

What I Saw In The War

War correspondent Janine de Giovanni shares touching human stories she has witnessed in the war zones around the world.

BEFORE YOU WATCH

Do you know the meaning of the following words? If you do, tell your partner. Then look them up in a dictionary and see if you were right.

camaraderie

siege

sombre

(it) haunts me

slaughter

reconciliation

delude oneself

In what context do you think she will use these words?

WHILE YOU WATCH

Watch Janine's talk (without subtitles) and answer the following questions:

- How many conflicts has she covered?
- What does she say about each one?
- Which images or stories struck her most?
- Which images or stories struck you most?



Image source: TED.com [fair use]

WHILE YOU WATCH 2

Before you watch Janine's talk again, look at the following questions and see how many you can answer:

1. Who was walking in a mini-skirt and high heels to work? Why did Janine mention her and her child?
2. Janine says she "had the honor and privilege to be there" [in Sarajevo]. Why? What did it teach her?
3. Why did she go back to Sarajevo 20 years later? What did she see?
4. What conflict is she covering now? In what way does it remind her of Bosnia?
5. What war haunts her the most? Why?
6. How has Rwanda been transformed?
7. Why did her Iraqi friend tell her "There will always be another war"?
8. How does she see her role as a war correspondent?

Now watch the talk again and answer the questions.

AFTER YOU WATCH

Who said it?

her Bosnian friend who works in a bank

Martha Gellhorn (American author)

her Iraqi politician friend

her colleague

herself

"I feel like Alice in Wonderland going down the rabbit hole, down, down, down into chaos."

"You can only love one war. The rest is responsibility."

"People don't want to believe it's coming, so they don't leave, they don't leave before they can."

"Go home, because if you miss his first tooth, if you miss his first step, you'll never forgive yourself."

"...to shine a light in the darkest corners of the world."

Language focus 1

Do you know the meaning of the words and phrases **in bold** in these lines taken from Janine's talk?

- a) Your life as you know it goes into **suspended animation**. It stops.
- b) It was a very somber gathering of the reporters that worked there during the war, **humanitarian aid** workers, and of course the brave and courageous people of Sarajevo themselves.
- c) Now if those 12,000 chairs **freaked me out** with the sheer number, I want you just for a second to think of a million people.
- d) They were just brought together in this kind of reconciliation, and I find this **remarkable**.
- e) And there were mothers holding their children who had been caught in their **last death throes**.
- f) But **my métier** is to bear witness and that is **the crux**, the heart of the matter, for us reporters who do this.

Match the **bolded phrases** with their meanings.

scared or shocked

the main part

the process of dying in a painful way

food and other things to help people who are suffering

a kind of work that you are very good at

unusual in a way that makes you surprised

putting a person's biological processes on hold

Dig deeper

- Do you know who Martha Gellhorn is? Look her up on Google and see what you can find out about her.
- Do a Google search for the red chairs installation Janine mentions. When was it set up in Sarajevo?
- Do another search and find out more about Janine di Giovanni. Find one war-related article she has written and one article on a non-war topic. Share with your classmates what the articles are about.

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Teacher's notes and answers - Advanced B2/C1

BEFORE YOU WATCH

camaraderie	friendship and trust between people in a group of people (often in a military context)	reconciliation	the process of becoming friends again after an argument or conflict
slaughter	when an animal is slaughtered , it is killed for its meat; when people are slaughtered they are killed in a cruel way, in large numbers (usually in a war)	sombre	a sombre (UK) / somber (US) mood , atmosphere or occasion is sad and serious
siege	when the military lay siege to a place they surround it in order to force the people inside it to surrender; the people inside it are under siege	(it) haunts me	when a painful or unpleasant memory haunts you , it keeps coming back so you can't forget it
		delude	when you delude yourself you tell yourself that something is true, even though it is not

WHILE YOU WATCH

Watch Janine's talk (without subtitles) and answer the following questions:

- How many conflicts has she covered? **so many that she's lost count; but she talks mainly about four: Bosnia (Sarajevo), Rwanda, Syria and Iraq (Baghdad)**
- What does she say about each one? **refer to the transcript or see more detailed answers below**
- Which images or stories struck her most? **Possibly Bosnia ("there was nothing like Sarajevo") or Rwanda**
- Which images or stories struck you most? **students' own answers**

WHILE YOU WATCH 2

Before you watch Janine's talk again, look at the following questions and see how many you can answer:

1. Who was walking in a mini-skirt and high heels to work? Why did Janine mention her and her child? **her Bosnian friend, a young mother who worked in a bank; she mentions her outfit to emphasise the fact that it was just an ordinary day; she was later separated from her child, whom she handed over to a stranger leaving on the last bus out of Sarajevo**
2. Janine says she "had the honor and privilege to be there" [in Sarajevo]. Why? What did it teach her? **It taught her not just about being a reporter, but about being a human being as well as about compassion, heroism of ordinary people, sharing, camaraderie and love.**
3. Why did she go back to Sarajevo 20 years later? What did she see? **for a reunion of reporters and aid workers who worked there during the war; an installation consisting of almost 12,000 empty red chairs symbolising the victims, with tiny little chairs for the children**
4. What conflict is she covering now? In what way does it remind her of Bosnia? **Syria; people refuse to believe that the war is coming until it's too late, they don't want to leave their homes (she calls it a template")**

5. What war haunts her the most? Why?
Rwanda, because of the piles of dead bodies lying in the streets
6. How has Rwanda been transformed?
There's been a process of reconciliation or healing. Many parliamentarians (56%) are now women; according to the new constitution, you're not allowed to identify anyone by ethnicity (Hutu or Tutsi)
7. Why did her Iraqi friend tell her "There will always be another war"?
He was surprised that she returned to Baghdad to cover the war when she had a newborn son back home (also see his quote below - *After you watch: Who said it?*)
8. How does she see her role as a war correspondent?
Although she knows that politicians will not do anything, she hopes that if we remember any of her stories tomorrow morning over breakfast, she has done her job

AFTER YOU WATCH

Who said it?

"I feel like Alice in Wonderland going down the rabbit hole, down, down, down into chaos."

her Bosnian friend who works in a bank

"You can only love one war. The rest is responsibility."

Martha Gellhorn (American author)

"People don't want to believe it's coming, so they don't leave, they don't leave before they can."

herself

"Go home, because if you miss his first tooth, if you miss his first step, you'll never forgive yourself."

her Iraqi politician friend

"...to shine a light in the darkest corners of the world."

her colleague

Language focus

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- b) It was a very somber gathering of the reporters that worked there during the war, **humanitarian aid** workers, and of course the brave and courageous people of Sarajevo themselves. (*food and other things to help people who are suffering*)
- c) Now if those 12,000 chairs **freaked me out** with the sheer number, I want you just for a second to think of a million people. (*scared or shocked*)
- d) They were just brought together in this kind of reconciliation, and I find this **remarkable**. (*unusual in a way that makes you surprised*)
- e) And there were mothers holding their children who had been caught in their **last death throes**. (*the process of dying in a painful way*)
- f) But **my métier** (*a kind of work that you are very good at*) is to bear witness and that is **the crux** (*the main part*), the heart of the matter, for us reporters who do this.