

FOR THE RECORD

A MONTHLY MEDIA LITERACY RESOURCE FROM TORONTO STAR CLASSROOM CONNECTION

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INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM PART I: EXPOSING CRIME & CORRUPTION

When a politician, a company or even a government has done something wrong, often it's journalists who are first to let the public know about it.

Investigative journalism is one of the most time-consuming and therefore expensive types of journalism. An investigative journalist might work on an investigation for weeks, months or even years before ever writing a single article.

It's also one of the most difficult kinds of journalism, requiring a journalist with talent, experience—and guts. That's because they have to dig into big issues like corruption and other illegal activity, possibly making powerful enemies who don't want their crimes exposed.

It can be very rewarding, often bringing about changes in laws and policies that help many people.

WHAT THEY INVESTIGATE

Investigative journalists root out, among other things:

- Political corruption. For instance, a political leader is illegally given money by a company to give them contracts for jobs, when they should be choosing the best company based on their ability to do the job and price
- Serious crimes
- Human rights violations by companies, governments or organizations
- Product defects that cause injuries to people
- Unfairness, for instance to marginalized or racialized people
- Fake news and lies

Investigative journalists are a bit like detectives and a bit like police officers. They find out about things that are wrong with society and then they follow clues, interview suspects and victims and try to figure out what happened. They try to piece together how things could be fixed so the problems never happen again.

Unlike detectives or police, however, investigative journalists report to the public with what they've found. They can't charge anyone with a crime and they don't have the power to change laws (although both of those things may result from their investigations, as police and law-makers follow up).

They shine a light on problems and let the public know what is going on. For that reason, many people consider investigative journalism to be very important for democracy. Its goal is to find out the truth, so readers can decide for themselves how they feel about an issue, an organization or a leader.

Investigative journalists write longer and more complex articles than most daily news journalists. Often, their work is published as a series of articles over weeks and even months, to tell a story and explain it from many different angles and points of view.

Because it is so time-consuming and expensive, many news organizations either no longer have investigative journalists on staff or they pair up with other news organizations to share resources. In other cases, general news reporters also do some investigative journalism.



The Toronto Star's Kevin Donovan is one of Canada's best-known investigative journalists. In Part II, coming next month, *For the Record* reports on how he does his exciting and demanding job.



DID YOU KNOW?

ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN: THE WATERGATE SCANDAL

In 1972, the work of two investigative journalists helped to bring down a US president. Through a lengthy and complicated investigation known as Watergate, reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein of the Washington Post proved that then-president Richard Nixon's re-election committee was involved in a break-in at the headquarters of the Democratic National Committee.



Carl Bernstein (left) and Bob Woodward in the Washington Post newsroom.
Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/karlhorton/29063448577>

Through painstaking and often dangerous investigation work, Woodward and Bernstein were able to connect the break-in to the highest levels of the US government including the FBI, the CIA, the White House and the US Justice Department. Their investigation included clandestine meetings with a government insider known then only as "Deep Throat," who helped them uncover the facts.

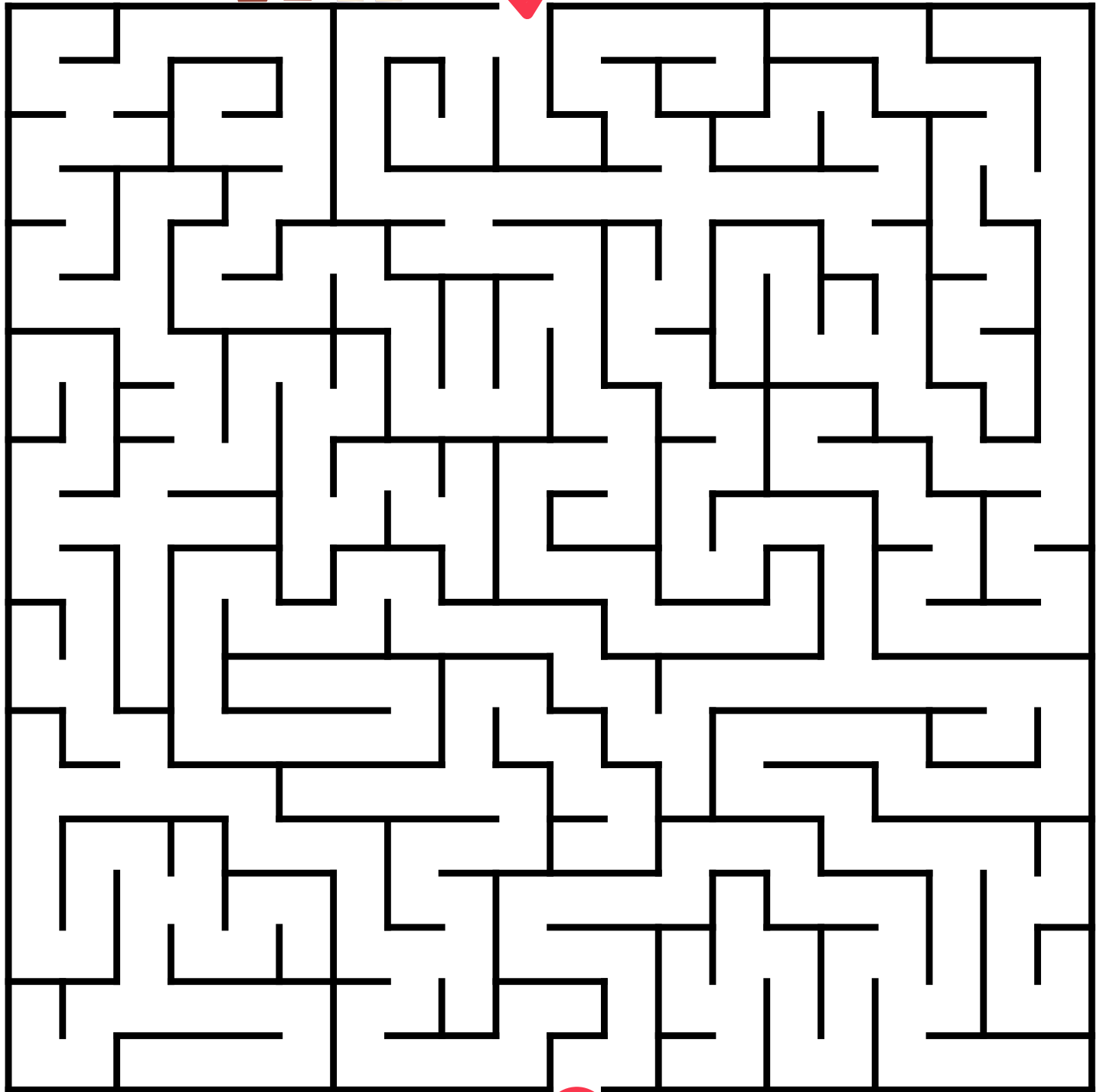
Nixon resigned over the scandal in 1974. In 1973, Woodward and Bernstein's work helped earn the Washington Post a Pulitzer Prize, the highest honour given for excellence in journalism.

In 1976, Woodward and Bernstein wrote a best-selling book, *All the President's Men*, based on their investigation. It became a movie starring Robert Redford and Dustin Hoffman.



A-MAZE-ING

Instructions: Guide this investigative journalist and her source through the maze to the article.



Answer at classroomconnection.ca/puzzle

