job - but could also have wider political meaning about US foreign policy, especially during the years post-9/11.

Throughout the bomb disposal scenes, Bigelow cuts between four cameras, further creating a ‘nervy’, anxious atmosphere - but also establishing a sense of space and character’s positioning in each scene and the sense of ‘360 degree threat’. During these sequences (and the extended, ‘real time’ sniper shoot out in the desert 00:55:27-1:10:03), there is also cross-cutting between the US soldiers and the Iraqis. This inclusion of the enemies’ POV prevents them from being a faceless, dehumanised foe. It also suggests that both sides are engaged in a deadly ‘game’ with each other. (After one insurgent is killed in the shoot-out James even says “Thank you for playing”).

Sound

The sound design for the bomb disposal scenes compliments the immersive use of cameras and editing: loud heavy breathing and whispered curses contrasting with the yelled commands and orders during long shots.

Dialogue in the film is minimal and naturalistic (there are no grandstanding speeches like in other war films). Eldridge’s brief speech at the start of the sequence to “scare the new guy” adds to the sense of threat, and his comments about the uselessness of the tanks in this situation suggest that this war is very different to the kind fought in the past. Note also the change of the army base name from “Camp Liberty” to “Camp Victory” (another sly criticism of US foreign policy?)

Research Task:

Use the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes to find a review of *The Hurt Locker* online. Look for one that is no longer than two pages long. Most of the reviews available are positive, you should definitely pick one of those.

Print off the review.

Highlight and annotate sections that refer to editing/sound/misè-en-scene/cinematography.

Also highlight and annotate any sections that refer to the making of the film and the representation of women/girls in the film.

As a class you’ll feed back this information and make notes in your books.

The Hurt Locker: Key Scenes

The notes below are just to help you getting started on the analysis of key scenes from the film. You will still need to make your own notes using the film analysis mats in class.

The Car Bomb 00:30:00 - 00:40:30

This long sequence shows Sgt James' methods of operating and how they differ from the standard procedure employed by other bomb technicians - especially Sgt Thompson. It uses all of the techniques that Ackroyd and Bigelow can to enhance the tension of the situation.

Look out for:

Unsteady handheld camera. Crash zooms and quick cuts. Close-ups + sweat! Point of view shots, uncertain enemies. Canted angles. Absence of non-diegetic music until when? Barbed wire, minarets.

Off the base 01:27:40 - 01:32:30

Sgt James' journey out of the safety of the base is a clear contravention of the rules the soldiers are supposed to obey. Despite receiving criticism from many soldiers about the realism of the scene it was subsequently found that many soldiers went 'off-base' during the war.

Look out for:

Low level lighting. Mournful/tense non-diegetic music. Editing flicking from James to the cattle. Any shot held for a long time?

The Cereal Aisle 01:56:10 - 02:00:50

This is the key scene in the film to explain the effect of the war on Sgt James. Here, when confronted with a banal choice of cereal in the supermarket he finds the lack of meaning or risk involved to be too confusing and insignificant.

Look out for:

Watch [Movies with Mikey on Jarhead 5:40-7.03](#) Low wide angle lens for maximum cereal! Reflective surfaces, bright jarring colours, no theme. Muzak. Depressing, muted tones of home life. White noise.

‘In the Humvee...’

Cinematographer Barry Ackroyd wanted to make the film as exciting as possible. He worked to Kathryn Bigelow’s aim to ‘put the audience into the soldier’s shoes, into the humvee.’

Over the next few pages are some examples of the kinds of shots used in the film. We’re going to make notes on the effect of these shots on the audience.





The Hurt Locker: Specialist Writing

What follows is the exam board chosen piece of specialist writing about the film that will inform our exam question. Your understanding of this text will be crucial in the answering the exam.

Specialist Writing Option C: Film Criticism

Pro or Anti War

Tara McKelvey, The American Prospect, July 2009

For a supposedly anti-war film, Kathryn Bigelow's *Hurt Locker* serves as a rather **effective military recruiting tool**. An Iraqi butcher holds a cell phone as he stands near the site of a bomb -- or an improvised explosive device (IED), as it is known. The Americans shout at the butcher to put the phone down and point their guns; he smiles and waves back, nodding his head reassuringly to show them everything is fine. Then he presses a button on the cell phone and detonates a bomb, killing one of the soldiers.

From that point on, **you, as viewer, sympathise with the soldiers** as they travel along dangerous roads and walk through Baghdad's narrow alleys, seeing all of the Iraqi men, women and children around them as potential terrorists. Just as American horror movies shifted at some point in time and invited the moviegoer to take on the point of view of the killer tracking down the victim, rather than the perspective of the victim fleeing from a psychopath, ***The Hurt Locker* places the viewer squarely in the mindset of a soldier on the verge of shooting someone.**

The Hurt Locker shows the paranoia, rage, and brutal recklessness of soldiers trapped in the downward death spiral of the Iraq war: the American soldiers fighting the very people they had once attempted to liberate. **It sets itself up as an anti-war film.** It opens with Chris Hedges' quote, "War is a drug," Yet for more than two hours, the film presents Baghdad's combat zone with excitement and drama. In one

scene, a bomb-defuser, Staff Sgt. William James (Jeremy Renner), searches for a detonator in a car loaded with explosives, and later he tries to save an unfortunate Iraqi man who has been forcibly strapped with homemade bombs. The tense moments are set to creepily compelling music and the cinematography **captures the beauty** that is found in the desert landscape and even in the casing of a bullet. **It is easy to understand why the soldier, William James, would take so much pleasure in his work as a daredevil bomb-defuser in Iraq**, and find so little to be happy about in the difficult, messy world of America when he comes home.

Back in the United States, James finds himself in a supermarket aisle, trying to decide between Lucky Charms and Cheerios. He stares at those brands and then at dozens of others on the shelves, feeling overwhelmed by the dizzying array of breakfast cereals, in a scene of American consumerism gone mad. He then spends part of the day cleaning soggy leaves out of the gutter of his house. It is a **dull, dreary world**. A moment later, however, a soldier is shown striding down a wide, dusty Iraqi road in a NASA-like bomb suit, filled with a sense of purpose, courage, and even nobility that does not exist in suburban America.

The film draws a sharp contrast between the tedium of American life, with its grocery- shopping, home repairs, and vapid consumerism, and the heart-pounding drama of the combat zone in Iraq. The fact that the war itself seems to have little point fades into the background. For all the graphic violence, bloody explosions and, literally, human butchery that is shown in the film, ***The Hurt Locker* is one of the most effective recruiting vehicles for the U.S. Army that I have seen.**

Discussion (and annotation!) Task:

This article is very critical of *The Hurt Locker*, why?

What things does it suggest the film is good at doing?

Do you think the film is 'anti-war'? Why?

Do you think the film fails in the way the article thinks it does?

Marked Task:

You have to write at least a page (2 pages of the smaller books!) to explain how this article has changed (or not changed) the way you feel about the film. You must use one key scene to help you explain.

The Hurt Locker: Exam Question

Below is a sample question from the exam paper. It is likely that because you have to refer to an existing text that the questions might be relatively similar for each year but they will definitely not be the same! Remember this! It is not a response you can learn and then repeat verbatim. You need to be sure you are answering the specific question you have been asked.

Explore how one example of specialist writing on the chosen film you have studied has deepened your understanding of the film. Refer to at least one sequence from your chosen film to illustrate your answer.

In your answer, you should:

- identify the example of specialist writing you are using in the box provided in your answer book
- briefly describe one key idea from the example of specialist writing you have studied
- outline what this key idea suggests about your chosen film
- show how this idea compares with your own views on the film (use one sequence from your chosen film to illustrate this). [15]

This is very close to the kind of question you might find in the English exam in Paper 2. It's asking you to bring two different texts together: the film and the written article. The question wants you to show that reading the article has 'deepened' your understanding of the film. That the ideas in the article have helped you to be in a better position to understand the messages and themes of the film. Most of the questions will want you to be able to do something quite similar to this. Some might ask if you agree or disagree with the article.

The exam board recommend that you spend **25 minutes** answering this question which adds up to about two/two and a half sides of exam booklet writing.

The bullet points under the question are very helpful in structuring your answer. We are going to have a go at answering this question using our notes from our books and in this booklet. You have exactly 25 minutes for your first go.

The Marking Scheme

This is a much simplified mark scheme for the question.

Band	AO1 - Elements of Film	AO2 - Film Analysis
5	<p>5 Marks Excellent demonstration of knowledge and understanding of elements of film.</p>	<p>9-10 Marks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applies excellent knowledge and understanding of the elements of film as evident in specialist writing, including to analyse films • Explores one sequence from chosen film highly effectively and highly relevantly in response to the question • Uses excellent points to develop a highly coherent point of view in response to the question, demonstrating an excellent knowledge and understanding of subject-specific terminology.
4	<p>4 Marks Good demonstration of knowledge and understanding of elements of film.</p>	<p>7-8 Marks Replace 'excellent' with 'good'. Replace 'highly effectively and highly relevantly' with 'effectively and relevantly'.</p>
3	<p>3 Marks Satisfactory demonstration of knowledge and understanding of elements of film.</p>	<p>5-6 Marks Replace 'excellent' with 'satisfactory'. Replace 'highly effectively and highly relevantly' with 'satisfactorily and with reasonable relevance'.</p>
2	<p>2 Marks Basic demonstration of knowledge and understanding of elements of film.</p>	<p>3-4 Marks Replace 'excellent' with 'basic'. Replace 'highly effectively and highly relevantly' with 'in an uneven way and with little relevance'.</p>
1	<p>1 Mark Limited demonstration of knowledge and understanding of elements of film.</p>	<p>1-2 Marks Replace 'excellent' with 'limited'. Replace 'highly effectively and highly relevantly' with 'in a limited way with minimal if any relevance'.</p>

Marking the Samples

Below there is a handout with three different answers written on there. First you need to rank them in order of strongest to weakest. Then, using the marking criteria, we want you to give them a band (1-5) and a specific mark (out of 15).

Answer 1:

Tara McKelvey's article on *Hurt Locker* says that the film isn't really an anti-war film. Even though it wants to be. It is more like an action film that makes people so excited they want to join army.

She says that the film uses exciting music and camera shots to make the audience more interested what is happening. Instead of thinking that war is dangerous and hurts the soldiers it looks like they are having fun doing the most dangerous and deadly jobs. This makes it seem as if the film doesn't do what it wants to do because it is too exciting.

By using shaky camera shots and lots of close ups when William James is digging up the second bomb site we feel that he is really tense and nervous. The music is like a horror film, using violins that make an unpleasant sound that gets louder when the many bombs are seen. This shows that even though the film is supposed to make war look like a horrible place to be I really think that it is fun too. Like Call of Duty and other war games the film puts you on the same side of the soldiers who are trying to do a good job. It makes you feel excited that they are the good guys.

Band (1-5)	Mark (1-15)	Reasons why (using the mark scheme)

Answer 2:

Hurt Locker is a very exciting film that is very tense and makes you want to keep watching because the close ups make you like William James more because he is the hero and you want him to stop the bombs.

In the article the woman says that *Hurt Locker* is too exciting because it is supposed to make you think about how bad war is. But it makes you excited while you are watching it. Like when he is defusing the bomb in the car and he takes all his body armour off, you start wanting him to do it.

You feel sorry for him when he is in the supermarket because he is so bored so she is right when she says that it makes you want to join the army because it looks so cool and better than doing the shopping and cleaning the drains at home.

I really like the film, especially when he is defusing the bombs because it makes you feel close to what is happening and the shaky camera makes you know how desperate he is.

Band (1-5)	Mark (1-15)	Reasons why (using the mark scheme)

Answer 3:

McKelvey's article suggests that *Hurt Locker* is a film that seeks to demonise war and the effect it has on its participants; but in doing so it offers the excitement and thrills of a more conventional action film that only causes us to sympathise with the American soldiers present in the film.

The tension of *Hurt Locker* is key to the argument that it is a compelling adventure. McKelvey uses the phrase 'creepily compelling' to describe the music and aesthetics of the film, comparing it to a white knuckle theme park ride.

This notion should be exemplified in the sequence where the army come across an innocent man with a bomb strapped to him. The camera is often much closer to the American troops, framing their anxious faces in a series of close ups with an agitated moving camera. The Iraqi man with the bomb strapped to him is framed in a series of long wide shots, essentially dehumanising him. He isn't shown as a rounded character but as a threat, lost and alone in an empty expanse of a dusty streets.

The sequence where Staff Sgt William James approaches the man repeatedly shows the rising tension as the character's voices clash and the camera shots get tighter and tighter to become close ups on both characters. However, there is no 'creepy/chilling' music. Instead there is silence and sound effects of the hardware and bomb disposal equipment along with the heavy, stressed breathing of James and the victim.

So, whilst there is an element of excitement contained in this scene, the victim's constant sad pleading lends a mournful and upsettingly desperate feeling. This suggests that whilst the film is creating a veneer of excitement - this is undermined with the emotional trauma the characters are clearly undergoing.

Band (1-5)	Mark (1-15)	Reasons why (using the mark scheme)