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The 10 best journalism movies (including Steven Spielberg's 'The Post'), ranked

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Some professions just seem right for the movies. Secret agents. Jedi knights. Oil drillers who need to blow up an asteroid with a nuke. That sort of thing.

On the surface, journalism isn't an inherently cinematic field. (I can safely say this, pecking away on my laptop with nary a lick of drama or explosion around me.) But through the years, filmmakers have sniffed out good stories like seasoned beat reporters and made some pretty great movies about the media.

The latest is [Steven Spielberg \(/story/life/movies/2017/12/20/steven-spielberg-post-sometimes-history-best-viewed-through-lens/966187001/\)](#)'s excellent Pentagon Papers drama [The Post \(/story/life/movies/2017/12/06/review-stein-spielbergs-post-dazzles-terrific-cast-journalistic-bent/924812001/\)](#) (in New York, Los Angeles and Washington theaters now, goes nationwide Friday), about *The Washington Post's* pre-Watergate clash with the Nixon administration. Here's how it stacks up with the best of the best movies involving the Fourth Estate (sorry, *Newsies*).



Cary Grant and Rosalind Russell are bickering exes who also share a passion for journalism in 'His Girl Friday' (Photo: Sony Home Entertainment)

10. *His Girl Friday* (1940)

The Howard Hawks classic skews toward romantic comedy, with a newspaper editor (Cary Grant) using any and all means to keep his ex-wife and star reporter (Rosalind Russell) from remarrying. But it also has some interesting things to say about how obsessed folks can get in the news business.



William Hurt and Holly Hunter are two-thirds of the 'Broadcast News' love triangle. (Photo: Kerry Hayes/20th Century Fox)

9. *Broadcast News* (1987)

Holly Hunter is the spark plug here as the female part of a love triangle involving her TV news producer having to deal with the egos of a smooth-talking anchorman-to-be (William Hurt) and a shlubby but talented reporter (Albert Brooks). It deserves kudos for making you really feel the stress of creating a live news show.



Hayden Christensen stars as disgraced journalist Stephen Glass in 'Shattered Glass.' (Photo: Jonathan Wenk/Lionsgate)

8. *Shattered Glass* (2003)

While Hayden Christensen gets flak for his wooden acting in the *Star Wars* prequels, he gives the performance of his career with the rise and spectacular fall of the skeezy Stephen Glass, a go-getting *New Republic* writer who was busted for fabricating most of his stories. (Any J-school grad will tell you that's a big no-no.)



Al Pacino (left) as '60 Minutes' producer Lowell Bergman and Russell Crowe as biochemist Jeffrey Wigand in 'The Insider.' (Photo: Frank Connor/Touchstone Pictures)

7. *The Insider* (1999)

Director Michael Mann brings his cool filmmaking style to the worlds of whistleblowers and Big Tobacco. Based on a *60 Minutes* exposé, the gripping thriller features a CBS producer (Al Pacino) working with a biochemist (Russell Crowe) to get the word out on a cigarette manufacturer adding chemicals to make them more addictive.



Ben Bradlee (Tom Hanks, at desk) rallies his crew for a major story in 'The Post.' (Photo: Niko Tavernise)

6. *The Post* (2017)

It's not too early to put Spielberg's all-star drama in the pantheon of great newspaper flicks. Meryl Streep is simply awesome as *Washington Post* publisher Katharine Graham and Tom Hanks is editor Ben Bradlee as the two weigh personal and professional sacrifices in exposing a government cover-up about the Vietnam War.



Robert Downey Jr. (left) and Jake Gyllenhaal star as 'San Francisco Chronicle' journalists on the hunt for a serial killer in 'Zodiac.' (Photo: Merrick Morton/Warner Bros. and Paramount Pictures)

5. *Zodiac* (2007)

David Fincher's period mystery thriller is freaky and fabulous as it pits both police and the newshounds of the *San Francisco Chronicle* against the notorious Zodiac killer of the late '60s/early '70s. It's got a cool vibe and a great cast, especially Jake Gyllenhaal as a cartoonist who goes way down a dark rabbit hole. (Dig him in this? Cue up 2014's *Nightcrawler* as a chaser.)



Peter Finch's epic rant in 'Network' is a cinematic all-timer. (Photo: MGM/UA Entertainment)

4. *Network* (1976)

It's fair to say that in the past year, quite a number of people at least thought if not shouted, "I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to take this anymore!" The satire feels crazy-current in its premise of a network with flagging ratings riding its suicidal, unhinged anchorman to populist glory — with Peter Finch unleashing a raging rant for the ages.



Michael Keaton (left) and Mark Ruffalo star as 'Boston Globe' journalists investigating a child-abuse scandal in 'Spotlight.' (Photo: Kerry Hayes/Open Road Films)

3. *Spotlight* (2015)

While *The Post* looks at the grander importance of digging up the truth, the wondrous best-picture winner *Spotlight* explores the more intimate quest of reporters hounding sources and doing the grunt work of investigative journalism to expose those who abuse power — in this case, sexual abuse of kids by Catholic priests in Boston.



Orson Welles (left, with Joseph Cotten) is the powerful newspaperman Charles Foster Kane in "Citizen Kane." (Photo: Warner Home Video)

2. *Citizen Kane* (1941)

Childhood sleds and the legend of Orson Welles often get bandied about when discussing what many consider [the best movie of all time](/story/life/movies/2016/11/11/citizen-kane-75th-anniversary-greatest-movie-ever/93584442/) (</story/life/movies/2016/11/11/citizen-kane-75th-anniversary-greatest-movie-ever/93584442/>). What sneakily lies within *Kane*, though, is a cracking good journalistic story, with power going to the head of a newspaper magnate (Welles) and a reporter (William Alland) unearthing his complicated legacy.



Dustin Hoffman (left) and Robert Redford are reporters investigating Watergate in the classic 'All the President's Men.' (Photo: Warner Bros. Home Video)

1. *All the President's Men* (1976)

The only movie where a close-up of a busy typewriter equals a perfect and satisfying ending. The mother of all reportage dramas is part political thriller, part detective yarn and all entertaining with Robert Redford and Dustin Hoffman as *The Washington Post* reporters who — with the help of the enigmatic Deep Throat — took down a crooked commander in chief like a couple of coffee-drinking, paper-passing superheroes.

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