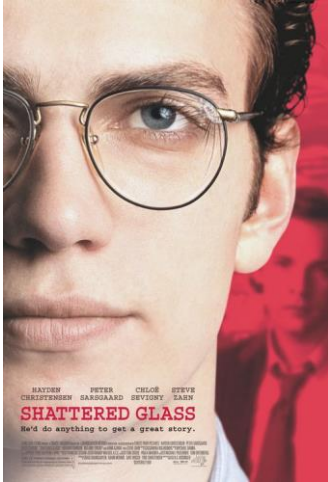


Movie Kit



American
Spaces

Shattered Glass



Year of Release: 2003

Rating: PG-13

Length: 94 min

English level: Medium

Director: Billy Ray

Starring: Hayden Christensen, Peter Sarsgaard, Chloe Sevigny

Themes: Journalistic Integrity, Media Literacy, Anti-Corruption

Warning/General Advisory

Includes some profane language, brief drug use

Shattered Glass is the true story of a personable young journalist's rapid rise to becoming a top feature writer at *The New Republic*, a popular American magazine with many articles on American politics and culture. Twenty-something year old Stephen Glass' notoriety grew through his ability to find entertaining human interest angles to what otherwise may have just been typical news stories. His career possibilities seemed limitless until it was discovered that Glass was guilty of journalistic fraud, where 27 of his 41 published stories were either partially or completely made up.

Additional Movie Background

In the mid-1990s, Stephen Glass was making a name for himself by writing a series of topical and entertaining feature articles for *The New Republic* magazine. When his stories received increased scrutiny, it was discovered that he made up sources, quotations and sometimes even entire situations for many of his stories. His credibility destroyed, Glass was dismissed by *The New Republic* and his career in journalism was finished.

One of Glass' most successful stories, also featured in this movie, was about how technology companies try and prevent hackers from damaging their products. In his piece "Hack Heaven," Glass wrote about how a teenage hacker Ian Restil was given a lucrative job by software company Jukt Micronics so that he would stop hacking into the company's security system. After another reporter starts researching this story, it was discovered that the story was completely made up -- Ian Restil, Jukt Micronics, and other details were all fictitious.

Journalism Today

Truth and accuracy in the news media is essential for our communities because it enables people to make informed decisions. In today's digital world of cable television, the internet, social media and email, it is sometimes difficult to determine what is accurate and impartial from false and biased news. Some trends that contribute to the increase of false information online

include people increasingly relying on the internet for their information, where anyone can re-work and/or publish subject matter online from anywhere.

How do we know what to trust? Here are some questions that readers can ask if there are doubts:

- Who manages this website?
- Do they have a point of view or an agenda?
- Who wrote this story?
- Who is the intended audience?
- Who might benefit or be harmed by this message?
- How many sources are there and are they named?
- Does this message tell the whole story?
- Is the information presented here believable?

As consumers of news and information, we often have to rely on ourselves to make sure the information that informs us is as accurate as possible. It is in our best interest to make sure we use known reliable sources for our information, and when we are unable to double-check a particular topic or story, we should see what others are reporting on the subject.

Key Vocabulary/Places

- ***The New Republic*** – an influential American magazine whose articles feature commentary on politics and culture.
- **Editor** – a person who is in charge, usually of a newspaper or magazine, and determines the final content of written pieces.
- **CPAC Conference** – the site of Glass' fabricated "Spring Breakdown" article where he falsely alleged young conservative political operatives of engaging in drinking, drugs and debauchery
- **Disinformation** – false information deliberately and often covertly spread (as by the planting of rumors) in order to influence public opinion or obscure the truth

Discussion Questions

- How was Stephen Glass able to make it as far as he did? What factors allowed him to publish so many fabricated articles?
- What kind of person is the new editor and boss Charles "Chuck" Lane?
- How far should an editor go in defending a writer? How does an editor or news organization ensure that journalists are acting ethically?
- After watching this movie, do you have any new perspectives on journalism?
- How do you get your news? How skeptical are you of the news you read nowadays?
- If you get your news from social media, are you able to name the original sources of the news stories?
- Are you starting to see more false news or disinformation? What are potential consequences when false news goes viral?
- Do you think you could spot false news or would you be fooled? Why or why not?