

AoW 3/18/2015

Read the following article. Mark Up the Margins (T4, marginalia, etc) as you read it a second time on your own. Pay close attention to the bias or lack of bias in the article. Identify the issues that occur when a real life event is made into a book or movie and it is publicized by the media.

**RDW#3:** Briefly summarize the article (1-2 sentences) and answer the following question: How do you know that the article is biased? Use text evidence. **Highlight transitions.**

## Crew Members: ‘Captain Phillips’ is one big lie

It’s made for Hollywood: the story of an average American family man, captain of a cargo ship in dangerous waters, his vessel overtaken by armed Somali pirates demanding ransom, saving his crew by allowing himself to be removed from the boat and taken hostage.

Capt. Richard Phillips, his crew claims, is no hero, and the film is one gigantic lie.

“Phillips wasn’t the big leader like he is in the movie,” says one crew member. He worked very closely with Phillips on the Maersk Alabama and was alarmed by his behavior from the beginning. Phillips, he says, had a horrible reputation for at least 12 years before the incident, and is known as a gloomy and selfish captain. “No one wants to sail with him,” he says.

After the hijacking, 11 crew members have sued Maersk Line and the Waterman Steamship Corporation for almost \$50 million, alleging “willful, reckless and conscious disregard for their safety.” Phillips is a essential witness for the defense. “The crew had begged Captain Phillips not to go so close to the Somali coast,” said Deborah Waters, the attorney who brought the claim. “He told them he wouldn’t let pirates scare him or force him to sail away from the coast.”

Phillips had taken command in late March 2009. Left for him, says the crew member, was a detailed anti-piracy plan now used by all ships per the International Maritime Organization. Should pirates get too close, the crew should cut the lights and power and lock themselves below deck. “He didn’t want anything to do with it, because it wasn’t his plan,” says the crew member. “He was real arrogant.” Phillips says he knows nothing about such a plan.

Phillips has admitted that, on board, he got seven e-mails about increased piracy off Somalia — each pressuring ships to move farther offshore by at least 600 miles. The Maersk was 235 miles off the coast, says the crew member, though Phillips has since rounded that number up to 300. “I couldn’t tell you exactly the miles,” Phillips tells The Post. “I don’t know.”

“We had two pirate attacks over 18 hours,” says this crew member. At 3 a.m., the pirates radioed the boat to stop; Phillips had left the stern light on and the bridge open. At 7 a.m., came the third and final attack: Four armed Somali pirates stormed the Maersk. The crew didn’t know whom to fear more: the pirates or Phillips.

The crew was on their own. “Phillips didn’t say what he wanted to do,” says the crew member. “His plan was, when the pirates come aboard, we throw our hands in the air and say, ‘Oh, the pirates are here!’ The chief engineer said, ‘We’re going downstairs

and locking ourselves in.’ One of the mates said, ‘Let’s go down. We’re on our own.’ ” They hid in the engine room, in 130 degree heat, for 12 hours. Phillips and three other crew members were held at gunpoint, yet Phillips tells The Post things weren’t that dire. “The ship,” he says, “was never actually taken.”

The pirates went back on the deal, grabbing their guy and making off with Phillips in a lifeboat. While the remaining crew waited for the Navy to reach them, they sat and wondered: What just happened?

Four days later, Phillips was rescued by SEAL Team Six. He was hailed as an American hero. He met with President Obama in the Oval Office and wrote a memoir. For some of the crew, it was too much. In their version, Phillips was the victim of a botched exchange. In 2009, he told ABC News he was taken after promising to show the pirates how to operate their escape boat. His book was packaged as the story of a man who gave himself up for his crew, which Phillips later said was a false narrative spread by the media. Today he tells The Post, “I was already a hostage,” but remains vague on the exchange.

Engineers, Mike Perry and John Cronan went to CNN, speaking of Phillips’ recklessness, claiming he endangered all their lives. Perry said he and other crew believed Phillips had a stubborn desire to be taken hostage. “That’s what many of us officers were saying to ourselves,” he said. The crew member, who is not part of the lawsuit, agrees Phillips had a death wish: “Yeah,” he says. “Because he went through that area, and the company is sending him e-mails, and I know he saw that chart [of prior attacks] 50 times.”

“It is maddening for them to see Captain Phillips set up as a hero,” Waters said. “It is just terrible, and they’re angry.” In the run-up to Friday’s release of “Captain Phillips,” Hanks has appeared on the cover of Parade magazine with Phillips and the headline “The Making of an American Hero.” The film won the opening-night slot at the New York Film Festival on Sept. 28 and received great reviews.

Not all of the crew cooperated with the movie, and those who did were paid as little as \$5,000 for their life rights by Sony and made to sign nondisclosure agreements — meaning they can never speak publicly about what really happened on that ship. It’s the film’s version of events — and Hanks’ version of Phillips — that will be immortalized. “They told us they would change some stuff,” says the crew member, laughing. By the end of Friday, opening day, he had seen the film. “It’s a good movie,” he says dryly. “Real entertaining.”

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**Critical questions:** (Think about these for your RDW)

Do we see more than one perspective?

Do you hear words with strong negative connotations?

Does this seem to be more factual/balance or opinionated/argumentative?

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