

GCSE (9–1)
Teacher Guide

MEDIA STUDIES

J200
For first teaching in 2017

News (print and online): Industry and audience

Version 1



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Print newspapers in the 1960s and 2010s

Newspapers in the 1960s were already fearing competition from other media – in this case, television. However, newspaper circulations were very high by today's standards. The peak in newspapers' circulation was in the early 1950s, with decline ever since. By 1965, circulation of Sunday newspapers had fallen to 25 million, which represented 1.4 newspapers per household (a fall from over 2 per household in the 1950s), meaning that it was common to buy more than one Sunday newspaper. By comparison, total circulation of Sunday newspapers in 2010 was down to about 10 million, which represents about 0.4 per household.

The segmentation of the newspaper market in the 1960s reflected the clear class and political differences in society: Labour supporting working class readers bought the *Mirror*, Conservative supporting working class readers bought the *Daily Express*; the social elite read *The Times*, the Conservative middle class read the *Daily Telegraph* and the Labour or Liberal supporting middle class read *The Guardian*. Society in the 2010s is more fragmented, with much less sense of loyalty to political parties or an identity based on class, and this fragmentation may be better served by online media rather than traditional print newspapers, as these can target a multitude of different audiences.





Newspapers in the 1960s were starting to be defined by their physical size. All upmarket newspapers such as *The Observer* were printed in the broadsheet format, whereas downmarket newspapers such as the *Sun* launched tabloid formats (the *Sun* went tabloid in 1969). Broadsheet newspapers were dominated by a news agenda, with relatively little self-promotion on the front page, whereas tabloid newspapers relied on their front covers to attract readers. *The Times*, for example, continued to fill its front page with classified advertising until 1966. Front pages for *The Observer* from the mid-60s, for example, have many more news stories on the front page, less space dedicated to photography and promotion of the newspaper’s contents, and are written in a more formal language register than would be used today.

The increasing role of marketing in newspapers was, however, evident in the launching of colour supplements in the early 1960s – these were designed to offer advertisers the opportunity to use high quality colour images. Printing in the main newspapers was monochrome and of poor quality compared to contemporary standards.

The terms ‘broadsheet’ and ‘tabloid’ are still in common use to describe the style of a newspaper, although few newspapers are still printed in the broadsheet format (*The Observer* – currently in Berliner format – is scheduled to change to the tabloid format in 2018). The ‘quality’ or ‘broadsheet’ press sometimes refer to their tabloid format as ‘compact’, as they feel the term ‘tabloid’ carries negative connotations of sensationalism and gutter journalism.

The main characteristics of tabloid and broadsheet newspapers are as below:

Tabloid	Broadsheet
Softer news agenda – e.g. human interest stories, celebrities	Harder news agenda – e.g. politics, finance, international news
Less formal language register	More formal language register
Pages dominated by headlines and images	Pages dominated by copy
Target a more downmarket audience	Target a more upmarket audience
Offers news as entertainment	Offers news as information

This simple division does not always work in practice:

- Newspapers such as *The Daily Mail* position themselves as mid-market, combining conventions of both the tabloid and broadsheets.
- Some traditionally ‘tabloid’ features – such as extensive use of photography, human interest stories, and stories about celebrities, are increasingly common in the broadsheet press, especially in supplements such as *The Guardian’s G2* – a process sometimes rather inelegantly described as ‘broadloidisation’.

Funding

1960s newspapers depended on circulation and advertising for revenue. Tabloid newspapers had larger circulations but working class audiences that were less attractive to advertisers, so relied more on cover price; broadsheet newspapers had the reverse – smaller circulations but attractive upmarket audiences – and relied more on advertising.

Newspaper in the 2010s have a wider range of funding sources:

- **Circulation** – subscription or over-the-counter sales.
- **Paywalls** – paying to access online content e.g. at *The Times* website – the *Sun* has just discontinued this option as it reduces online readership.
- **Membership** – *The Guardian/Observer* are experimenting with this model for protecting free online content; they announced that they had reached 800,000 paying members worldwide in October 2017 and that the income from this now exceeded that from advertising (members pay about £5 a month).
- **Print and online advertising** – print is traditionally much more lucrative than online advertising but has drastically reduced in recent years, though concerns over advertising being placed next to inappropriate content by *Google* and *Facebook*, for example, may boost print advertising. Online newspapers reach a global audience and can sell advertising to different national audiences (*The Guardian* accessed in Greece, for example, carries advertising aimed at Greeks).
- **Sponsored content** – brands supplying content and/or paying to be connected to content – this blurs the boundaries between advertising and editorial that journalists prize but advertisers wish to blur, e.g. ‘Cricket has no boundaries’ paid for and controlled by the bank NatWest, or ‘Connecting Britain’ editorially independent content ‘supported by’ Alstrom, the train company.
- **Events** – *The Guardian/Observer* frequently run courses (e.g. on journalism or literature), meetings and conferences.
- **Sales** – *The Guardian/Observer* sell holidays and books, for example, linked to their review and travel sections.

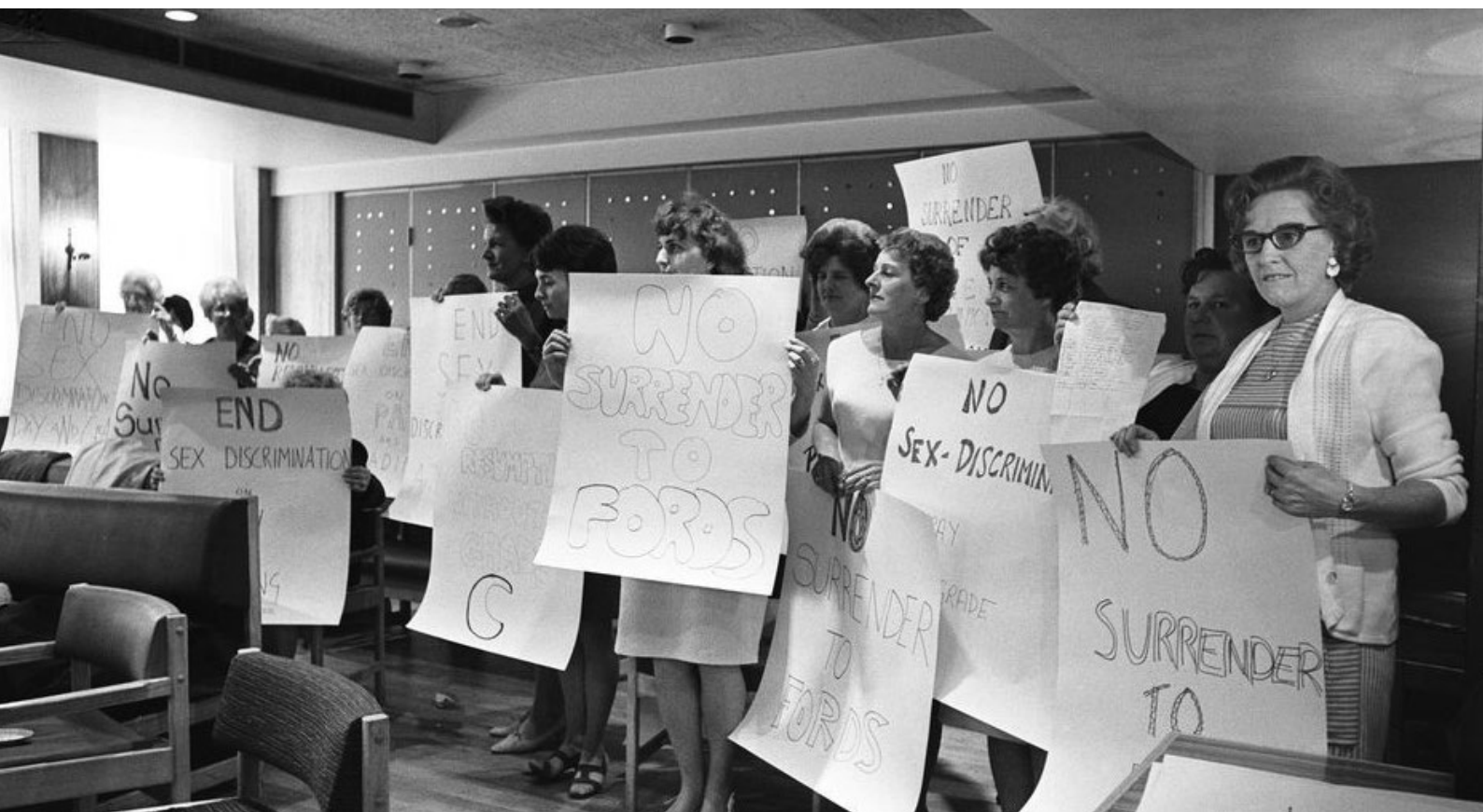
All print newspapers are facing declining circulations at the same time as much advertising is moving online, and this online advertising is both worth less than print advertising with revenues mostly going to *Facebook* and *Google* rather than online versions of the newspapers. Print newspapers are facing a crisis. Once circulation dips below a certain level – 100,000 copies for example – it becomes too expensive to physically print newspapers. Hence one national newspaper – *The Independent* – went online only in 2016. One fear is that a newspaper will lose its influence if it becomes just another website – television news programmes now cover online as well as print newspapers in their reviews, for example, but a print version is still seen as an essential promotional tool for online versions of newspapers as the print version carries the authority of the traditional news source. As more readers rely on social media sites such as *Facebook* and *Twitter* for their news then these become an important ‘shop window’ for newspapers – those with readily recognised brands that are trusted may attract readers who are concerned about ‘fake news’.



Historical print newspapers and social, cultural, political and historical contexts

Many news stories from the 1960s front pages of *The Observer* clearly reflect the contexts of the time (see the three set historical front covers here: <http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/gcse-media-studies-j200-from-2017/assessment/>):

- ‘Lawyers will urge divorce by consent’ – an example of the social reform of the 1960s, the law commission (staffed only by men) is recommending divorce by consent – a change that made it much easier for people, mostly women, to get divorced – a move to greater gender equality.
- ‘Wilson-Brown market clash’ – reflects the political context that relations with Europe were contentious in the 1960s, as today.
- ‘So polite, this North Sea Spy Game’; ‘Yard suspects Blake used two-way radio’; ‘America accused of spy frame-up’ – reflect the prevalence of spy stories in the 1960s Cold War historical context. The influence of the Cold War is also shown in the articles about the Vietnam war – ‘Hopes rise for cease-fire in Vietnam’ and, indirectly, ‘Police will appease marchers’, which also reflects the rise of protest in the 1960s, including ‘militant Marxists’.
- ‘Jackie: we’re very happy’ – reflects a patriarchal context in which women are most often defined in terms of their relationship with men; here the dead US President’s wife makes a controversial second marriage. The front pages are characterised by the absence of women, e.g. one front page has only one reference to women – a photograph of a woman illustrating an article about knitted fashion.



- ‘Unions postpone strike’ – illustrates the high level of coverage of strikes in the 1960s, reflecting greater union power in that decade. Barbara Castle is mentioned – the only female politician in all three front pages – as trying to argue for a move towards ‘narrowing the differentials’ in pay for men and women, showing the patriarchal culture of the 1960s and the limited attempts to create greater gender equality before the Equal Pay Act.
- ‘Briton shoots a gold’ – this article mentions the Black Power protest at the Mexico Olympics, reflecting the anti-racist movements of the 1960s; note the unselfconscious use of the term ‘Negro’.
- ‘Stephen Pollock...with Elizabeth Vambe, 21, a Rhodesian-born African, after their marriage yesterday’ – reflects the context of a white culture that sees what were known as ‘mixed marriages’ as so unusual to be newsworthy.

Newspaper industries – ownership and control

Newspapers are not usually profitable, but are seen as a means of gaining political and social influence, so are often owned by rich individuals rather than conglomerates so these businesses tend to specialise in newspaper (and sometimes magazine) publishing rather than a range of media. News International is part of a media conglomerate (publishing newspapers, books, and radio) which has only recently separated from 21st Century Fox. The *Mail* and *Metro* newspapers and some magazines are the only mass media interest of the Daily Mail and General Trust. Northern and Shell produce newspapers and magazines, but were once owners of Channel 5. Trinity Mirror mostly run national and regional newspapers.

The Telegraph Group is a private company that runs the Telegraph and the Spectator magazine – both quasi house journals of the Conservative Party. Nikkei is a Japanese financial newspaper publisher.

Newspaper groups	Titles owned	Daily market share in 2017
News International (Rupert Murdoch)	Sun, Times, Sunday Times, Sun on Sunday	34%
Daily Mail and General Trust	Mail, Mail on Sunday	24%
Northern & Shell (Richard Desmond)	Express, Express on Sunday, Star	14%
Trinity Mirror plc	Mirror, Sunday Mirror, Sunday People, Daily Record	11%
Telegraph Group (Barclay brothers)	Daily Telegraph, Sunday Telegraph,	8%
Guardian Media Group (Scott Trust)	Guardian, Observer	3%
Nikkei	Financial Times	1%

The Guardian and Observer are owned by a trust set up in the 1930s to protect the editorial independence of the Guardian newspaper and to safeguard journalistic freedom and the newspaper’s liberal values. These liberal values have meant support from the Guardian for both the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats, with the newspaper trying to express a range of views from slightly right of centre to left wing. The Guardian Media Group bought The Observer in 1993 after a disastrous period in which it had been used by its new owner as a weapon in a vendetta against a business rival. This is an example of the sort of editorial interference that The Scott Trust was set up to avoid.

The Observer is considered a venerable institution – it is the world's oldest Sunday newspaper, dating back to 1791 – and this was an attack on its journalistic ethics and integrity. *The Observer's* liberal values had been established under the ownership of the Astor family, with David Astor its editor for many years until the mid 1970s, so the newspaper easily fitted with the values of The Scott Trust. Although the (pre-tabloid) print version of *The Observer* maintains a slightly different house style to *The Guardian*, their online presence is almost identical.



This example of editorial interference by the owner is a rare example of public testimony of such interference. The then editor of *The Observer* has publically claimed that Mr Rowland, the head of the Lonrho mining company that owned the Observer, threatened to close the newspaper down unless he pulled an article that might damage Lonrho's business interests in Zimbabwe. Newspaper editors otherwise invariably insist in public that the owner never interferes with the content of the newspaper. Rupert Murdoch, who owns at least part of News International, has expressed strong views about the European Union, yet his newspapers – the *Times*, *Sunday Times* and *Sun* – took different positions in the Brexit referendum. Direct interference might destroy the credibility of the newspaper, as in the case of *The Observer*, and will be resisted by editors and journalists.

The owner, however, will appoint the editor, so they have a great deal of indirect power. One anecdote, for example, tells of a journalist being advised to write a positive review for a new album as that very album had been once seen on Rupert Murdoch's desk. British politicians have routinely met with Rupert Murdoch before elections, presumably to seek his support in the expectation that this might result in more favourable press coverage. The former Prime Minister, Tony Blair, who did visit Murdoch before he was elected, received far more favourable coverage than his predecessor, John Major, who reportedly did not 'do a deal' with Murdoch. The Leveson Inquiry into the press found that politicians of all parties had 'developed too close a relationship with the press in a way that has not been in the public interest', and that politicians' relationships with newspaper owners, managers and editors (i.e. not just editors) were not clear and open.

Press freedom and regulation

Newspapers were the main form of mass communication at the time when Britain was becoming a full democracy, where all adults had the vote. A free press was seen as crucial to democracy – censorship was abolished and press freedom came to be seen as a precious ideal to be defended at all costs. Anyone must be free to set up a newspaper and newspapers must be allowed to publish whatever they want without interference from the government or other authorities.

This ideal of press freedom remains very much alive today and is the reason why newspapers and magazines are not regulated by a body set up by the government (like Ofcom, who regulate television). In practice, the idea of press freedom means that the press are the most opinionated of all the 'old' media. Newspapers can campaign on political issues and journalists are expected to be highly critical of those in power. The same journalistic ideals apply to magazines, but it is newspapers that are treated as being the more important opinion-formers in society.

The 'red top' or 'tabloid' press survived the impact of television by emphasising this opinionated quality. They developed a brash, no-nonsense style that addressed the passions of their target audience in order to try to gain the loyalty of a large audience. This style, however, has led to regular concerns about issues such as invasion of privacy. In response to plans by the government to create a regulatory body if they did not do so, the press set up their organisation to regulate press behaviour and enforce a code of practice. This proved ineffective. Matters came to a head when the *News of the World* was exposed, after a long campaign by *The Guardian*, as having hacked the voicemails of a young murder victim in such a way that her parents thought she was still alive. This 'hacking scandal' led to the Leveson Inquiry into the 'culture, practices and ethics of the press'. The inquiry recommended that the press should regulate itself with a body that could levy substantial fines, but that this body would have to be recognised by another body set up by parliament. In response, most of the press joined a new regulator named IPSO (Independent Press Standards Organisation) which refused to apply to the recognition body as they saw this as unwarranted state interference in the free press. A rival regulator – Impress – has been recognised by the recognition body, but only covers a few local newspapers. At the time of writing the government has not yet invoked the 'stick' that Leveson proposed to encourage newspapers to join a compliant regulator.

A different constraint on press freedom is the libel law. Journalists argue that Britain has particularly onerous libel laws – journalists have to prove that what they allege is true to win cases (unless they can demonstrate that the story is in the public interest). Cases like that of Jimmy Saville – who was first investigated by journalists in 1967 but not publically exposed until after his death – show the ability of those with the financial means to hire expensive libel lawyers to silence the press.

Online news is not regulated at all, unless online newspapers chose to sign up to a regulator. The issue of ‘fake news’ came to special prominence during and after the 2016 US Presidential election. A special counsel was appointed to investigate Russian interference in the election, which included very extensive use of false news reports on social media. Facebook appointed its first content reviewers in 2017 to try to address this problem. This constitutes a retreat from the social media company’s previous position that they were not media companies but IT companies offering a platform for other people’s content, an extreme ‘freedom of speech’ position they hoped would absolve them from journalistic ethics or regulation.

Newspapers such as The Guardian/Observer try to offer a trusted brand online by applying the same ethics and journalistic practices as the print newspapers, and by actively moderating readers’ comments to filter out inappropriate comments.

Convergence

When newspapers operate online there is technological and cultural convergence. Online newspapers will use the traditional media language of newspapers – headlines, copy, photography, and so on – but also that of television through embedded video, and that of social media through readers’ comments on blogs, or each other’s comments. Online versions of newspapers often differ from the print version as they take on more online attributes (such as ‘clickbait’). The Mail online, for example, is much more celebrity and gossip focused than the print newspaper.

The Observer online recognisably follows the structure of the print edition, but with greater prominence for the lifestyle, food and sport sections that are kept out of the main section of the print newspaper, plus a much higher proportion of photography and headlines to copy on the home page.

Newspaper audiences

The Observer’s audiences are much larger than its circulation suggest, because more than one person will read each newspaper and because many more access *The Observer* online.

Print (Sept/Oct 2017)	
Circulation	177,000
Readers	800,000

Print and online (Sept 2017)	
Daily readership	2.4 m
Weekly readership	6.3 m
Monthly readership	10.5m

Print *Observer* readers are very equally spread between male and female, about 50-50. They are upmarket readers, 68% class AB, 78% class ABC1. They live mostly in London and the south (53%). These readers are sold to advertisers as affluent, ‘progressives’ – forward looking people who are keen to try new things – arts and culture lovers, and food and drink aficionados.

Monthly UK online *Observer* readers are slightly more male (55%) than female (45%) – this male bias is very common in online news content. One third of the audience are 15-34, two thirds are 35 plus. This is a younger audience than the print readership, among whom only 17% are 15-34. 75% of the online audience are social class ABC1, which makes them slightly downmarket from the print audience, but still upmarket compared to the UK population as a whole. Online readers are about one third on PCs, two thirds on mobiles.



The Guardian/Observer website had, in May 2017, 152 million unique browser views worldwide. The *Guardian* online has bespoke Australian and US editions as well as the global and UK editions.

The Observer has sections which are designed to appeal to different types of readers. The main section of the print version consists of news and opinion – a mix of the traditional ‘hard’ news traditionally offered by newspapers and opinion pieces that were once the preserve of current affairs magazines. This appeals to the news-hungry reader. The New Review consists of more comedic opinion pieces, interviews and reviews of theatre, dance, music, cinema, architecture, computer games, and television listings. This appeals to the culture consumer. The Sports section covers primarily male sports with a bias to football and rugby union, reflecting the former’s national dominance and the latter’s base among the southern middle classes. This appeals to the sports fan and is written in a stereotypically masculine style. The magazine contains much lifestyle material such as fashion, gardening, interior decor, well-being, and advice on sex and relationships, as well as more serious opinion pieces and interviews – much but certainly not all of the lifestyle content appears to be targeting women. The online version reproduces this material, mostly but not always organised in the same way.

Differences in audience interpretation may be most easily seen in the comments section of online articles, particularly those dealing with contentious political issues. For example, an article by Nick Cohen entitled ‘Who are the heroes who will lead the Brexit retreat?’ led to comments from Leave supporters that he was deluded and other comments from Remain supporters agreeing with his argument that Brexit should be abandoned.

Uses and gratification

Personal identity

Newspaper readership can still be used as a symbol of one’s social identity. The term ‘Guardian reader’ connotes a certain type of social attitude and *The Observer* similarly reinforces a set of social and political attitudes, and thus identity, in its representations. For example, *Observer* readers like to think of themselves as open-minded and this is reflected in the *Observer*’s practice of allowing both sides of an argument equally to be put when the newspaper is clearly on one side of this argument – over the success of President Trump or Brexit, for example. Even if a reader does not always agree with a viewpoint the newspaper puts forward, they may still be agreeing with the values being espoused and thus reinforcing their own values.

Social interaction and integration

Newspapers offer stories and opinions to readers that may form the basis of conversations with others. Traditionally they offered the opportunity for privacy in crowded social situations with strangers, such as on a train. Reading news and opinion about society, politics, sport and culture may help audiences feel more strongly that they are members of a common culture. Reading articles by familiar columnists and responding with tweets, Instagram comments, or comments on the website may replace real social interactions for some readers.

Some columnists such as Nick Cohen in *The Observer* write strongly argued, almost provocative pieces that often encourage such a response.

Entertainment

The entertainment function of newspapers may take the form of humour – in punning headlines, in cartoons, or in comedic opinion pieces such as that by David Mitchell in *The Observer*, for example. It may take the form of diversion into a celebrity world of ‘glamour’. It may take the form of human interest stories in which readers are invited to sympathise with the subjects of the article. Newspapers further offer games, puzzles, crosswords and the like. At the higher end, sections such as the New Review in the *Observer* may offer the pleasure of extremely well-written think pieces and literature reviews.

Surveillance

The major use of newspapers is to offer a sense of knowing what is going on in the world. Newspapers offer a range of information: hard news stories, interpretive articles, opinion pieces that can demonstrate a range of opinions in play about current affairs, celebrity and entertainment news and gossip, sports news and opinion, cultural reviews, and lifestyle advice and information. Above the information function of an individual newspaper is the role of the industry as a whole to reflect a variety of different viewpoints.

Active/passive audiences

Traditionally, the audience for a newspaper was primarily passive – they could choose which newspapers to buy and could write to the editor but would otherwise have to accept what they were given. Online newspapers cultivate a far more active audience, but still retain the editorial supremacy of the newspaper itself. Thus, the *Observer* website has no user-generated content; the audience are limited to responding to the journalists’ output. The Twitter and Instagram feeds similarly offer content for response.



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