good night, and good luck.

Study Questions

1. What do you learn from the opening scene about the era when this movie takes place? What are your clues?
2. What can you tell from the beginning about the relationship between these characters? What is their mood? What do you think they’re doing?
3. In the opening and again throughout the movie, what part does the music play?
4. What do you know about Edward R. Murrow before he even says a word?
5. One of the lines in his speech is, “Our history will be what we make it.” How does this relate to the people to whom he is speaking?
6. What is the mood in the country Oct. 14, 1953 when the next scene begins? How has Senator Joseph McCarthy played a role in this?
7. What do you think it was like to work in the news department of CBS in the 1950s? What are some of the scenes that show this?
8. The first time you meet Joe and Shirley, how do you know they are more than just business colleagues? Later, how do you learn about their relationship?
9. What are some clues that Murrow and his producer, Fred Friendly, agree about coverage of the McCarthy situation?
10. Who is Milo Radulovich? Why did Murrow and Friendly think it was important to cover his story?
11. What are some early signs that some at CBS don’t totally agree with what Murrow and Friendly are doing?
12. How does the movie point out the contrast between Murrow’s “See It Now” and his other program “Person to Person”? What does his boss mean when he says Murrow will have to do a lot of “‘Person to Persons’ to make up for this”?

13. What is CBS boss William Paley’s first reason Murrow and Friendly shouldn’t air the Milo Radulovich story?

14. What do others who work with them think about the controversial programs Murrow and Friendly are doing? How can you tell this?

15. What is the importance of the Don Hollenbeck subplot in the movie? What is Murrow’s relationship to him? Why is the report of his death significant?

16. How can you tell Murrow, Friendly and their crew are somewhat nervous about airing the McCarthy program?

17. What are Paley’s reasons for changing the program?

18. What is the effect of using the actual film footage of McCarthy, Radulovich, Annie Lee Moss and others?

19. Why do you think cigarettes and smoke seem to play such a major part in the movie? Why do you think the movie is in black and white?

20. Some critics say the movie ends too abruptly. Do you see any indication of what will happen in the future?