

The Lens of War

The inspiring life and career of photojournalist Margaret Bourke-White

About the Story

Lexile: 990L (captions)

For qualitative complexity factors, go to the Story tab.

Learning Objective: to define *trailblazer* and apply the idea to a character in a historical-fiction drama

Key Skills: author's craft, character, key ideas and details, text evidence, literary devices

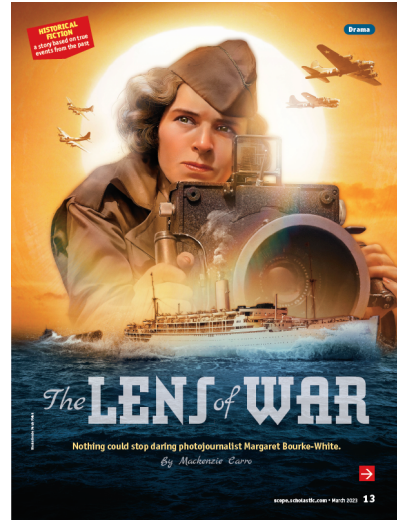
Essential Questions:

- What makes someone courageous?
- How does technology affect communication?
- What makes someone a trailblazer?

Standards:

The play and lesson support these Common Core anchor standards: R.1, R.2, R.3, R.4, R.5, R.7, R.10, W.2, W.9, SL.1, SL.2, L.4, L.6

For more standards information—including TEKS—go to Scope Online.



Your Teaching Support Package

Find your full suite of support materials at scope.scholastic.com.

Audio:

- Text-to-speech
- Vocabulary

Slideshow:

- Background Builder: Photography Through Time

Connected readings from the

Scope archives:

- [Stories of World War II](#)
- [Women's History: Stories of Trailblazers](#)

Skill Building Activities to print, project, or share digitally:

- Writing Planner: Trailblazer Margaret Bourke-White
- Vocabulary: Definitions and Practice
- Close Reading and Critical Thinking
- Choice Board
- **Core Skills Workout:** Inference
- Quiz*
- Contest Entry Form

*Available on two levels

Step-by-Step Lesson

1. Preparing to Read

20 minutes

View a Slideshow (10 minutes)

- View the **Background Builder** slideshow, which takes students through a brief history of photography and introduces several terms and concepts students will encounter in the play.

Preview Vocabulary (10 minutes)

- Project **Vocabulary: Definitions and Practice**. Review the definitions and practice using the words as a class. Highlighted words: *convoy*, *correspondent*, *darkroom*, *front*, *hangar*, *preposterous*, *solemn*, *torpedoed*. Optionally, print or share the interactive link directly to your LMS and have students preview the words and complete the activity independently beforehand. Audio pronunciations of the words and a read-aloud of the definitions are embedded in the interactive slides.

2. Reading and Discussing

45 minutes

- Have a volunteer read the As You Read box on page 14 of the magazine or at the top of the digital story page.
- Assign parts and read the play aloud as a class.
- Break students into groups to discuss the following close-reading and critical-thinking questions.

Close-Reading Questions

(20 minutes)

The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.

1. **What do you learn about Margaret and her parents in Scene 2? How does the author convey these ideas?** (author's craft, character) *In Scene 2, we learn that Margaret is a passionate and driven teenager with an interest in nature and photography. The author conveys Margaret's interest in nature by having her hold a pet snake. The author also conveys Margaret's interests through dialogue: Margaret excitedly tells her great-aunt that she plans to become a*

nature photographer, and that she wants to travel and help people. When her great-aunt expresses doubts about these dreams, Margaret's determination becomes clear. Margaret says, "She's wrong. I will see the world." Scene 2 also reveals that Margaret's parents are worldly and intellectual people who are supportive of Margaret's ambitions. The living room is described as being full of butterfly larvae, gadgets, books, and maps. These details of the setting suggest that Margaret's parents support and encourage curiosity and learning. Minnie's line "We encourage Margaret to pursue all her interests. She's very passionate. She wants to see the world," also supports this idea.

2. **Based on the play, what can you infer about what life was like for women in Margaret's time?** (key ideas and details, text evidence) You can infer that in Margaret's time, women were not viewed as equal to men—that women were often viewed as less capable, and it was believed that they should stay at home rather than be part of the workforce. You can infer this from Aunt Lynn's reaction to Margaret's dreams of becoming a photographer in Scene 2: Aunt Lynn calls the idea "preposterous" and says Margaret should be focused on learning how to run a household. A similar idea is expressed by the men at the newsstand in Scene 5. The men—and apparently others who have been spreading the rumor that Margaret is a "front" for a male photographer—don't seem to believe that a woman could have taken the photos that Margaret took, or that a woman should even be inside a "dangerous" place like a steel mill. The idea that women cannot handle difficult or dangerous jobs also appears in Scene 7, when Margaret is denied her request to go out on a combat mission, even though a male photographer was allowed to do so.
3. **The caption "Maggie the Indestructible" says that Margaret was known for her fearlessness. What details in the play support the idea that Margaret was fearless?** (key ideas and details, text evidence) Many details in the play and its text features support the idea that Margaret was fearless. In Scene 1, instead of going directly to the lifeboats after the torpedo strike, Margaret climbs some stairs to get a better view for her photos. In Scene 6, she tells Wilson Hicks that she "hung out the door of a plane" to get certain photos in the Arctic. You can also tell she is fearless from the fact that she wanted to—and did—photograph combat missions, even after being on a boat that was struck by a torpedo. The photo on page 16 of Margaret perched on a ledge on the 61st floor of a skyscraper also shows Margaret's fearlessness.
4. **What did Margaret believe was her role in society as a photographer? How do you know?** (character, text evidence) Margaret believed her role as a photographer was to show the general public the world—the beautiful and inspiring parts as well as the ugly and frightening parts. She felt that it was her responsibility to go to the places that most people wouldn't or couldn't visit—steel mills, war zones, the Arctic, the ledges of skyscrapers—and share what she saw. Margaret expresses this sentiment in Scene 4 when she says "And isn't my job as a photographer to show people what they can't go see for themselves? To open up the world for them?"

5. In Scene 7, General Doolittle tells Margaret she is being sent to North Africa by boat instead of plane because “It’ll be safer.” Why is this ironic? (author’s craft, literary devices)
Doolittle’s decision to have Margaret travel by boat because a plane would be too dangerous is ironic because Margaret’s boat ends up getting torpedoed. In other words, Doolittle puts Margaret on a boat because he thinks it will keep her safe but just the opposite ends up happening: Traveling on the boat places Margaret in great danger.

Critical-Thinking Questions

(5 minutes)

The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.

1. Choose three character traits that describe Margaret Bourke-White and explain each one with text evidence. Answers will vary. Students may describe Margaret as courageous, bold, determined, resilient, dedicated, etc.
2. Why is photojournalism important? Answers will vary. Students may say that photojournalism is important because it gives the public a better understanding of current events by allowing the public to see, rather than just read or hear about, what is happening. Photos can also serve as proof of events in a way that words alone cannot. In other words, people may be more trusting of a news story if they see photos of what is being reported. The photos taken by photojournalists also help to create a historical record of things that happened and people who lived, which can help future generations understand the past.

3. Skill Building and Writing

30 minutes

- Have students complete the **Writing Planner: Trailblazer Margaret Bourke-White**. This activity will help them organize their ideas in preparation for the writing prompt on page 18 in the printed magazine and at the bottom of the digital story page.
- Alternatively, have students choose a culminating task from the **Choice Board**, a menu of differentiated activities.

Connected readings from the Scope Archives:

- Special Collection: [Stories of World War II](#)
- Special Collection: [Women’s History: Stories of Trailblazers](#)