

STUDENT WORK SAMPLE: ALLIE'S INQUIRY-BASED RESEARCH ESSAY

Truth in Society

by Allie

Can images and videos change aspects of truth? In reading *Ender's Game*, this is the question I found myself asking, but is this question relevant to life as well? In researching this question, I ultimately found that yes, it is. The so-called truth in one place may be different in another. Different perspectives like opposite sides of a war may hold different truths depending on news and media shown with different videos and pictures. Now, one of the biggest things that everyone uses every day is the Internet, and who can put information, videos, and pictures on the Internet? The correct answer is everyone. Images and videos can be altered by anyone, including the media, government, and ordinary people, to change public knowledge and opinions.

My question was inspired by the book *Ender's Game* by Orson Scott Card. In the book, the government tricked Ender into annihilating a whole species! Ender's brother and sister also gained considerable political power via the Internet. When the people called for Ender to come back to Earth, that footage was edited out of the videos shown to the public. This shows how carefully the government controlled the media. On a final note from the story, there were two wildly different perspectives to the war. There was the buggers' side who didn't realize the humans were a sentient species when they first attacked, and the humans who wanted to annihilate the buggers thinking they were a violent species who would eventually wipe them out. These are all great examples of different truths or manipulated truths from the book.

Photoshop is everywhere, this is just part of our culture. Most people know that models on billboards are Photoshopped, but how much? All the models or people on billboards advertise themselves as perfect, but then in the study from class we saw that they were all heavily Photoshopped to look perfect. People then look at those photos and just accept them as truth. Today more and more people are gaining the easy ability to manipulate photos. I, for example, took a photo of my mother and was able to take about twenty years off her face (her words, not mine). Photoshop can be used for different purposes, making someone look better, making a photo look artistic and fresh, or even creating a scene which didn't really happen. My personal culture collage had three different photos. Two of the photos were changed to make the person look better, and one that I did was for an artistic purpose in which I made myself various shades of blue. So, when has Photoshop crossed the line to make these photos untruthful or fake? Should companies have to say when they Photoshop a picture, or is it all right not to?

Also, in our culture study in class, we looked at Photoshop and "truth" which people are inclined to believe, and the rights and wrongs in changing a photo. For example, the picture of a giant cat (about as big as a dog). The man who was holding the cat said "she started out as a big kitty and just seemed to keep growing." The picture is Photoshopped, but many people believed that it wasn't. This is a great example of the truth being bent on the Internet, however, this could be viewed as a joke or possibly sarcasm, so we can see that what is acceptable in changing a photo and what is not acceptable is not all black and white. There is a large middle ground in whether the pictures are lies or were altered with negative intent, or if it's simply artistic expression. Next are the pictures we see in magazines and on the media. It is shown that around six companies are the head of where about 90% of the media comes from. That means a small few control most of the pictures we see in that area and therefore have the power to control which perspectives most people can see the side of. If you think about it, everyone has the ability to take photos, and many people do every day. With the ability to change these photos there raises a question of how much change is okay? Another thing which many people use every day are filters. Keep in mind that photos you post on the web are part of your identity. Filters can make a picture look better or in some cases more sinister. Magazines have changed lighting or used filters on the pictures they use in order to convey a feeling or different idea about a photograph. This may change the public's opinions on a topic.

Pictures throughout history have been changed to serve certain people's or groups' purposes. During the Vietnam War, photos were also taken by journalists for the purpose of showing people in the United States what was happening. This led to turmoil when the images on the TV didn't match up with the so-called truth the government had told everyone, despite the government's best efforts to make sure the images showed what they wanted the public to see. Some of the most famous photos in history have been manipulated. One example is the Kent State shooting during the Vietnam War. Though this photo was not significantly altered it was enough to raise some questions about the truthfulness of it all. One other photo showed a soldier pointing a gun at a group of civilians. The soldier had been in a different photo and edited in to create a more dramatic scene. The man who did this was fired, but it makes me wonder how many other photos were changed and possibly not caught in the act. Also, in history, the legend of the Loch Ness Monster had one famous photo which many people believed was the real thing until one of the men responsible finally came out and told the truth.

Though not many people think about it, the truth is constantly bending, and problems with truth will undoubtedly come up in the future. The government, media, and even ordinary people have changed photos and videos throughout history, today, and will for years to come. Issues in the breaking or mandatory keeping of net neutrality (the equal treatment of all information on the

Internet) are considered a "grave threat to the Internet" (Selyukh), and more advanced easy access to photo-manipulating tools will only make it easier for ordinary people like you, or me, to continue to bend truths and people's opinions online in pictures and videos.

Citations:

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