

PRODUCT CONTEXT

News UK

- The **Sun** is a British **red-top tabloid** owned by **News UK**, a **subsidiary** of **conglomerate NewsCorp**, owned by **media baron** and **CEO**, **Rupert Murdoch**.
- The **Sun** has an average daily **print circulation** of 1.3 million copies in the UK with a **daily readership** of 2.2 million.
- **NewsCorp** describe **The Sun** as, "No longer just a news brand...but a true community anchor."
- The majority of its **print audience** is **35-64 year old C2DE males**.
- **YouGov** surveys show **The Sun** as UK's 4th most popular newspaper (98% heard of it, but only 33% like it).
- (**The Sun**, like other **red-top tabloids** is known for its **sensationalism**, celebrities and gossip – they have removed nude Page 3 models but continued with suggestively **objectified** representations of women.

MEDIA LANGUAGE

Images

- **Dominant image** – the **dominant image** features a substation explosion at Heathrow, which is a **hard news** story about infrastructure failures at the country's busiest airport. The **spectacle** of the explosion appeals to a **Mainstreamer readership**.
- **Secondary images** – the **photoshopped secondary image** of celebrity **Kym Marsh** (see: social context) **anchors** the front page in **soft news** entertainment, with connotations of glamour, status and red-carpet culture with her **elegant evening dress** - this image can be seen as an **intertextual reference** to Jessica Rabbit (Who Framed Roger Rabbit?) positioning **Kym Marsh** as a **'screen siren'** conforming to tabloid **voyeuristic male gaze conventions**.
- additionally, the **photoshopped image** of **Myles Lewis-Skelly** and **Harry Kane** highlights their **heroic status** in an England football qualifying match.

Written language

- **Headline** – the **headline** uses a **pun** on (Faulty/Fawly) that **intertextually references** the 1970s **sitcom** (see: cultural context) to imply the **incompetence** of the national grid and subtly, the Labour government's underfunding of Britain's infrastructure.
- **Masthead** – 'The Sun' **masthead** features in a **red-top skybox**, with connotations of the tabloid being a vital source of light to readers –
- **Strapline** – the three bullet-point **sub-headings** (substation blaze..., ...airport fiasco, ...thousands stranded) summarises the causes and consequences of the Heathrow closure and provides context for the **headline**.
- **Off-leads** – the **off-leads** 'Kym & The Fab at 50 Club', 'Myles Better England 2 Albania 0' and 'Get 2 Tickets' provide the readership with colloquial headings for **soft news** (celebrity, sport, theme park promotions) to counter-balance the **hard news headline story**.
- **Emotive language (puns)** – the **puns** 'Faulty Towers' and 'Myles Better' create a light-hearted and humorous tone – the pun of 'Myles' plays on the word 'miles' to imply that the England team have improved significantly thanks to the 18-year old footballer.
- **Emotive language** – the **emotive** use of "humiliated", "failed", "fiasco", "stranded" and "shambolic" reinforce the outrage of the 270,000 passengers affected by the blaze, and criticises the incompetence of national grid workers arguably communicates an anti-Labour bias.

Layout and design

- **Typography** – beyond the **informal mode of address** of **sans-serif typography**, the wonky 'Y' and 'S' in the **headline** have been stylised to connote the chaotic nature of the blaze.
- **Colour scheme** – The frequent use of **red (red skybox for masthead, Kym Marsh's red dress, and the 'blaze' at Heathrow)** – red has connotations of **passion, love and romance** but also **violence, danger and aggression**. Red is an engaging **primary colour** for readers that is considered aesthetically pleasing.
- **Text-to-image ratio** – there is a **low text-to-image ratio** which aligns with **tabloid conventions**. The **reading age** for The Sun is **8+** to make the **tabloid** accessible for all audiences, regardless of educational level.
- **Splash** – the splash features the **headline, dominant image**, and a **superimposed secondary image** (Heathrow closed), a **strapline** with three bullet points and brief copy of the incident (which conforms to the 5Ws – Who? What? When? Where? Why?) – the use of a **splash** for the headline story is a convention of the **tabloid** which becomes a **house style** for the paper.

Intertextuality

- See social and cultural context.
- **Genre** – **Red-top tabloids** often portray **hard news** stories in a simplified manner with a focus on **soft news** to entertain a **blue-collar C2DE demographic**.

- **Narrative** – the **dominant narrative** is that Britain (and Labour) has failed – **emotive language** points to crisis, chaos and incompetence – with a narrative of public victimhood and blame/accountability for the government, authorities and airport management.

News values

- **Negativity** – **negative** stories such as the airport infrastructure fire affected 270,000 is considered newsworthy.
- **Proximity** – Heathrow is in **proximity** to readers as the busiest airport in the UK – there is likely to be a direct impact on some UK travellers.
- **Threshold** – the disruption is large enough and meets the **threshold** to be considered nationally significant.

POLITICAL CONTEXT

- **Heathrow Airport** (LHR) is the UK's primary international gateway and Europe's busiest **airport** serving over 200 destination with four active terminals (2-5) – it is a major transport hub for passengers and cargo, open 24/7.
- **Heathrow** uses as much electricity as a small city and has three connections to the **national grid**.
- On the evening of 20 March 2025, a fire began in an **electrical sub-station** in Hayes, one of these connections.
- The fire caused a 16-hour closure of the airport, disrupting **270,000 passengers**.
- Big infrastructure is considered political, whether the **national grid** or **Heathrow airport**, because of the effect it has on peoples' lives – it is built and regulated by the government.
- The **headline** is in part a reference to the power outage, but also a **right-wing critique** of the **Labour government**, suggesting the outage was a sign of **incompetent management**.



REPRESENTATION

Gender

- Gender is represented **stereotypically** on the front page with **traditional gender norms** being conformed to – women (such as Kym Marsh), are constructed as **feminine and glamorous** – **glamour** can be associated with self-confidence and success.
- One can argue that the image of Kym Marsh reinforces the idea of **women as passive objects of visual pleasure** (commodities to sell newspapers) – her **'plunging sweetheart' neckline of the red dress** could be interpreted as an **intertextual reference** to the sex symbol Jessica Rabbit, reinforcing **patriarchal** structures in society.
- **Patriarchy** is also reinforced through the **construction of masculinity** through sport – Kane and Lewis-Skelly as dynamic, successful, strong and active – **traditional stereotypes of masculinity** that appeal to the **dominant Sun-reading demographic**.

Age

- One can argue that the Sun have been **counter-typical** in portraying **mid-life feminine beauty** (Kym Marsh turning 50) rather than a celebrity in their 20s, however, the photograph is an **archive image** of Kym Marsh as a 39 year-old, with no acknowledgment – this suggests that the Sun perpetuate the **'ageless beauty' stereotype**, and potentially reinforce **ageism** rather than authentically portraying the **'mid-life influencer'**, with clearer signs of ageing.
- The Sun also celebrate youth in sport with Myles Lewis-Skelly's debut goal at 18 years old for England FC – however, their celebration of 31 year-old Kane's goal in tandem, highlights a prioritising of sporting achievement over age.

Events and issues

- The Sun positions itself as a revealer of 'truth' by exposing the ineptitude of the national grid with the airport fire – the use of hyperbole (disaster/fiasco/mayhem) is a convention of **tabloids**.
- **Right-wing bias** is arguably evident in copy which is implicitly scathing towards the Labour government – as a **populist right-wing paper**, framing a **left-leaning political party** as incompetent or chaotic reinforces the **cultivated narratives** within Murdoch's media output.
- There is some **ethnic diversity** on the front page with a favourable appearance of a Black British sportsman on the front page – some may argue that this is **tokenistic**, whilst others may identify that this is **proportionally representative** of UK demographics.

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

- **Kym Marsh** is an English actress, singer and TV presenter best known for her role as Michelle Connor in ITV soap opera, **Coronation Street** (2006-19) – she appeared on **Strictly Come Dancing** in 2022 and as a presenter of **Morning Live** on BBC One.
- **Fawley Towers** was a 1970s TV sitcom starring Basil Fawley (John Cleese) as an incompetent and ill-tempered hotelier, running a dysfunctional hotel in England – the TV series has cult status with **older demographics** but has regained acclaim with **younger demographics** on the West End (Fawley Towers: The Play) – the 'Faulty Towers' headline acts as a **pun** and **intertextual reference**.
- 'Kym & The Fab at 50 Club' **sub-heading** is a reference to Kym turning 50 in 2026 – the UK cultural reappraisal of 'midlife influencer' women is redefining 50+ as a 'new prime' (Davina McCall, Claudia Winkleman, Tess Daly, Amanda Holden).



- **Myles Lewis-Skelly** is an English national team footballer who became the youngest player to score on their senior England debut (18 years old) – he scored 20 minutes into a match against Albania at Wembley – captain **Harry Kane** also scored in the 77th minute leading to a 2-0 win – it was manager Thomas Tuchel's first game in a World Cup qualifier.
- **Alton Towers** is the UK's largest theme park – it closes off-season from November to March (anyone over 90cm needs a ticket – one-day walk-up tickets can cost £68 – **Merlin Entertainments** (the **conglomerate** that owns the attraction, operates a dynamic pricing system, meaning tickets are more expensive for busy seasons – tabloid giveaways are a conventions – **The Sun Superdays** is a promotion to provide free/discounted tickets to major UK attractions (Alton Towers, Thorpe Park, Chessington World of Adventures) – access requires **Sun Savers** codes printed in the newspaper – The Sun can be seen to incentivise **C2DE audiences** to buy the paper for these benefits.

INDUSTRY

- **Context** – **declining profits and revenue** from print sales of newspapers has led to news content to be made available online – experimentation with **subscription models**, **membership and donation models**, and **diversification** with advertising-led approaches have been methods to prevent financial decline.
- **Regulation** – newspapers are largely **self-regulated**, with editors expected to follow the **Editors' Code of Practice** – if readers believe any content breaches this code, they can complain to the **Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO)**.
- **Pre-press**
 - **Newsgathering** – editor sets agenda for the paper, journalists create content, editor signs off on final content – increased use of **citizen journalism** with smartphone capturing of events providing source material.
 - **Advertising** – sales teams sell space both in the newspaper and on the website to brands wishing to promote products and services.
 - **Design** – page designers lay out the paper, arrange stories and advertising according to guidelines set by the editor and advertising teams.
- **Press**
 - **Publishing** – after editorial sign-off, the paper is published in print/online formats.
 - **Distribution** – finished print edition is **distributed** to newsagents and supermarkets – **digital content** is made available through **The Sun app**, whilst online stories are distributed on platforms including **Apple News** and social media to maximise audience reach.
 - **Roles in production process** – the owner, editor, writers, photographers and designers all have significant roles in the production process.
 - **Synergetic partnership and digital convergence** – see Industry KOL.

AUDIENCE

- **Target audiences** – both online and in print, **The Sun** targets **lower-to-middle income social groups (C2DE demographic)** – majority of **print/online readers** are male – most **print readers** are between **40 and 64 years old** – 60% of **online readers** are below age 34 – The Sun reading age is **8+** (**bold text, strong visuals** and **short sections of copy** improve accessibility to a wide audience).
- **Active/passive audience** – print newspaper readers often considered **passive audiences**; however, audiences are often considered quite **active** in responding to content according to context, personal beliefs and values.
- **Uses and Gratifications**
 - **Entertainment Needs** – sensationalist content appeals as a form of spectacle.
 - **Knowledge Needs** – **soft/hard news** keeps readers informed on current affairs.
 - **Social Interaction Needs** – friends/family can debate headline news.
 - **Personal Identity Needs** – readers may ideologically align with the tabloid.