

# The Mirror

(13 March 2019)

**DAILY** FIGHTING FOR YOU  
Wednesday, March 13, 2019 80P

**The Mirror**

Enders Hayley glassed by thug  
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**PM LOSES KEY VOTE AGAIN**

**BREXIT DELAY MAYHEM**

BY PIPPA CRERAR Political Editor  
BREXIT looks set to be delayed after Prime Minister Theresa May suffered a second humiliating defeat last night.  
With the Tory PM's authority in tatters, the Commons could seize control by voting to block a no-deal and postpone leaving on March 29.  
Labour's David Lammy called it "another humiliating defeat for the most chaotic and destructive British Government in living memory".  
FULL STORY: PAGES 4&5

May surrenders after another massive defeat leaving nation facing months of chaos

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# The Mirror

(13 March 2019)

## AS Level Component 1: Investigating the Media

### A Level Component 1: Media Products, Industries and Audiences.

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

#### PRODUCT CONTEXT

- The *Daily Mirror* is a British daily national tabloid newspaper. Established in 1903, it is aimed at predominantly working class readership. It follows a traditionally left wing political stance.
- One of the *Mirror's* main competitors is *The Sun* newspaper which targets a similar socio-economic demographic, but usually adopts a more traditionally right wing stance.
- This edition was published on March 13th, 2019, after Theresa May had encountered another Commons defeat over her Brexit proposals. As a mostly left-wing newspaper, the *Mirror* has been critical of the way the conservative government has been handling the Brexit negotiations.

#### PART 1: STARTING POINTS – Media language and representation

##### Political context

On 23rd June 2016, citizens of the UK voted to leave the European Union (EU). This was nicknamed '**Brexit**'. The vote was very close with 51.9% voting to leave and 48.1% voting remain. The controversies from the campaign continued even after the vote. Remainers accused leave voters of xenophobia and racism; leavers accused remainers of being unpatriotic and un-democratic. The period since the referendum has been one of political turmoil. Following the resignation of David

Cameron shortly after the vote, Theresa May has faced regular leadership challenges from within her own party, and a snap general election in 2017 in which her party suffered heavy losses. Meanwhile, she had been regularly visiting Brussels and other EU countries in an effort to create a **Brexit deal** that would satisfy both the EU and the UK parliament. On the date this edition of the *Mirror* was published, MPs had **voted against** the deal she had negotiated with the EU. This was very serious as the UK was scheduled to be leaving the EU just ten days after. Withdrawing from the EU with '**no deal**' could have catastrophic consequences on trade, immigration, healthcare etc., affecting all UK citizens.

##### Cultural context

*Eastenders* is one of the UK's most popular **soap operas**, with a reputation for featuring hard-hitting storylines that often feature issues such as rape, domestic violence and homophobia. Since 1985, it has been regularly watched by audiences of up to 20 million people. This has turned the actors into celebrities and - like **Dyer's 'Star Theory'** suggests - tabloid newspapers often run stories about the actor's lives mirroring their *Eastenders* storylines. Traditionally, one of the *Mirror's* (and other tabloids') main elements is **sports reporting** - often over half the paper is dedicated to sport. The '**back pages**' often feature the betting odds for horse races and will have special 'pull out' features when there is a major racing event. Racing 'meets' like Ascot and Cheltenham have upper class associations, but have increasingly become popular days out for the less wealthy audiences.

##### Front page:

- The page is split between the political story, a '**puff box**' promoting the pull-out **supplement**, and an advert for a betting service (that obviously links to the Cheltenham pull-out). The headline 'Brexit Delay Mayhem' and the use of the emotive words 'surrender', 'defeat' and 'chaos' suggest the negotiations for Britain leaving the EU are disastrous.

- The image of May looking very serious **anchors** the headline - that fact the image is tiny (smaller than the photo of attacked actor in the top right) shows how little respect or faith the *Mirror* has in May's abilities.
- The **strapline** 'Fighting for you' provides solidarity for people confused or worried about the political turmoil of Brexit.
- The Cheltenham Festival pull-out actually dominates the page - with bright green font and background, combined with an exciting **action shot** of a horse and rider, it grabs the attention more than the political story. The puff box "All the tips! All the form!" offers practical advice and the offer of a free bet will also entice the reader. The use of these terms **positions** the reader as someone already knowledgeable about racing.
- The advert at the base of the page also uses brightly coloured graphics, the greens linking it to the racing feature above.
- The article about the assault on the actor is a close-up of her upset face, to create empathy and the reader feel closer to this 'character'. The headline uses emotive slang like 'glassed' and 'thug' to condemn the attack. It also doesn't use the real actor's name (Katie Jarvis) instead addressing her as her character's name. The abbreviation of *Eastenders* along with the slang suggests this story is less important and more 'gossipy'.

### Article:

- The central image is a medium shot of Theresa May: her hands are raised which could connote defeat. It could also indicate conciliation or resistance.
- The text of the article shows it is a mixture of all of these! May is portrayed as someone who is losing, but who is also bravely fighting on against the odds.
- The language of the whole article is **allegorical**: portraying the debate in Parliament as if it is a horse race. "A Faller At The 2nd" is racing track slang for a poorly performing horse, and there is even a book-keeper character at the bottom of the page, offering odds for the different Brexit outcomes.
- Throughout the main article, May is described using light-hearted derogatory language ("tottering Theresa"). Though her "dwindling authority" is ridiculed, at some points her efforts sound almost heroic ("dashing to Brussels").

- On either side of the double page there are two rival columns offering opposing viewpoints on the proceedings. The style of these is similar to that of **sports journalism**, and there are numerous light-hearted **pop culture** references (e.g. comparing one man to Gandalf from *Lord Of The Rings* and including his famous line "You shall not pass").

### Theoretical perspectives:

#### Structuralism - Levi - Strauss

There is a **binary opposition** between the MPs and "the Nation" which feeds into the 'us vs them' ideology of '**populism**'. There is also an opposition between the two political pundits on the double page piece. The language in the headlines (plus the odds from 'Honest Jason') also explains some quite complex political debates in using the allegory of a horse race - this dramatises the details (and also links to the paper's main **advertisers**!)

#### Starting points: Representation

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

#### Front page:

- By reducing Theresa May to the smallest image on the page, the *Mirror* is sending a clear message about the way she is seen by her fellow MPs and by the newspaper's target audience.
- The headline focuses on her **defeat** and implies the whole situation is her fault - there is very little description of the MPs who have challenged her.
- This **personalises** a complex story by making it about the experiences of one **individual** rather than a complicated political progress involving hundreds of people. This is a technique used by news media to help audiences build **emotional engagement** about 'dry' political or economic stories.
- The small amount of space given to the whole story - along with the "...Loses Key Vote Again" headline - suggests that, these political conflicts have become almost commonplace, and this is all part of the **ongoing Brexit 'chaos'**.
- Both this and the *Eastenders* story could suggest women are weak and **vulnerable**: May 'surrenders', 'Hayley' has been physically assaulted. Yet the images - May in mid-argument, 'Hayley' looking **defiant** - give the impression of inner strength despite the attacks they have experienced. The *Mirror* has an even gender split in their audience, which may explain this more **complex portrayal** of women.



### Article:

- The portrayal of May as embattled continues with a blow by blow account of the debate. The detail of her losing her voice again represents her as both weak, but also relentless in her aims.
- The image of her dominates the page, whilst the male politicians are in far smaller photo-boxes. There is a sense that even though she is failing, she is going down fighting. Though this seems at odds with the Mirror's political bias, it does fit with the large female market who may admire May's tenacity even if they don't like her politics.

### Theoretical perspectives:

#### Feminist theory - Van Zoonen

Van Zoonen suggested that women are often portrayed as sexualised, weak or vulnerable in the media. Though the two women featured on the *Mirror's* cover are from stories that seem to portray them as vulnerable, the images used connote strength and defiance in the face of adversity; also neither are sexualised (almost a genre convention in many other UK tabloids!)

## PART 2: UNDERSTANDING MEDIA INDUSTRIES AND AUDIENCES

### STARTING POINTS – Media Industry

#### Industry context

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 Reach plc, 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 509, 000 copies (Jan 2019).

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. Though it doesn't invite users' comments on political issues, it does have accessible stories breaking down the key events into 'bitesize' chunks (e.g. "5 Facts About..."). This reinforces

the *Mirror's* brand being the "Intelligent Tabloid". Reach plc is the largest national and regional multimedia content publisher in the UK, comprising national and regional news brands across the country. The group publishes more than 150 newspaper titles across the UK and Ireland, from the national presence of the Daily Mirror, the Daily Record, the Daily Express, to local newspapers such as the Manchester Evening News 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

Reach plc has maintained their position in the UK market despite falling sales of the *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

Reach plc is facing increasing pressure alongside the rest of the UK press industry to adhere to strict rules and regulations 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

Reach plc 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 is predominantly C2DE, over 35 and are working class Labour supporters.

##### How do audiences interpret the product?

- The audience is **positioned** as being disapproving of May, a Tory PM, and towards the other MPs.

The use of despairing, defeated language would **resonate** with their cynicism towards politicians, and their fears about the ‘chaos’ of Brexit.

- The red font and central positioning of the headline indicates that this story is important, but the sandwiching between adverts for gambling, along with the ‘Loses Again’ indicates this is just another installment in a long, tedious process, and that it is advisable to focus on more entertaining experiences.
- The use of horse-racing **terminology** in the main article’s headlines relates to the audience’s interest in racing, and the rival political columnists describe the day’s events in the opinionated and emotive style of a sports ‘pundit’.
- Despite much emotive and symbolic language (that also references popular culture) there is actually a lot of factual detail about the Commons debate. The ‘cut and thrust’ of the proceedings **narrates** what could be quite a dry and inaccessible series of arguments.

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

- The tone of the article - and the prominence of more stereotypical working class entertainment like soap operas and horse-racing - link to ideology of ‘populism’ that has become more prevalent in mainstream politics over the past five years. Donald Trump’s ‘Make America Great Again’ and Nigel Farage’s attack on the ‘elite’ encourage the view that mainstream politicians are hopelessly out of touch with the ‘common people’.

### Theoretical approaches:

#### Cultivation theory – Gerbner

Audience exposure to **repeated patterns** of representation (of May, of Brexit, or of modern politics) by newspapers may shape and influence their views and opinions. Gerbner went on to say that this is not like ‘hypodermic model’ but rather depends on what the audience already believes. The messages (e.g. politicians are ineffectual) need to **resonate** with an established belief (e.g. Brexit is a chaotic mess) in the audience (e.g. working class, left-wing men and women).

#### Reception theory – Stuart Hall

There is an ambiguous representation of women on the front page. Some may **decode** the stories as portraying women as defeated and vulnerable, others may **negotiate** a meaning as these women being defiant in the face of adversity.

#### End of audience – Clay Shirky

The concept 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. Newspapers like *The Guardian* have embraced this, taking popular ‘**below-the-line**’ (i.e. non-professional) commentators and offering them ‘**above-the-line**’ columns. The *Mirror* does offer some opportunities for ‘citizen journalism’ (e.g. the “What’s Your Story?” section of their website) the majority of content is still written by journalists.