Delve Deeper into "My Country, My Country"
A film by Laura Poitras

This multi-media resource list, compiled by Jennifer Ewing of the San Diego Public Library in partnership with the American Library Association, provides a range of perspectives on the issues raised by the upcoming P.O.V. documentary "My Country, My Country" that premieres on October 25, 2006 at 9 p.m. on PBS (check local listings at www.pbs.org/pov/).

Working alone in Iraq over eight months, filmmaker Laura Poitras creates an extraordinarily intimate portrait of Iraqis living under U.S. occupation. Her principal focus is Dr. Riyadh, an Iraqi medical doctor, father of six and Sunni political candidate. An outspoken critic of the occupation, he is equally passionate about the need to establish democracy in Iraq, arguing that Sunni participation in the January 2005 elections is essential. Yet all around him, Dr. Riyadh sees only chaos, as his waiting room fills each day with patients suffering the physical and mental effects of ever-increasing violence. Poitras gained remarkable access to the Sunni community, U.S. military and the U.N., resulting in "My Country, My Country," a powerful mosaic of daily life in Iraq not seen in the mainstream media.

ADULT NONFICTION


Anderson, Liam D. and Gareth Stansfield. The Future of Iraq: Dictatorship, Democracy, or Division? New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. The future of Iraq is governed by its past and a partition might be the only option.


Dudley, William, ed. Iraq: Opposing Viewpoints. San Diego, CA: Thomson Gale, 2004. This well-known series that explores both sides of current issues covers the controversy surrounding the Iraq war, including articles written by Iraqis, Kurds and Muslims.


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Mamdani, Mahmood. Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror. New York: Doubleday, 2005. Investigates the root causes, including the U.S.’s role, in the rise of Islamic Fundamentalism.


McKiernan, Kevin. The Kurds: A People in Search of Their Homeland. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2006. A journalist travels among the Kurds, the world’s largest stateless ethnic group.


Nakash, Yitzhak. Reaching For Power: The Shi’a in the Modern Arab World. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006. The Shi’is, the largest group in Iraq, are crucial to the U.S.’s attempt to bring democracy to the Middle East.


Packer, George. The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005. In an attempt to change the history of the Middle East, the United States has become embroiled in a guerrilla war.


Salam Pax. Salam Pax: The Clandestine Diary of an Ordinary Iraqi. New York: Grove Press, 2003. Based upon his blog, these incisive and sharply funny Web postings provide one of the most immediate and gripping accounts of the Iraq conflict.


Takeyh, Ray. The Receding Shadow of the Prophet: The Rise and Fall of Radical Political Islam. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004. Radical Islamic movements have failed to present a workable model of governance and, despite their use of violence, have failed to topple secular regimes in Egypt and Algeria.
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Wilson, Mike, ed. Democracy: Opposing Viewpoints. Detroit, MI: Greenhaven Press, 2006. This well-known series explores both sides of current issues, debates the state of democracy, the role of religion in democracy and whether democracy is suitable for all nations.


NONFICTION FOR YOUNGER READERS


Downing, David. Democracy. Chicago, IL: Heinemann Library, 2003. Explains how this system of governing began. It traces the evolution of democracy from Greece and Rome to the United States and discusses the potential for democracy in other countries.


FICTION FOR YOUNGER READERS

Alrawi, Karim. The Girl Who Lost Her Smile. Delray Beach, FL:
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Winslow Press, 2000. A story, inspired by the writings of Jallal al-Din Rumi in a collection of Sufi poetry and short stories known as Mathnawi, about Jehan, a young girl living in Baghdad who unexpectedly finds reason to smile.

Heide, Florence Parry and Judith Heide Gilliland. The House of Wisdom. New York: DK Ink, 1999. Ishaq, the son of the chief translator to the Caliph of ancient Baghdad, travels the world in search of precious books and manuscripts and brings them back to the great library known as the House of Wisdom.

Laird, Elizabeth. Kiss the Dust. New York: Dutton Children’s Books, 1992. Her father’s involvement with the Kurdish resistance movement in Iraq forces thirteen-year-old Tara to flee with her family over the border into Iran, where they face an unknown future.


VIDEOS/DOCUMENTARIES

“The Survival of Saddam.” A film by Greg Barker. PBS Video, 2000, 1996. (56 min.) Examines how despite the Gulf War, economic sanctions, no-fly zones and military attacks from the Iraqi opposition, Saddam Hussein has been able to hold onto power. www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/saddam/


“Turtles Can Fly.” A film by MJ Film/Bahman Ghobadi. Metro Goldwyn Mayer Home Entertainment, 2005. (98 min.) Soran is a 13-year-old boy who orders other children around as he installs an antennae for villagers interested in hearing about Saddam’s fall. Eventually, he falls for Agrin but is distu rbed by her brother Henkov who can seemingly predict the future.

“The Dreams of Sparrows.” A film by Aaron Raskin. Go Kart Films, 2005. (75 min.) Follows Iraqi director Hayder Mousa Daffar and his team of contributing filmmakers as they share their vision of life in Baghdad under the U.S. occupation.

WEB SITES

P.O.V.’s “My Country, My Country” www.pbs.org/pov/pov2006/my_country
Includes an interview with the filmmaker, resources, special features and more.

NPR: Iraq
www.npr.org/iraq/
An ongoing report from NPR about Iraq, including analysis, commentary, politics, interviews, and more, in audio and video clips.

Country Profile: Iraq http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/country_profiles/791014.stm#facts
BBC’s country profile includes a brief review of recent history, an overview of Iraq’s leaders and available media and links to timelines for Iraq and Iraqi Kurds.

Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq
www.ieciiraq.org/English/Frame_set_english.htm
Facts about the IECI and Iraqi elections, including information about the candidates, voter information (including posters), election rules and regulations and polling results. In English and Arabic.

United States Institute of Peace sponsored a series of three scenario-planning workshops from August 2004 to January 2005 with Iraq experts designed to anticipate Iraq election outcomes.

BBC’s overview of the January 30, 2005 election in Iraq, including key issues surrounding the vote and how it would take place.

Iraq Elections: Road to Democracy http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/iraqelect/index.htm
A history of the January 2005 elections and how it fit into the larger plans for establishing a democracy in Iraq. An online version of a pamphlet produced by the U.S. State Department.

Part of BBC’s In Depth section featuring statistical and graphical information about life in Iraq, including data about reconstruction, security, people, oil, health, cost of living and education.

A series of one-page primers about the fundamentals of democracy reflecting the practices of many free societies under systems of democratic governance. Available in eleven languages.

Riverbend’s Blog http://riverbendblog.blogspot.com/
A blog started in 2003 by a 24-year-old Iraqi woman. She writes with an immediacy that is striking and poignant. Published in book form as Baghdad Burning: Girl Blog From Iraq by Riverbend.
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CBC News Indepth: Iraq
www.cbc.ca/news/background/iraq/
CBC News’ in-depth look at the recent history and background information about Iraq which led to the present conflict and the 2005 Iraqi elections.

UN Assistance Mission for Iraq
www.uniraq.org/
Created by the UNAMI—Humanitarian Coordination Team in Amman—to provide information related to the UN’s mission and its various agencies in Iraq.

The CIA World Factbook: Iraq
Key facts about Iraq, including geography, people, government, communications, and more, from The World Factbook, published annually by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).