

When the Media is the Disaster

Chapter 8 in Language talks about how words can hurt people. The first article discusses the news reporting that was done on the major earthquake in Haiti that happened a couple years ago. The media was describing some of the victims as “looters” because they were “stealing” food. Rebecca Solnit disagrees with this term, and argues that it is a bad description of these people.

Words cannot physically hurt but they resonate with us. I’ve always heard the saying to “choose your words carefully” and that’s because words are so easy to manipulate upon others. We have the capability of making emotions by using words in different contexts. We can make each other happy, sad, and mad all by choosing the right words at the right time.

At the end of the article Solnit ends with the opinion that “we live and die by words and ideas, and it matters desperately that we get them right.” By choosing the right words, the media could have saved lives by getting compassion from people to donate instead of accusing the victims of “stealing” when they are simply trying to survive. The media knows how to manipulate people with words which is almost always the case. They realize that they have power and know how to use words to get a desired response.

It matters that we get words right because we are dealing with actual people. Words can change people and what they think. What do you think about what Solnit meant by her quote?