Background Information on the Iraq War:

- **The Iraq War**, also called **Second Persian Gulf War**, (2003–11), was a conflict in Iraq that consisted of two phases. The first of these was a brief, conventionally fought war in March–April 2003, in which a combined force of troops from the United States and Great Britain (with smaller contingents from several other countries) invaded Iraq and rapidly defeated the Iraqi military and paramilitary forces. It was followed by a longer second phase in which a U.S.-led occupation of Iraq was opposed by an insurgency. After violence began to decline in 2007, the United States gradually reduced its military presence in Iraq, formally completing its withdrawal in December 2011.

`Why did the Iraq War take place?

- In March 2003, U.S. forces invaded Iraq vowing to destroy Iraqi weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and end the dictatorial rule of Saddam Hussein. When WMD intelligence proved illusory and a violent insurgency arose, the war lost public support. Saddam was captured, tried, and hanged and democratic elections were held. In the years since, there have been over 4,700 U.S. and allied troop deaths, and more than one hundred thousand Iraqi civilians have been killed. Meanwhile, questions linger over Iraq's fractious political situation.

<u>Background Information on Journalism surrounding the Iraq Invasion:</u>
Excerpt from Warnings From The Archive website -

The former Prime Minister's case for intervention in Iraq was characterised by many UK newspapers as one that was morally-led and driven by liberationist ideals. In a speech in 2003, Blair described Iraq President Saddam Hussein's regime as one 'that contravenes every single principle or value anyone of our politics believes in', thus entangling the British public's self-image with foreign policy strategy. The invasion was even optimistically named 'the operation of Iraqi freedom' by the Bush administration, influencing perceptions across the Atlantic. This characterisation of a US-UK humanitarian intervention was promoted throughout popular Western media outlets, with newspapers across the political spectrum advocating Blair's moral duty in the Middle East. These papers included The Sun, News of the World, The Times, and even extending to left-leaning publications, like The Guardian. For instance, The Guardian's article '<u>Why we should go to war'</u> provides an important example of how overt some of the paper's publications were in support of Blair's invasion.

The UK media, therefore, played on the 'hearts and minds' of the British public, constructing a moral case for the Iraq invasion that would convince the general population. Many publications argued that President Hussein's regime had long prohibited the 'autonomy, freedom and justice' of ordinary Iraqi civilians, imbuing Blair's cause with a humanitarian angle. This rhetoric, combined with Blair's lobbying, emphasised a public belief in the urgency for war. In this way, editors crafted an illusion of a desperate Iraqi population, longing for foreign intervention to 'save' them from their morally corrupt leader. During Blair's lobbying period in 2003, The Guardian gave less coverage to anti-war arguments, instead publishing articles that focused on Hussein as a defiant and deluded leader who rejected Western values and presented a viable threat to the world and *his own citizens.*

This support for the Iraq invasion on moral grounds was seen throughout newspapers in the UK. The former financial newspaper Sunday Business openly supported Blair's agenda and the bilateral intervention. In a 2004 article, one of their journalists confirmed the publication's steadfast support of the military intervention and the regime change in Iraq, citing the domestic and international threat of Hussein's reign. In tandem with The Guardian, Sunday Business used moral rhetoric to add colour to their pro-war agenda. Journalists at Sunday Business drew parallels between Adolf Hitler and Hussein, comparing how both endangered liberal democracy and 'British values'. Recalling the horrors of the Second World War, this rhetorical tool emphasised that the UK government should intervene as a preventative strategy and adopt a global policing role. Thus, the Iraq intervention would, once again, demonstrate the UK as the moral force for good against an international evil, as during the Second World War. Building upon popular conceptions of Britain's conduct during the Second World War invigorated nationalist expectations of the country and amplified neo-colonialist aspirations.

<u>WHAT WAS THE RHETORIC CREATED BY THE UK MEDIA?</u>
Overall, most media outlets promoted the war as a good idea, citing that due to a humanitarian responsibility to protect the Iraqi people, an invasion was necessary. By attempting to invoke the opinion of a sense of urgency for the

war from the British public, the UK media essentially attached the idea of the war to a threat against democracy.