OVERLOAD, PP. 30-42: Why is the Web like catnip for so many people, and journalists in particular? Is information overload a problem? What would be a good indication that you are suffering from information overload? Are you? What are the benefits and drawbacks of having so much information at our fingertips? According to the study cited on top of page 32, despite all the additional information that is now available, the public is no better informed than it was in 1940.

Assuming the study is correct, why do you think that’s the case? Since the study also indicates that the public isn’t as well-informed as it should be, what could be done to increase public awareness about important issues? The author, Bree Nordenson, suggests that news organizations “need to reevaluate their role in the information landscape and reinvent themselves to better serve their consumers.” How could they do that? Nordenson also cites one expert who says, “We tend to define productivity in terms of speed and volume rather than...”
quality of thought and ideas.” Why do we do that? What could journalists do to help change this attitude toward productivity? Is it part of a journalist’s job to do so? Do you agree with those who say that people who use the Web as their prime source of news generally seek out news that supports their own points of view? Why or why not? Even if it is partly true, how does it change the way our society works? **ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES:** Log your use of the Web over two days. Also, note how you read Web sites. Do you read them in the manner that Jakob Nielsen suggests most people do (p. 33)? Why or not? Analyze your log and write a report explaining its implications about your reading habits. Does it indicate you are taking in too much information? As a class, create a guide to the Web that would help journalists find what they need to do their jobs well without being overloaded with too much information.

**AT RISK IN MEXICO, PP. 43-45:** What would you do if you were facing the same kinds of threats as those described by the journalists in this story? What, if anything, could the Mexican government do to protect the lives of reporters investigating the drug cartels? Is there a way to continue covering these issues while also minimizing the danger the journalists face? Go online and read some of the recent reports published by the Committee to Protect Journalist. What do they indicate about the dangers faced by journalists worldwide? Do the reports discourage you from doing potentially dangerous journalism? Why or why not?

**ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES:** Go online and find any Web sites or blogs that cover news on Mexico’s drug cartels. Who are the sources of the stories? How well are English-speaking readers being made aware of the problem? Find examples of any journalism that makes the connection between the Mexican cartels and drug abuse in the United States? What do the stories that you found teach you about how to do quality reporting?

**MURROW’S BOY, PP. 46-51:** What do you think motivates Dan Rather to continue in the news business after being fired by CBS? Does HDNet sound like place where you would like to work? Why or why not? What are the advantages and disadvantages of working for HDNet’s news programs? The article mentions Rather’s contentious interview with George H. W. Bush (excerpts can be found on YouTube). Was Rather wrong to press Bush? What does it say about the state of journalism that tough questioning of presidents or candidates for president (and vice president) are often frowned upon? Should there be a larger place on the broadcast schedule for “tough journalism” and documentaries? How has corporate ownership of the networks elevated or lowered the importance of their news division? How has that in turn affected our politics and culture? **ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES:** Rather says his firing was motivated by CBS’s desire to curry favor in Washington. Find out if his charge has merit. Research the story of President Bush and the National Guard. If you can, watch a broadcast of it and critique it based on any additional research you have done. Did Rather get the story right, or were those who criticized it correct? Explain your verdict in an essay. Watch several of Rather’s HDNet broadcasts and critique them in comparison with the fare offered up by the major networks. Find out more about the life and work of Edward R. Murrow. What were the highlights of his career? Why did he eventually leave CBS (and what parallels can you draw to Rather’s departure)? Why is Murrow still so revered more than forty years after his death? Assess his impact on television news and on the American political landscape. Find video of Murrow and discuss what you’ve learned from his work. Who were “Murrow’s Boys”? What did they do that made them so highly respected?