

# Daily Mirror – American Election

(2016)



Credit: Daily Mirror, Thursday November 10, 2016

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### Component 1 Media Products, Industries and Audiences – Newspapers

**Focus Areas:**  
Media language  
Representation  
Media industries  
Audiences  
Media contexts

### Product Context

- National mid market Tabloid Newspaper established in 1903 and aimed at a predominantly working class readership, it follows a traditionally left wing political stance.
- This edition was published on the 10<sup>th</sup>
- November 2016 following the unprecedented
- high profile American election campaign which was eventually won by Republican Donald Trump, a 70 year old billionaire famous for appearing on reality TV show The Apprentice USA.
- *The Daily Mirror* demonstrated an unequivocally oppositional response to the result and views Trump as ill suited to such a high position of power.

### SECTION A – ANALYSING MEDIA LANGUAGE AND REPRESENTATION

#### STARTING POINTS – Media Language

#### Cultural Context

Donald Trump achieved one of the most improbable political victories in modern US history, despite a series of controversies exposed during the election campaign, his extreme



policies that drew criticism from both sides of the political spectrum, a record of racist and sexist behaviour, and a lack of political experience.

The **contemporary audience** could be assumed to be familiar with the **codes and conventions** of tabloid newspapers and the sensationalised **mode of address** that these newspapers present.

**FRONT PAGE:** The use of **American iconography** in the **subverted image** of the Statue of Liberty draws the **reader's attention** to the front page of the newspaper. Here the statue is seen to be weeping into her hands which **creates meaning for the audience** and is intended to be read as **connoting despair**. The background of the image contains dark clouds which can be interpreted as foreshadowing future events. *The Daily Mirror* has **juxtaposed the image** with the bold headline “What have they done?” which positions the American voters as to blame for Trump’s victory. The bold headline at the top of the page “It’s President Trump...” with the use of ellipsis again suggests foreshadowing.

**AMERICA’S BREXIT:** This article likens the US election outcome to Brexit by highlighting immigration concerns and loss of jobs as central to voters’ decision to vote for Trump. The **juxtaposition of images** of Trump’s supporters rejoicing alongside a breakdown of voting according to **demographics** highlights the **newspaper’s**

**viewpoint** that the election was “a whitelash” (used in a subheading) and that white, middle class voters were responsible for Trump’s win.

### Theoretical perspectives:

#### Semiotics – Roland Barthes

The use of **American iconography** throughout the front page (subverted image of the Statue of Liberty) and the colours of the American flag in the article will have immediate **cultural significance** for the reader who will be able to **create meaning** in the **associations** they have with these signs

#### Structuralism - Levi – Strauss

The use of the pronoun ‘They’ in the front-page headline “What have they done?” creates an immediate binary opposition of ‘us and them’ and lays blame on the American people for Trump’s win and creates the suggestion that this has a global impact and therefore particular ideological significance.

#### Starting points – Representation

**Consider how representations are constructed through a process of selection and combination.**

In the article there are several images used of Trump supporters that all demonstrate similar patriotic **codes of dress** (red, white and blue clothing dominates with one man in a stars and stripes suit). Their **body language** suggests jubilation and clear support with one woman wearing boxing gloves that could **connote** her being willing to ‘battle’ to win. Trump and Clinton are both featured here in smaller articles with Clinton being represented as **calm and composed** while Trump looks **aggressive and determined**. Of the eleven people featured on these pages all are white and are predominantly male which is indicative of the newspaper’s suggestion that Trump’s supporters fall into this demographic. This subsequently marginalises other social groups, however.

### Theoretical perspectives:

#### Representation – Stuart Hall

The representation of Trump and his supporters is constructed, using media language to create meaning

for the audience. The use of these ‘signs’ by the newspaper suggest that Trump and his supporters belong to a specific cultural group of predominantly white, middle class men. This representation transmits ideas to the reader about inequalities of power and the subordination of certain social groups.

## SECTION B: UNDERSTANDING MEDIA INDUSTRIES AND AUDIENCES

### Industry context:

The striking image of the weeping Statue of Liberty was created in 1989 by British Artist Gee Vaucher and was chosen by the **newspaper to represent their viewpoint** on the election outcome. The newspaper had found the image amongst hundreds of social media memes and contacted the artist for permission to use it. Her painting had originally been used as homage to punk art of the 1970s, known for its anti-establishment messages. The image is an incredibly powerful tool for the newspaper as it takes an **iconographic symbol** of American idealism and opportunity and subverts it, **challenging established beliefs** to suit their **political agenda**.

### Starting Points – Industry

The *Daily Mirror* was first published in 1903 as a newspaper for women ‘to act as a mirror on feminine life’. However the newspaper was quickly redesigned to appeal to a broader audience.

Owned by the Trinity mirror group, the *Daily Mirror* was once the most **popular tabloid** in the UK. However, it has had the largest year on year fall in sales of any national print newspaper in recent years with a current average daily sales of just 716 000 copies.

**Online media** has largely been responsible for the downturn in print sales and the *Daily Mirror* has responded to this by launching ‘**Mirror Online**’ and having a presence on **social media sites**.

The website offers **interactive opportunities** for its readers with competitions, polls and a ‘Got a story?’ feature which invites readers to submit their own stories. After the Trump victory online users were able to express their views on an online forum.

The Trinity group is the **largest national and regional multimedia content publisher** in the UK, comprising national and regional **newsbrands** across the country. The **group publish more than**

**150 newspaper titles** across the UK and Ireland, from the national presence of the *Daily Mirror*, the *Daily Record*, the *Sunday Mirror*, to local newspapers such as the *Manchester Evening News*, *Bristol Post*, *Liverpool Echo* and *Nottingham Post*.

The *Daily Mirror* is part of **Independent Press Standards Organisation (Ipso)** - an independent body which is not backed by the Government and is fully funded by the industry itself. This is a **regulatory body** that maintains press standards but is anti-Leveson in its approach.

### Theoretical Approaches:

#### Power and media industries – Curran and Seaton

The Trinity Group have maintained their position in the UK market despite falling sales of the *Daily Mirror* and other mainstream titles by diversifying into regional news. This diverse pattern of ownership has allowed them to create the conditions for more varied and adventurous media products.

#### Regulation – Sonia Livingstone and Peter Lunt

The Trinity Group is facing increasing pressure alongside the rest of the UK press industry to adhere to strict rules and guidelines on industry practice. This has arisen after the phone hacking scandal and subsequent Leveson enquiry into the industry. There is an underlying issue of protecting citizens from harmful material while ensuring choice and press freedom.

#### Cultural Industries – David Hesmondhalgh

Trinity Mirror group has become a horizontally integrated company with a wide range of titles in order to maximise audiences and minimise risks. Rather than seeing digital media as a threat the company has embraced its digital expansion and now offers digital marketing as well as digital classifieds to generate additional income.

### Starting Points: Audience

#### How are audiences grouped and categorised?

The *Daily Mirror*'s target audience, according to NRS and ABC data are predominantly C2DE, over 35 and are working class Labour supporters.

#### How audiences interpret the media product.

The Trump election win edition will target this group as it highlights his right wing conservatism and attempts to instil fear in the reader through the use of rhetoric and the emotive use of the front page headline.

#### How do different audience interpretations reflect social, cultural and historical circumstances.

Highlighting Trump's intentions for America (building a wall to prevent Mexicans entering the US, scrapping Obamacare etc.) will potentially enrage readers with a left wing political stance. This is furthered by the use of pronouns such as 'we' to suggest the impact that Trump's victory will have on the collective global audience.

### Theoretical Approaches:

#### Cultivation Theory – Gerbner

Audience exposure to repeated patterns of representation (of Trump and his election campaign) by newspapers may shape and influence their views and opinions.

#### Reception Theory - Stuart Hall

The *Daily Mirror* is able to promote a hegemonic-dominant reading of its viewpoint on Trump's victory through the use of encoding and decoding, which is fully accepted by the reader.

#### End of Audience – Clay Shirky

The conceptualisation of audience members as passive consumers is no longer tenable in the age of the internet with the rise of the prosumer who can create their own content such as submitting stories and being part of forums.