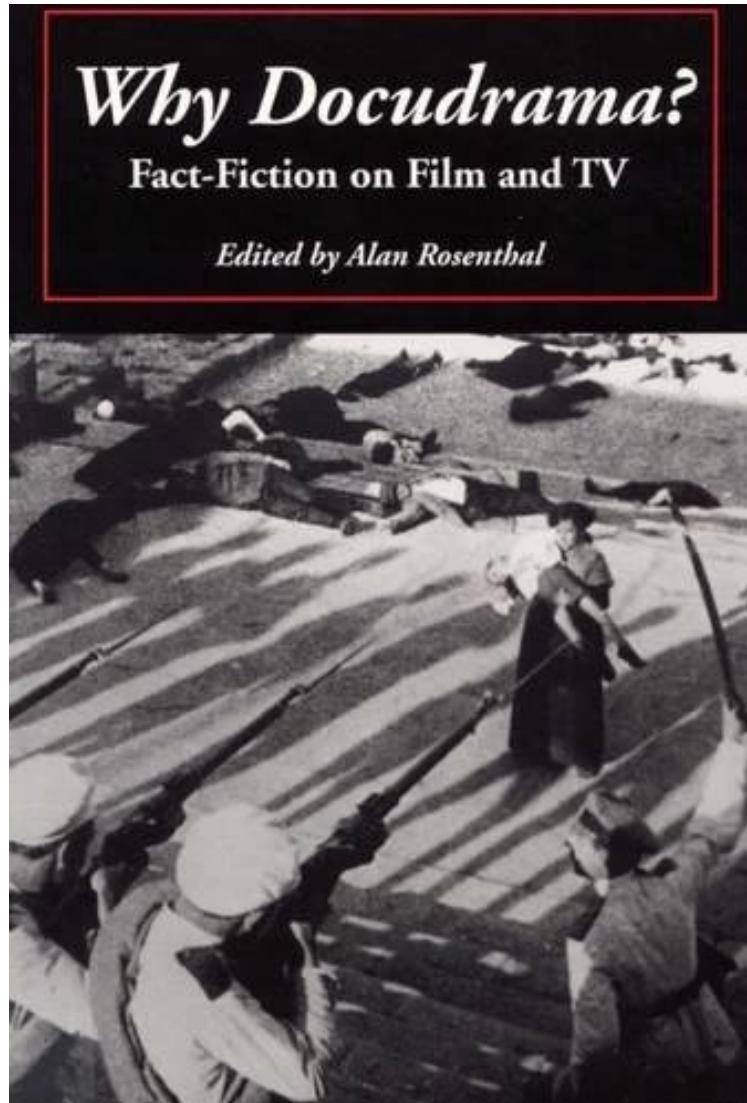


[Download] Why Docudrama?: Fact-Fiction on Film and TV

## Why Docudrama?: Fact-Fiction on Film and TV

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**From Southern Illinois University Press : Why Docudrama?: Fact-Fiction on Film and TV** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Why Docudrama?: Fact-Fiction on Film and TV:

When the 1990 English docudrama *Who Bombed Birmingham?* cast serious doubt on the guilt of six men convicted of bombing two British pubs in 1974, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher declared that a "television program alters

nothing." But, as Alan Rosenthal concludes, Thatcher was wrong. The film engendered a new inquiry that led to the release of the convicted men. Rosenthal notes that docudrama wields more influence than the average documentary and that "reality-based stories taken from topical journalism are the most popular drama genre on U.S. and British television today." This three-part collection of diverse and provocative essays addresses the dominant questions and controversies the genre poses. Defining and examining the rationale of docudrama, the nine essayists in the first part discuss the history and development of docudrama on TV and in film; they also consider the place of truth in docudrama, the main critiques of the form, and the audience's susceptibilities and expectations. In investigating the actual filmmaking process, the eight essays in the second part focus on how "docudrama as a 'commodity' is created in the United States and England." Part essay, part case study, and part interview, this section also explores how Hollywood and the commercial networks as well as producers and writers work and think. The final part presents an in-depth critique of a number of controversial docudramas that have helped form and shape public opinion, including *Battleship Potemkin*, *Roots*, *Reds*, *JFK*, *Mississippi Burning*, *Schindler's List*, and *In the Name of the Father*. In addition to Rosenthal, the contributors are John Corner, George F. Custen, David Edgar, Leslie Fishbein, George MacDonald Fraser, Todd Gitlin, Douglas Gomery, Richard Grenier, Sumiko Higashi, Tom W. Hoffer, Jerry Kuehl, Steve Lipkin, Yosefa Loshitsky, Ian McBride, Richard Alan Nelson, Conor Cruise O'Brien, Derek Paget, Robert A. Rosenstone, Betsy Sharkey, Irene Shubik, Jeff Silverman, D. J. Wenden, Sita Williams, and Leslie Woodhead.

From *Library Journal* The emerging genre variously called "docudrama," "dramatic reconstruction," and, as editor Rosenthal likes to define it, "reality-based stories," has become the most popular kind of drama on U.S. and British television. The frequent criticism of its potential to misguide audiences by erecting a fictional structure around historical events is well examined in this collection of nearly 30 probing essays by a well-credentialed mix of contributors from the entertainment industry and academia. What emerges from these analyses of such landmark TV and cinema docudramas as *Roots*, *Patriot Games*, and *Schindler's List* is the value of reaching a wider audience for important historical topics than would be achieved by conventional documentaries. Also explored are the ethical issues involved in controversial fictionalizations, such as Oliver Stone's *JFK*. A prolific filmmaker himself, Rosenthal has authored several books on documentaries and taught at several film schools. Highly recommended for academic libraries and cinema collections. A Richard Warren Grefrath, Univ. of Nevada Lib., Reno Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. About the Author Alan Rosenthal is the author of *Writing, Directing, and Producing Documentary Films and Videos*. He is a documentary filmmaker, teacher, and author active in Israel, Britain, and the United States and a winner of the George Foster Peabody Award for journalism for *Out of the Ashes*. His films have appeared on Channel 4 UK and Israeli television and on the American networks NBC, PBS/WNET, and ABC.