

Newspapers can vary from their house style and generic conventions on occasions. The day after the 9/11 attacks on the twin towers in New York, for example, the *Guardian* ran a full-page picture story with the image of the burning building, disrupting the usual layout. The day after a photograph of a drowned refugee boy was released the *Daily Mail* ran a full-page picture story (3 September 2015) using the photograph with the following headline in a lower-case font that challenged the generic conventions and house style: 'Tiny victim of a human catastrophe'. The muted media language fitted the sympathetic tone of the headline.

Revision activity

Analyse the front pages of the different daily newspapers listed on page 9 in terms of how far they follow broadsheet or red top tabloid conventions using the Print newspaper generic conventions table on there as well. Make notes on any variations from these conventions and try to explain why they occur. Pay particular attention to your set products: the *Guardian* and the *Daily Mail*.

Online newspaper generic conventions

The traditional classification of print newspapers as broadsheet and tabloid extends at least in part to their online editions, though here the process of hybridisation continues even further.

Broadsheet newspapers online all tend to follow a similar format, which echoes the connotations of objectivity and seriousness in the print newspapers:

- the home page of the website is filled with headlines, with hard news stories towards the top of the home page
- the same traditional masthead is used as in the print edition – the *Guardian* before January 2018 used a white on blue sans-serif masthead but has since reverted to the traditional black on white serif format
- most home pages in their PC editions use a four-column layout, which fills the home page with news
- most typography is serif
- although the pages consist of mostly headlines and **standfirsts** the quantity of photographs (and other images) roughly matches that of writing.

The home pages of broadsheet newspapers do contain many more hybrid features:

- there is more extensive use of colour
- opinion, lifestyle and sports pieces appear on the home page, these would be buried inside the print newspaper or in supplements
- there is some use of sans-serif fonts.

Tabloid newspapers online also mirror some conventions of their print versions and hybridise others. Conventions shared with the print editions include:

- lifestyle, 'showbiz' and human-interest stories feature prominently towards the top of the home pages
- fonts are sans-serif
- there is use of saturated colour, especially red
- photography dominates the home pages
- the language register is more informal
- the *Mirror*, *Star* and *Sun* all use the same red top masthead as the print newspaper.

Standfirst: A block of text that introduces a newspaper story under the headline, normally in a different style (often bold) to the body copy and headline.

Hybridised features:

- there is little use of banner headlines, rather a large number of headlines are offered, connoting ‘newsiness’
- most headlines are not capitalised (except in the *Sun*)
- the home page layout is generally less photograph/image and headline dominated than the print front page
- the large number of headlines means that some hard news stories are covered on the home page that might only make the inside pages of the print newspaper.

Print and online technology and media language

These hybridised features in online tabloid newspapers might reflect the influence of online technology: large capitalised banner headlines, for example, would be the equivalent of shouting in an online environment, whereas they are appropriate for the front page of a print newspaper to be quickly scanned by possible customers in a newsagent. Online headlines, such as those in the *Mail Online*, are often much longer than those in the print newspaper; this may be due to their role in attracting clickthroughs from the home page or to act as ‘clickbait’ in social media, which means they have to explain more of the narrative hook in the headline.

The large number of headlines in the online editions of all newspapers reflects audience expectations of a cornucopia of choice in the online media, whereas print readers are more content to be guided by the layout of the newspaper as to the hierarchy of stories. The online media are less effective at showing photographs compared to the print media, so photographs online tend to be cropped more as close-ups and smaller scale.

The newspaper home pages follow many online conventions and offer the usual functionality of the webpage, suggesting that the media form is as powerful an influence as the genre of newspapers in the choice of media language.

Intertextuality in media language

You should be able to analyse why media products use intertextuality. The reasons are as varied as the uses of intertextuality so you need to be able to analyse its use in context rather than applying pre-learned ideas.

However, some common significances of intertextuality include:

- to create humour
- to parody (criticise) the referred text or person (e.g. political cartoons)
- to honour the referred text (e.g. reference to universally revered people or texts)
- to create a flattering mode of address for the audience – the product may be assuming that they are clever or well informed enough to understand the intertextual reference
- to attempt to transfer the value of the referred media product to the referring one (e.g. a newspaper quoting Shakespeare or references to currently high-status celebrities)
- to create a sense of shared experience with the audience (e.g. reviews of last night’s television).

Within the news sections of newspapers, headlines and standfirsts are often good sources of examples of intertextuality as they have to draw attention and summarise in a pithy manner. For example, the 3 March 2018 edition of the *Guardian* (see Figure 1.2 for the front page) contains the following instances:

Revision activity

Revisit your set products – the *Guardian* and the *Mail* online editions and use of social media – and note how they adapt their generic conventions in their online forms. Compare the home pages of two other quality and popular newspapers.

Revision activity

Compare the print version of newspapers to their online editions. Make notes on:

- whether the similarities between all the home pages are greater than the differences
- any key differences between the online and print editions not noted above.



Figure 1.2 *Guardian* front page, 3 March 2018

- ‘Oscars so right?’ – an intertextual reference to the ‘Oscars so White’ hashtag, which combines humour in the pun with a flattering assumption that the readers would understand it
- ‘Walk on the poetic side: Lou Reed’s lost verse published’ – an intertextual reference to Lou Reed’s song ‘Walk on the Wild Side’, which suggests homage to the original
- ‘MI5 agents licensed to commit crime in UK’ – an intertextual reference to James Bond, which suggests a similar level of lack of regulation of spies to that shown in Bond films.

The opinion section yields:

- ‘Will we get a sleeping beauty or our first woke princess?’ – punning intertextual references to children’s fairy tales and a term for anti-racist political awareness for an article about a mixed-race soon-to-be princess, which surprises with this unlikely conjunction of connotations
- ‘Don’t cry for Theresa May. The truth is, this is her fault’ – an intertextual reference to the lines ‘Don’t cry for me Argentina, the truth is I never left you’ from the musical *Evita*, which works by replacing the expected gentle second line with a brutal one.

Viewpoints and ideologies in media language

‘Viewpoints and ideologies’ crop up in both media language and representations and will be covered in more detail in the latter. For media language, you need to be able to analyse how the choice of media language is never neutral. This is true whether or not the viewpoints being expressed are obvious. Let us take one example where the viewpoint/ideology is not obvious and one in which it is obvious.

For the more obvious example, let’s take the *Daily Mail* front page for 13 June 2016, which can be found at: www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/daily-mail-front-page-fails-to-mention-orlando-mass-shooting-at-all_uk_575e67c8e4b014b4f253df35.

The headline reads, ‘FURY OVER PLOT TO LET 1.5M TURKS INTO BRITAIN’. This choice of language incorporates viewpoints and ideologies in a few words. The headline connotes that there is a plot, that it is right and proper to be angry about these plotters, that immigration is a bad thing, that Turks are particularly bad immigrants, possibly because they may be Muslims (the language may be read by the audience in terms of racist and Islamophobic ideologies even if these are not intended), that the plotters are most probably the ‘metropolitan liberal elite’ who are soft on immigration, hand-in-hand with the EU, and never to be trusted. The ideologies at play here are British, or perhaps English, nationalism (the belief in the superiority of the British/English nation) and social conservatism (the belief in the role of the common people in maintaining traditional values and resisting social liberalism). It is, in fact, newspapers such as the *Guardian* that represent the ideologies of internationalism and social liberalism that the *Daily Mail* wants to resist. Alongside this headline, the choice of the word ‘dazzling’ on the front page to describe the Queen, alongside a ‘glamour’ photograph of the young queen, again reinforces what feminists and republicans would see as traditional patriarchal views of femininity and monarchism that fit with social conservatism.

As a less obvious example, on the front page of the *Guardian* (3 March 2018) is a large photograph of a woman looking pensive and sad

Revision activity

Look at the front pages and home pages of a range of newspapers (both print and online versions can be found online). Note examples of intertextuality and suggest reasons why they have been used. Note examples of intertextuality in the pages of your set products.