

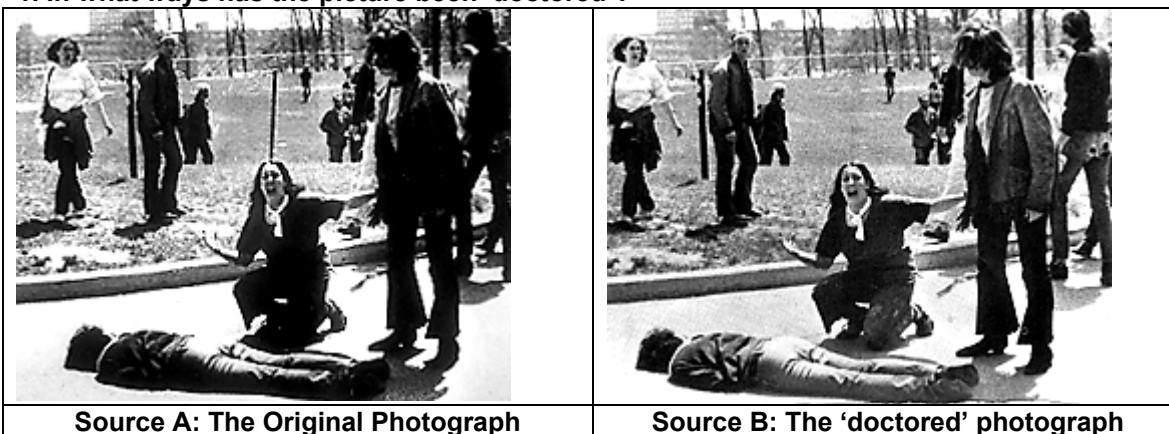
MURDER AT KENT STATE UNIVERSITY, MAY 1970

This Pulitzer Prize winning photo by John Filo shows Mary Ann Vecchio screaming as she kneels over the body of student Jeffrey Miller at Kent State University on May 4, 1970. National Guardsmen had fired in to a crowd of demonstrators, killing four and wounding nine. The American public was outraged.

It is easy to discern the central images: the student dead on the street, the woman kneeling over him, her companion with a turned head, the woman walking behind her, and the man with his back to the camera. The casual air of not being involved, of divorcing themselves from the disaster, of the bystanders is equally as disturbing as the grief of the kneeling woman and the stillness of the dead student.

Yet this original, iconic photo was 'doctored' before being published in *Time* magazine...

1. In what ways has the picture been 'doctored'?



2. This has caused a lot of controversy. Read the sources below and answer the questions which follow.

"I don't understand why everyone is 'outraged'. Yes, altering a news photo is very bad if it makes the picture a lie. This alteration in no way changes any meaning or message of this photo. Maybe the unknown alternator thought it looked like the woman was screaming because she had a spear sticking out of her head. It's not like someone added a gun or knife in her hand. I guess I don't get it": *Bill Klingner*

"I think it is unethical and dangerous to modify a news picture in any way. Unless there is a general understanding that news pictures are unmodified some people will be as skeptical of them as they are about written accounts...It is scary when people begin manipulating our 'reality.' Leave that job to the artists. Photo documentary must remain just that – documentary - if it is to retain its credibiliy into the 21st century": *Mike Cartier*

"Oddly enough no one is discussing here, the actual subject matter photographed of what actually happened that day at Kent State, and what has ocured at that University over the following years. It's like if the death of that student would be a secondary issue to the pole sticking out in the background. So what if there is a pole more or less, if what is being discussed is not what the picture was about. I find that a much more offensive and dangerous situation, than the fact that someone, altered the picture": *Pedro Meyer*

Questions:

1. What are the main arguments (a) defending and (b) criticising the idea of 'doctoring' the photo?
2. What is your own opinion on the matter?
3. Briefly summarise why the events at Kent State University were so important.