



Administration

Navigation

Student Support

HST 209: American History: Civil War W17 (Escobar 31664)

Home ► Winter 2017 ► HST 209 W17 (Escobar 31664) ►
Week 3 - 1862 - A Very Bloody Affair ► Week 3 Forum ► Creative License


Search forums

Week 3 Forum

Creative License

[• Subscribe](#)[◀ Two Decades Later](#)[Move](#)[Pin](#)

Creative License

by Joe Escobar - Saturday, January 21, 2017, 10:05 PM

This thread is for discussions on the Creative License topic.

To make your POSTS, click the reply link in this, MY post. To reply to another student's post, be sure to click the reply link within in THEIR post.

IMPORTANT - SUBJECT LINES

BE SURE to use an informative subject line for your post, something that describes which question(s) you are addressing . Do NOT simply leave it RE: Creative License

Sum of ratings: -

[Permalink](#) | [Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Split on the issue

by Kamron Bratlie - Tuesday, January 24, 2017, 8:52 PM

I am torn on this week's forum, but perhaps I will be able to take the opinions of my fellow students into account. My first reaction is to say there should have been more follow up or at least have the letter segment inserted in its proper place, chronologically. Given that the subject of this documentary is a historical event, the film maker has a responsibility to the viewer to be honest. Shoving more drama into the Civil War seems heavy handed, but very short and dramatic phrases do not bother me if it gives the audience a valuable insight. Statements like "men who had never strayed 20 miles from their front doors now found themselves soldiers in great armies" give a short but fair idea as to what men of the time had experienced, prior to the war. However, a long segment such as Major Sullivan Ballou's letter to his wife seems excessive, and unnecessary to the historically minded.

My second reaction is to accept this segment as a meaningful addition to the film. Understanding that this film was made for the general public, I can accept some "creative license" to give the story a personal touch. None of us are strangers to documentaries or television programs that we loathe because the way the subject material is presented is just uninteresting. Ken Burns is giving us not just the facts, but the story of the Civil War. By inserting emotional testimonies or personal letters into this film, one might be more willing to invest themselves into learning about the Civil War in a way that is more profound than just hearing the facts. There are plenty of YouTube videos on the Civil War that provide just the facts, which is a valid way to learn what one needs, given the information is correct. However, to reach an audience of meaningful size, there needs to be something to keep them invested.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Re: Split on the issue

by Joseph Miller - Friday, January 27, 2017, 6:22 PM

I agree with your second reaction. I think that's why movies are never like the book. You have to keep people interested and when you can get to them emotionally, you've got them hooked for the rest of the week. The Civil War is fascinating. The number of deaths. It's mind boggling. Imagining going to a civil war game at Autzen Stadium. It holds 54,000 people. I've been to maybe a handful of games. There's so many people it's ridiculous. Fun though. Imagine all those people breaking out into a fight, half and half. Not to get away from the subject, but I'm still in awe. To me I just feel, like he didn't really take it too out of context or try to put too much drama in it. Sure he spun it a little, but the true emotion was still there. You can't take away the fact that this was going on. I just think he ended it with something that happened historically in that year, with one of the hundreds of thousands of letters that were sent by both sides. It just gave us a little end and an emotional connection, if we had a heart, to one of the men and his family, and what he endured. I was a heavy critic, but it's doing exactly what it was intended to do. Kudos to Ken Burns. He got me investigating further and learning more than I thought I would originally. Nice Post.

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)

Sum of ratings:2 (1)



Re: Split on the issue

by Spencer Kellar - Saturday, January 28, 2017, 3:37 PM

It sounds like you already see both sides of the argument, but I'm interested to learn why you think Ballou's letter is excessive and unnecessary to the historically minded. Not to put words into your mouth, but it sounds as if you think segments like the narrated letter are only made to satisfy the casual audience. I would have to disagree. Personally, I find history to be far more fascinating when the subjects are humanized. In this case, the letter from Ballou to his wife gives a new perspective that is highly emotional. These soldiers weren't just statistics, after all. They were human beings.

Of course, the creative license Ken Burns takes is another issue entirely. But I think those letters do more good than harm, as long as they are authentic.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Re: Split on the issue

by Aimee Chow - Sunday, January 29, 2017, 5:16 PM

I completely agree with you. I believe the letter should've been placed chronologically with some back up information. I appreciate your insight into both sides of the argument. I can see how it can be excessive and unnecessary to those invested in history and the facts, but for Ken Burns' work, I believe it was absolutely needed. He is bringing the story of the Civil War. I agree that adding this emotional letter helps keep the audience invested in this historical series.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Obfuscatory commentary

by Austin King - Wednesday, January 25, 2017, 2:06 PM

I feel Ken Burns is very obfuscatory in the way he chose to approach this scene. Knowing that the letter wasn't sent to his wife until after the war I decided to listen carefully to see if he mentions it getting delivered. Ken Burns is very careful and only mentions that the letter had been written a week before the battle of Bull Run and that Sullivan Ballou died in the beginning of the battle. I think because of this he isn't necessarily being inaccurate because he never said that the letter had been delivered, just that Sullivan Ballou had written the letter to home a week before the battle. The Civil War is already a compelling and emotional

historical event, but this scene is the only one I recall actually depicting couples hardships during this very bloody war. Ken Burns could have told us that the letter was never delivered until after the war, but I don't think it was necessary to build the emotion he was going for in that scene. The images that accompany the letter sort of relate with the couples-hardship-theme Ken Burns was going for, but I think he could have built a more powerful scene had he done something like shown a single couple to represent this couple and then pictures of the horrors on the battlefield Sullivan Ballou soon saw and received himself.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Re: Obfuscatory commentary

by Bailey Tillotson - Sunday, January 29, 2017, 3:27 PM

Those were my thoughts when analyzing the images as well. The topic was Ballou and his wife, and to see several couples made me wonder if any of them were even them or related to this particular story whatsoever. I would have liked to see them first, then maybe moved onto couples a part of the war.

Alex Turnball wrote in the copyblogger how images psychologically impact the viewers and it's deeper than you think. Turnball said "In fact, 90 percent of the information that our brain gets is visual, and it processes that information 60,000 times faster than text. And visuals, when they complement your text, help your message connect: 40 percent of people will respond better to visual information than to text.". We learned last week how much time and effort was spent on the images used in Burn's videos alone, he understood imagery was important so I'm confident that his image decisions were purposeful. By using personal photos of people from the time, he helped us connect more to the event.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Keeping the viewer interested

by Melissa Garcia-Jimenez - Wednesday, January 25, 2017, 5:13 PM

In the letter Union Major Sullivan Ballou wrote to his wife was very touching. The way it was written and spoken in the first episode I can see his wife crying because of his death from the battle at Bull Run. Ken Burns does a good job in my opinion to put the extra drama into the series to keep the viewer hooked. He has a good music choice by playing sad violin music, along with the pictures of other couples to hint at the fact he was not the only one

who felt this way. Many other men who died must have left their wives and children behind. Is this extra drama necessary to include? No, but it may help the view understand how friends and family must have felt of their lost ones.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Use of the letter.

by Jordan Okoniewski - Wednesday, January 25, 2017, 5:15 PM

I am not bothered by Ken Burns' use of "creative license," for using Sullivan Ballou's letter to close out episode one of The Civil War. It's not like at any point the narrator suggests that his wife got the letter before Manassas, or before he died. It's interesting that Burns decided not to say that he died without ever sending it, but as it stands, my emotional take away from the scene is, "how sad, he love's his wife so much, wrote her this beautiful letter, and then died," and knowing that he didn't get to send it, and that she didn't receive it til after the war doesn't change any of that emotion. If this revelation threw some sort of spin on the scene (the kind of spin that discovering he was a deserter, or that he took a mistress might), then I would have misgivings about Burns' methods and the information he withheld. However, as it is- I'm unperturbed, and honestly think this issue could have been included in last week's forum.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Re: Use of the letter.

by Kamron Bratlie - Thursday, January 26, 2017, 10:37 PM

I fully understand how you feel about this. While I have some reservations about the chronological order of the letter in context with the film, its emotional impact was never lost on me, even after finding out more details about the events surrounding it. Do you feel like this letter made a larger impact on the audience than if it were omitted? I have a hard time believing the episode would have had the same impact if there was no letter, but I am interested in your thought on the matter.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Re: Use of the letter.

by Jordan Okoniewski - Sunday, January 29, 2017, 7:16 PM

Oh, I agree with you- I definitely think this letter had a larger impact than if it were omitted. It's an incredibly touching testament, and I think it really helps to put us in the shoes of the people who went through this conflict. I don't know what it's like to fight in a war, most Americans don't. But I know what it's like to love someone, and to be forced away from them due to circumstances beyond my control. By helping us empathize with soldiers such as Ballou, Burns really illustrates the magnitude of the tragedy of the Civil War. I think it was a really good inclusion.

Sum of ratings:2 (1) [Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



does the civil war need more drama?

by Jordan Okoniewski - Wednesday, January 25, 2017, 5:32 PM

For me the use of letters like Ballou's are not as much about concrete learning, or putting extra drama in the piece, as much as they are humanizing this conflict. I think it's hard to find the emotion a lot of times in blurry, black and white photos from 150 years ago. People's lifestyles have changed so much since then that it's sometimes hard to find the relevance in other people's travails from the mid 19th century. I think that's really the magic in Burn's work, is his ability to make relevant connections for us in events that happened over a century ago, where we know the outcome from the start. And love and conflict are two things that are still relevant to us today. I think Ballou's letter is a really effective tool for this because of its beauty and its eloquence. Because of its usefulness, I see why Burns decided to use it slightly out of chronological order. He's a filmmaker, he's going to end his films (or episodes) on an emotional note. Somber reflection might seem like Hollywoodizing, but I honestly think it makes what we see stick in our minds longer, and if you're not changing historical facts to do it (like the end of Inglorious Basterds), then I don't see the damage.

Sum of ratings:3 (1) [Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Omitted Details

by Lillith Ka'at - Wednesday, January 25, 2017, 5:39 PM

I mean the entire question is about creative license, so I'm not sure what else to put in the subject line, haha. "Discuss this topic, and label your thread as... something... specific. But not the topic."

Anyway, I'm not a fan of "creative license" when it comes to telling history. There's always going to be some necessity, because there have to be decisions made in presentation. It's impossible to avoid. But I don't like details being omitted or real historical content being altered. In the previous week's forum I advocated for using flawed material, and I want to preemptively say that I stand by that - but that, of course, it needs to come with the rest of

what I said: being critical of it. To criticize something harshly is not to say I have a black and white view of its usefulness as a whole product. Just throwing that out because sometimes people have trouble with the concept of criticizing things that you like or approve of.

It's pretty clear that the use of a fond, but melancholy letter from Union Major Sullivan Ballou to his wife is meant to give sympathy to people in the war. I don't necessarily think it was a goal to give sympathy to any particular side - a soldier's troubles caused by battle are going to be the similar for either side. It's very beautiful and eloquent, and was definitely the highlight of the video for me. Burns wanted an element of romance in his narrative, but I definitely think it would be better to do it with more accuracy...

I looked it up, and Ken Burns used an abbreviated version of the letter, which is really a huge waste... The entire letter is gorgeous! I think the emotional context of war is the most interesting element, so I would have loved to hear the whole letter, even at the expense of it dragging on a bit or detracting from Burns' desired pacing. My attention span works a whole lot better for people talking about their lives, relationships, and feelings, versus "THIS MANY GUNS. THIS TYPE OF GUNS. And THIS guy you'll never hear about again said in THIS journal that HE, TOO, wanted to keep his slaves...! and he said it IN THIS MONTH." (Obviously I understand that this is a huge part of history, and that I need to suck it up, but I'm just saying that personally, I have a more enjoyable time hearing about people's conditions in conflict than the conflict statistics.)

My own personal disappointment aside, if he's going to take the liberty of chopping it up, that's something that should absolutely be noted in the film. It's not hard to toss in a "part of his letter read:" or "- a partial excerpt from:" or something of that nature. I don't necessarily frown on not being told this letter never made it to her, though, because that's just additional context rather than anything that was contradicted. It doesn't change the content of the letter or that those were his feelings and experiences. It just gives - again, the thing I'm always whining about - more context to the whole scene.

I actually think it's kind of strange to use something like this to appeal to an emotional plight and leave out a detail that only makes it more tragic. That's a weird choice.

I can understand that Burns' would desire to control the pacing of his own work, but I don't think that 'pacing' was valuable enough to warrant these flaws. The letter was the highlight of the episode for me, and I am otherwise still having the same hard time digesting dates and weapons and slow-talking men over morose music. If he's accepting that the pace of this documentary is what it is, I don't know that adding the rest of this letter would have hurt that.

Sidenote: I think it's kind of silly that the teacher's quoted excerpts from Kevin Levin state that "Most instructors utilize this scene "simply to highlight the emotional hardships of wives..." etc. Like, the best insight to the pain of a wife isn't the wife, but the husband - and not just that, but that 'it's to highlight the wife's hardship" when it left out the rest of her known story, again, the parts that make it especially sad, like that she was only 24 but never remarried. (And the whole part about it not being sent to her.)

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Re: Omitted Details

by Joseph Miller - Friday, January 27, 2017, 11:06 PM

It was sad. For over 4 years she unknowingly waited for this letter. Really not even knowing if the ashes she had received were even that of her husband. Still disputable, by some I'm sure. Maybe it was too dark of a side to go to.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Re: Omitted Details

by Lillith Ka'at - Friday, January 27, 2017, 11:51 PM

I remember reading a long time ago a discussion about how there was a big rise in ghost stories around the civil war, because it was kind of a jarring change from people watching their loved ones die at home versus them going off to war and just... Not coming back, no body, etc. Not sure how accurate it is, but it was an interesting thought.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Re: Omitted Details

by Aimee Chow - Sunday, January 29, 2017, 7:41 PM

I also looked up different versions of the letter. There definitely was more emotion to it than the one that was read in the video. I agree with you that I would've like to see more context behind the letter itself. All the other facts behind the letter such as his wife not receiving it until long after he died or even that she never remarried are details that would add more emotion if they were included in the episode.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Necessary for Emotion

by Aimee Chow - Wednesday, January 25, 2017, 7:54 PM

Ken Burns' way to end Episode 1 was interesting. In my opinion, it was slightly out of context to include Sullivan Ballou's letter towards the end. It's unfortunate that this letter was handed to his wife long after he died in Bull Run. The one thing I can take away from

this letter and how it helps me accurately understand history of this war is the dedication of these men. In particular, Ballou says "I know how American civilization now leans upon the triumph of the government, and how great a debt we owe..." It amazes me that even in 1861, men were driven to dedicate their lives to creating peace within their own country. Other than taking this piece of history away, I'm having trouble why it's notable. I believe Burns' idea to include the letter was necessary. I agree that the Civil War is already an emotional historical event, but to include a personal writing from a soldier himself may provide an opportunity for the audience to have some personal attachment. The placement of the letter wasn't chronologically correct, but I believe it was a great way to stir personal emotion in the series. However, I wonder how accurate the letter said in the video is accurate to the original. I looked up Ballou's letter in a general google search, and I found multiple versions. In general, I enjoyed that Burns' decided to include the letter and the emotion that it stirs.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Re: Necessary for Emotion

by Kamron Bratlie - Thursday, January 26, 2017, 10:46 PM

I feel that most of us are on the same page, concerning the context and placement of this letter. While I think Ken Burns decision to include the letter was a personal and emotional one, part of me must wonder if there is any other reasoning. It's a no-brainer to include it as an emotional bookend to a compelling story, but its also a smart move financially. After all, Ken Burns is selling a product, and that letter might have helped his profits in a way by tugging on some heartstrings. Do you share some of the same reservations?

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Re: Necessary for Emotion

by Aimee Chow - Sunday, January 29, 2017, 8:03 PM

Honestly, I don't see any other reason why he would include the letter besides for emotional connection with the audience. I see what you mean by being it a smart move financially. It keeps us invested into the series and retains his viewers. I appreciate your thoughts!

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)

Fitting End



by Joseph Miller - Wednesday, January 25, 2017, 10:32 PM

I don't really see all that much of a big deal with it being at the end. To me it's very fitting. In the Civil War series, *The Cause*, the scene titled Gun Men is where we first really heard about the battle of Manassas. Then followed by A Thousand Mile Front, and to end it went into Honorable Manhood. They all were really a part of a whole. It may have been out of order chronologically because the battle was July 4th and that of course is only half the year, but it was fitting at the time in the episode. Fitting to end it that way. It grabbed at our emotions. Whether it was the real letter, and I did a little research. It didn't survive, but the versions seem to be similar, other than Ken Burns version is shortened. To me, it doesn't matter. It doesn't discredit the fact that this man left his wife and family to fight on the battle field for his country, got his leg and pony blew off and died a week later trying to lead his men to victory. His body never recovered. Very sad. To discredit the letter just seems cold and disheartening. I believe, even though the real letter was lost that this is how he felt, and this is how others felt as well. It doesn't matter that his wife didn't get the letter till well after the war either. Does that mean those feelings aren't real? You can imagine it happening in real time, it did for a lot of soldiers and families. This just happened to be a prominent actor in the theatre and it's a great story. What surprises me the most was how many letters were sent by union soldiers and confederates, hundreds of thousands, consistently. The fact that this letter was found in Ballou's trunk after he died and reclaimed by Governor William Sprague and then given to his wife. She finally may have been able to get some closure. Remarkable too, especially because the confederates were jerks and dug up the graves, mutilated the bodies and burned them. Along with trashing and looting, how the letter even got to the governor raises question. If it were not for the young girl who witnessed it, we would never know what had happened to him. Or even got his ashes back. So, to answer the final question, it doesn't deter me from the facts. The more I talk about Ken Burns series the more I realize how much I enjoy it. It does grab you and pull you in, I've learned so much from it already, from looking further into things said on the series. I'm still learning the *real* history of the civil war, through our books, and literature, but I also get to watch an interesting show, that entertains me, and gives me a pretty darn accurate representation of the civil war.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Thoughts on Honorable Manhood

by Bailey Tillotson - Wednesday, January 25, 2017, 11:40 PM

Obviously he decided to show that story at the end for a reason. Some people may be upset that he did since it wasn't in order and facts are what make history credible, but it was more of an emotional event for the viewers to maybe relate to. It's interesting to hear how differently people talked, and I do think the images they used made it more personal for Ballou's letter to his wife. I personally focused more on the story, not so much that it

wasn't in order of events. I have a feeling he also wasn't overly concerned about the fact that it wasn't chronologically in order. He's a filmmaker and while he is trying to educate the viewer, it can also get dry. This added more variety and change so I think it was a good decision.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Re: Thoughts on Honorable Manhood

by Melissa Garcia-Jimenez - Thursday, January 26, 2017, 5:42 PM

I completely agree with you in the fact that history can get too dry so this added more of a twist to it. Perhaps it would have been better to save this letter telling until he covered the battle of Bull Run for it to be in chronological order.

Sum of ratings:0 (1)

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Is taking creative license damaging?

by Spencer Kellar - Wednesday, January 25, 2017, 11:45 PM

It's funny. During our discussion last week, one of you brought up the importance of voice actors. I thought about chiming in on that thread, and commenting that the most powerful narration from the first episode was, in my opinion, the last one. That is, the narration of Sullivan Ballou's letter. I definitely thought that it tied a nice, neat bow on the introduction to the series. And of course it was emotional, with Burns telling us that the Union Major perished a week after the letter was written. Learning that Burns took artistic liberties to make the letter and the scene more poignant than it really was doesn't surprise me though. I was already a bit harsh on Burns last week, after all. It's clear already that his desire for a slick narrative package can sometimes act as a hindrance to the truth. I don't find myself as concerned about this particular example of creative license however. It doesn't concern me as much as the outright factual inaccuracies we've already discussed, at least.

As far as whether or not it's damaging because of its disregard for chronology, I don't think that's an issue in this case. If memory serves, Burns *does* mention that the letter was written before the first Battle of Bull Run. Considering we had already moved past that event, it was clear to me at least that this letter was out of order with the rest of the documentary, and was simply used to end the episode on an emotional note.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)

Re: Is taking creative license damaging?



by Joseph Miller - Wednesday, January 25, 2017, 11:54 PM

my thoughts exactly. I spent a lot of time pondering the question, but it boils down to ending the episode on an emotion note. I can imagine watching the series and this one ending like that. People all teary eyed and wanting more, but having to wait till the next night. To me it fit in. I wouldn't have given much thought to it, hadn't it been for Mr. Escobar pointing it out. I actually had to watch the entire episode again because I thought my note taking was off. But I feel it all tied in.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Re: Is taking creative license damaging?

by Bailey Tillotson - Sunday, January 29, 2017, 11:18 PM

That's what I was thinking, that he was making this series to educate and entertain. The general public still needs to have basic emotional connections to someone decades older. When I first viewed it, I was watching it as a history student trying to learn; versus if I was just a viewer at home watching simply for entertainment.

Sum of ratings:0 (1)

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Re: Is taking creative license damaging?

by Lillith Ka'at - Thursday, January 26, 2017, 1:55 AM

I'm with you on this one. I didn't take much issue, if any, with the placement of the letter, compared to things like muddled up dates. I also recall its place in the timeline being mentioned briefly. (I can't recall now if the episode mentions that he died a week later or if I just remember that from reading up on it afterwards...) I don't think that placing it at the end of the episode for the emotional impact inherently carried any weight of messing the chronological order of events being told. I guess, in a simplified way, it's probably easiest for me to think of like when movies wait until the end to reveal some 'twist' that doesn't further the progression of the story, just sheds new light on previous scenes.

I was actually kind of genuinely stumped on the question for a while, because I was confused about what this letter could have possibly *done* to confuse my accurate understanding of the history. The pacing of the episode doesn't inherently have to sync up with the pacing of the events they're telling; it wasn't hard to wrap my head around, "oh also, this letter from that thing we were talking about earlier."

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Re: Is taking creative license damaging?

by Joseph Miller - Friday, January 27, 2017, 11:21 PM

The more I talk about this the more I'm stumped as well. I don't think I've seen any posts that give me an accurate, or good opinion on why it matters this letter is out of order. I still don't see how? He goes thru the First Battle of Bull Run/Monassas probably 2 scenes before Honorable Manhood. So the letter is just a tie-in. And still, even The Thousand Mile Front. I look at my notes, and it even looks as though he talks about The Battle of Bull Run even as early as the scene titled Gun Men. Besides the fireworks show at Fort Sumter, poor horse, almost everything after that it was all talk about leading up to the The Battle of Bull Run, what happened, and what happened afterwards. The letter at the end, it worked for me.

Sum of ratings:1 (1) [Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Drama Within The Civil War

by Katherine Spriggs - Wednesday, January 25, 2017, 11:52 PM

At first I thought that although heartfelt and moving, this piece should not have been used. I say this because however moving it may have been, it wasn't necessary in explaining the events of the civil war. But then I thought about it from the standpoint of a man who will most likely die soon.

The quote "And when the soft breeze fans your cheek it shall be my breath or the cool air, your throbbing temple it shall be my spirit passing by..." reminded me that in the midst of a destruction, sickness and death, the one thing that these men thought of was returning home in whatever form possible. (The Civil War, 2:50) Whether death or life are to follow they thought primarily of the people they loved. And those loved ones would be the people to carry on their memory if they were to leave and never return.

Overall the dramatics aren't my favorite, but they do prove a good point. With this in mind, I suppose they are also an important part of history, no matter how corny.

Sum of ratings:3 (1) [Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Re: Drama Within The Civil War

by Lillith Ka'at - Thursday, January 26, 2017, 1:46 AM

Haha, I think you and I are on basically the complete opposite sides of the spectrum as far as what parts of history we feel are important to teach. For me, the social context and cultural build up to battles, and the experiences of the people caught up in them feel much more important than the more specific events.

I think it's rough because any time you show emotional context for one side, it could come across as *taking* that side, or sympathizing with it over the other, which could lead to skewed perceptions. But ultimately, the letter was written during this time in history, specifically about these times in history. It's a lil' sad to think of the genuine feelings of real people from that time as just 'dramatics.'

Sum of ratings:1 (1) [Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Re: Drama Within The Civil War

by Katherine Spriggs - Thursday, January 26, 2017, 12:43 PM

I guess I don't fully understand what you mean, but what I was trying to say is that even though I originally thought that it was an unimportant piece, it was important to them. This is something that is worth noting because it helps us to understand what these men were going through and the thoughts that kept them moving forward.

It can also gives us the ability to see reasons why some men may have deserted. Some felt they had to fight on in order to see their loved ones again. Others may have felt it a reason to leave the war altogether.

Sum of ratings:2 (1) [Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Re: Drama Within The Civil War

by Lillith Ka'at - Thursday, January 26, 2017, 4:11 PM

... Right! You started out initially feeling that it wasn't an important part of history, whereas my initial feeling was more in-line with the conclusion you came to later! Sorry if I was unclear. I was just pointing out that your first reaction was opposite to mine, and that was interesting to me.

Sum of ratings:0 (1) [Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Re: Different Versions of Same Letter

by Spencer Kellar - Saturday, January 28, 2017, 4:00 PM

I wanted to add something to the conversation a little bit late. I, admittedly, glossed over the fact that there are multiple versions of the same Sullivan Ballou letter. Glossed over might be too strong to use, but I was more interested in answering the question of whether or not the chronology of events was hurt by the letter's placement in the documentary. However, I saw Aimee mention that she looked up the letter and wondered whether or not the version Burns had on his show was authentic. Now, I wonder the same thing.

My questions is, how can there be multiple versions of one letter? How does that even happen? Are the changes between different versions tiny, like alternative spellings and other syntax differences? I assume the letter was written in English, so there was no need to have it translated. I understand the original letter has been lost, but the fact that it still exists to be read aloud indicates it was copied down by someone. That should still only give us one official version, so I feel as if I'm missing something. If one of the versions is more authentic than the others, might there be some concern that Burns used the wrong one? Maybe he picked the version that was most poetic, regardless of its authenticity.

I did a brief Google search of my own, as I know we're not supposed to use outside sources, but couldn't find much more to help me understand this issue with the different versions.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Re: Different Versions of Same Letter

by Joseph Miller - Sunday, January 29, 2017, 2:11 PM

Yeah, I hear you. From my understanding, Burn's just used a shorter version. Cut off part of it. He didn't change it, though, it still is a copy of the original that isn't in existence any more. It makes you wonder??? I know, I looked it up too. I can't help but look things up. The whole letter might have been just a wee to much for the end of the show. The more I read it, it also sounds generic in some sense. I have a question for you if you don't mind answering. how is it that this letter is out of order in the show other than the Battle of Bull Run happened six month's before the end of the year. I'm still curious why? I'm missing something here and I want to know what it is. Chronologically, since the Battle of Bull Run happened in July, I'm sure everyone would be talking about it for the next year, or 156 years after for that matter.

Sum of ratings:0 (1)

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)



Re: Different Versions of Same Letter

by Spencer Kellar - Sunday, January 29, 2017, 10:02 PM

So the versions differ based only on length? Good to know, as that makes more sense.

As for why the letter is out of place chronologically, it's simply because it's read at the end of the episode, when the first Battle of Bull Run had already been covered earlier. Ballou had written the letter before that battle, so therefore the narration is referencing an earlier event. As I said in my first post though, Burns makes it clear when it was written, so I have little issue with its placement.

Sum of ratings:0 (1) Permalink | Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply



Is it necessary to infuse even more drama into coverage of the Civil War, an already compelling and emotional historical event?

by Bailey Tillotson - Sunday, January 29, 2017, 11:53 PM

I think when you are trying to make a film for everyone to enjoy, you should use more emotion. People who enjoy history wouldn't need any drama, because the facts and knowledge are enough. But when you are mainly looking for entertainment, having that emotional connection would keep you interested in the show; hence the decision to have it at the end (in my opinion).

Goran on "How to Tell a Story That Will Keep People Interested in What You /have to Say" says "Stories are fundamental to how we, as human beings, communicate. They capture our attention, make us feel, understand, and most important of all – they have the power to persuade and transfer value from one person to another", and that every story needs a hero (Ballou).

Sum of ratings:1 (1) Permalink | Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply

◀ Two Decades Later

Moodle Docs for this page

Accessibility at Lane

You are logged in as Joe Escobar (Log out)

HST 209 W17 (Escobar 31664)

