



# The Brass Check: A Study of American Journalism

*Upton Sinclair*

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# The Brass Check: A Study of American Journalism

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**The Brass Check: A Study of American Journalism** Upton Sinclair

**A muckraking exposé of corruption in American journalism from the Pulitzer Prize–winning author of *The Jungle***

Upton Sinclair dedicated his life to documenting the destructive force of unbridled capitalism. In this influential study, he takes on the effect of money and power on mass media, arguing that the newspapers, magazines, and wire services of the Progressive era formed “a class institution serving the rich and spurning the poor.”

In the early twentieth century, a “brass check” was a token purchased by brothel patrons. By drawing a comparison between journalists and prostitutes, Sinclair highlights the total control publishers such as William Randolph Hearst exerted over their empires. Reporters and editors were paid to service the financial and political interests of their bosses, even if that meant misrepresenting the facts or outright lying. Sinclair documents specific cases, including the Ludlow Massacre of 1914 and the Red Scare whipped up by Hearst’s *New York Journal* and other newspapers, in which major news outlets ignored the truth in favor of tabloid sensationalism.

Sinclair considered *The Brass Check* to be his most important and most dangerous book. Nearly a century later, his impassioned call for reform is timelier than ever.

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