

Topic 7.11: Women Reporters in the Movies

Featured in nine Hollywood movies from 1937 to 1939 and played by three different actresses, Torchy Blane was a fictional newspaper reporter who was also a tough-talking, crime-solving detective.



[Glenda Farrell in Smart Blonde Trailer](#) | Public Domain

In the 1939 episode, “Torchy Blane Runs for Mayor,” the reporter, played that time by Glenda Farrell, exposes corruption in a city government where the mayor was taking money from the mob. In a plot twist with modern-day implications, the mayor threatens to withdraw advertising from any newspapers who criticize him, but Torchy finds a paper that will publish the truth.

Cited by one journalism researcher as “the most famous fictional journalist you’ve never heard of,” Torchy Blane may have been the most well-known fictional reporter of her time - more popular than either Lois Lane or Brenda Starr, two other fictional women reporters in the popular media of the time ([RTDNA](#), July 2, 2019).

Although actress Glenda Farrell is most prominently associated with the character, Torchy Blane was also played by Lola Lane in one movie and her name served as the inspiration for the reporter Lois Lane in the Superman comics ([Turner Classic Movies](#), April 24, 2019). You can read a [summary of all Torchy Blane films](#) here.



Watch on YouTube <https://edtechbooks.org/-YDT>

The image of a truth-seeking, fearless, tough-minded female reporter was a liberating role model for women during the mid-20th century when movies were the predominant entertainment media. In the 1970s, the Mary Tyler Moore Show and Murphy Brown continued to portray women reporters as independent figures, although the roles were in comedies where the news business was broadly played for laughs.

Looking at media today, do you see any women news reporters in recent Hollywood movies or current television or streaming shows (for example, Jennifer Aniston and Reese Witherspoon on The Morning Show on Apple TV+)? How do they compare with the image of a strong-minded reporter like Torchy Blane?

In this activity you will design a poster for a modern-day movie, TV

show, podcast, or streaming series about a woman journalist.

Activity: Design a Poster for a Movie, TV Show, Podcast, or Streaming Series about a Woman Journalist

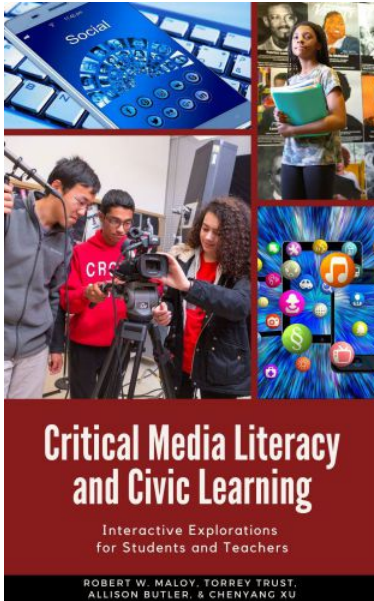
- Use the [Teacher and Student Guide to Critically Analyzing Images](#) to examine the design techniques used in posters for Torchy Blane movies, such as [Torchy Blane Playing with Dynamite](#).
- Then, spend 10-15 minutes free writing your thoughts for a movie, TV show, podcast, or streaming series about a woman journalist. Consider the following prompts:
 - Who would be the characters?
 - What would be the setting?
 - What would be the storyline?
 - What are the main tensions/conflicts facing the characters?
 - How would the main character balance the demands of presenting news as objective and truthful at a time when entertainment and fake news spread faster than truthful news?
- Finally, design a digital or print poster for the movie, TV show, podcast, or streaming series.

Additional Resources

- [Torchy Blane Collection](#), Warner Bros
- [Torchy Blane was scorching newspaperwoman](#)

Connecting to the eBook

[Building Democracy for All: Writing the News: Different Formats and Their Functions](#)



Maloy, R. W., Trust, T., , & Xu, C. (2021). *Critical Media Literacy and Civic Learning*. Equity Press.
<https://equitypress.org/mediaandciviclearning>