

Film guide

Spotlight

US | 2015 | Cert. 15 | 128 mins
 Director: Thomas McCarthy

In 2001, a group of investigative journalists at the Boston Globe newspaper began examining allegations of historic child abuse within the Catholic Church in their city. During a painstaking investigation, they discover a scandal stretching back decades involving institutions at the highest level of the city’s religious, legal and political establishments. Rigorous and engrossing, this accomplished drama deals with serious, complex issues in a mature fashion.

You will like this film if you liked
 Philomena (2013, 12)



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Watch next
 All The President’s Men (1976, 15)



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Talk about it

Have you heard of the term ‘wilful blindness’? What do you think it means?

How is journalism usually portrayed in film? Do you think it is reflective of reality?

Discussion points

- Why do you think it required the arrival of a new editor, from outside of the city, to the newspaper before the story was investigated properly? How does the film represent Baron’s role in the process?
- How would you describe the camerawork and style of filmmaking? Is the camera subjective or objective?
- Can you think of any investigations on a similar scale that have been published by newspapers more recently? What constraints might media organisations have to consider now, that were not such an issue in 2001?
- What is the Boston Globe newsroom like? Is it how you imagine newspaper offices and do you think they look any different today? Why do you think the camera lingers on an AOL billboard outside the office?
- We learn little about the private lives of members of the Spotlight team - why do you think this is?

Write about it

Bring your ideas together in a review and share it on our Into Film clubs’ website. You could include a summary of the story, mention other films that it’s similar to, describe what you particularly liked or disliked and give it your star rating.

Extension Activities

Why do you think that the filmmaker chose to make a drama film rather than a documentary on the scandal? List the possible reasons for and against telling real life stories in both formats.