

BACKGROUND CONTEXT

The Sun is a British **tabloid** daily newspaper owned by Rupert Murdoch's **News Corp.** It was originally published six days a week until News Corp. also started producing The Sun on Sunday in February 2012 to replace the News of the World. With an average daily circulation of roughly 1.6 million copies of their print edition in the UK and a daily readership of around 4.1 million <http://www.newsworks.org.uk/The-Sun>), The Sun has the **largest circulation** of any daily print newspaper in the United Kingdom. In addition, The Sun on Sunday is the UK's biggest selling Sunday newspaper. On 23rd June 2016, citizens of the UK voted to leave the European Union. This was nicknamed 'Brexit'. The vote was very close with 51.9% voting leave and 48.1% voting remain. This reflects the divisive nature of the referendum and the sometimes ugly nature of the campaigns where the Leave camp was accused of fuelling racism and xenophobia (fear of strangers), and the Remain camp was accused of 'betraying Britain' (nationalism). Almost two years later (on the date this edition of The Sun was published) different factions were still arguing. The Prime Minister, Theresa May was trying to put a bill through Parliament to approve her plan for Brexit, but many MPs (from both sides) were critical.

MEDIA LANGUAGE

CODES AND CONVENTIONS

This front cover uses the conventions of a newspaper:

- Layout, use of cover photographs/images, house style, mastheads.
- Emotive vs Formal language to engage different audience responses.
- Roland Barthes enigma codes - headlines used to tease people to want to read certain stories

There is also a **strapline** that reads "For A Greater Britain" that suggests The Sun has a clearer idea than MPs what is good for the country.

The start of the **headline** addresses MPs directly, and has a threatening tone. The huge letters for the 'choice' is phrased more like an ultimatum. This reduces what is obviously an extremely complex piece of legislation to something very simple and emotive. 'Cutting through bureaucracy' is something right wing populists favour, and this kind of 'straight talking' is what The Sun is renowned for.

The masthead is in block, capitalised text and uses the colours red and white. Other newspapers in the UK also use this design (such as The Mirror, The Daily Star and the Daily Sport) and these are termed "red tops" as they specialise in tabloid journalism - journalism that often relies on sensationalism, celebrities and gossip. Tabloids are also renowned for simplifying complex political issues.

REPRESENTATION

REPRESENTATION: HISTORICAL & POLITICAL CONTEXTS

In its early years, The Sun nominally supported the Labour party but has moved back and forth between Labour and the Conservatives, depending on party leadership. The paper has always been very vocal in telling its readers how they should vote ("Why it must be Labour" 1970; "Vote Tory this time" 1979; "Do you really want this old fool to run Britain?" 1983). Today, The Sun is described as having **political allegiance to the Conservative party** and does not support the EU, so it is not surprising they are backing offering a **pro-Brexit** viewpoint that links to nationalist values. The paper does have an ambivalent representation of politicians. They often flatter and endorse specific MPs and policies, but also regularly feature articles that expose government policies they consider too left wing (especially concerning immigration or multiculturalism). This links to the populist belief that politics is run by an 'elite' who have 'lost touch with the people'.

The cover is a **montage** of different British cultural traditions that we should be proud about (including fish'n'chips and the Loch Ness monster!) These are also quite stereotypical elements of British identity, what foreign tourists may expect from a visit to the UK.

The Sun targets the lower middle social classes, most of whom haven't attended higher education. Two thirds of its readers are over 35 years old, 54% are male and its biggest audience share comes from the C2DE demographic. the average reading age of the UK population is 9 years old. The Sun has a reading age of 8 years, which means it is accessible to everyone and especially appealing to members of our society who have weaker literacy skills.

HISTORICAL & CULTURAL CONTEXTS

The Sun started life as a broadsheet in 1964, becoming a tabloid in 1969 after being purchased by its current owners. Sex was an important feature of the paper's marketing strategy and the first topless page 3 model appeared in November 1970. This soon became a regular feature of the paper and has been an area of contention for some people. The Sun has always been considered controversial in terms of its output, partly due to its over-reliance on sensational news and partly due to complete fabrication for the sake of a story ("Freddie Starr Ate My Hamster", 1986). It has also maintained an antielitist agenda where it regularly exposes the sex or drug scandals of celebrities or authority figures. In the past five years there has been a surge in 'populist nationalism'. This is a political ideology that distrusts 'experts', statistics and mainstream politicians in favour of returning control to 'the common people' (populist). In many countries across the world, there has been a rise in nationalism; the belief that your country and customs are superior to all others. Positively, nationalism could be seen as pride in your country's culture, traditions and achievements. Negatively, the dismissal or fear of other cultures could be viewed as xenophobia or racism. The Sun is unashamedly right wing, and part of its brand is to support a nationalist ideology - especially in sporting events and stories about the royal family, but also extending into politics. These have been controversial: during the 1980s Falkland War they featured a photo of a sinking Argentine battleship with the headline 'Gotcha'. They often employ outspoken columnists like Katie Hopkins whose descriptions of migrants as cockroaches" were condemned by the UN Commission for Human Rights. During the Brexit campaign and aftermath, The Sun enthusiastically supported the leave party and published a number of exaggerated or plainly untrue stories that linked into nationalist beliefs: that migrants from the EU are stealing British jobs, overwhelming the welfare services, planning terrorist attacks etc. They even reported the Queen supported Brexit, a claim that Buckingham Palace denied.

The **dominant image** is a photo-montage of iconic British landmarks or traditions. There are key historical sites like Stonehenge and the Shard; popular British brands like Minis and red buses and spitfires; and even the Houses of Parliament to show a respect for our political system. These are set on backdrops of rolling fields, forests and coastline. It creates the image of Britain as a 'green and pleasant land' (a common term from William Blake's poem 'Jerusalem', itself a song with a nationalist message). This is a very positive representation but also quite a stereotypical one.

This montage is **anchored** by the **headline**, "Great Britain or Great Betrayal". The headline's use of the emotive term 'betrayal' make it clear that the cultural icons featured on the cover are at risk from politicians.

The opening to the article can be seen on the left third of the cover beginning, "The Sun says..." suggesting the newspaper has real influence when it comes to the decisions MPs make.

TERMINOLOGY

Masthead - The name of the newspaper, at the top of the front page, easily identifiable

Headline - The main story, biggest text on the front page

Anchor - The main image that goes with the headline

Strapline - a sub-heading to the masthead, gives insight into the style / purpose and audience of the newspaper

Direct address - Talks directly to the audience or subject of the article

Emotive content - words and images that spark emotion to the audience

Serif - font that looks fancy with little flicks

Sans serif - font that is simple and less formal (sans = "without" flicks)

Colour palette - the colours used in the brand image

House Style - the style of the brand, including fonts and colours

Political allegiance - who, politically, the newspaper supports due to a common value/belief

Tabloid - smaller, sensationalist newspapers

Red tops - nickname for tabloids due to their mastheads being in red/white

Brexit - nickname given for UK leaving the EU

Enigma code - elements that create intrigue for the audience

Informal language - slang, less correct way of saying things

Xenophobia - a fear of different nationalities /people from other countries

Right wing - opposes social democracy

Reinforcing stereotypes - uses stereotypes

C2DE - lower skilled workers, lower paid

Demographic - the make up of audience based on factors such as age, race, sex etc.

Political ideology - a certain set of ideals of a political party, that explains how society should work

Montage - piecing together separate images



The landmarks and traditions are closely associated with England and particularly the South of England where there was **strong support for Brexit**. There is only one Northern landmark (the Angel of the North) and no representations of Scotland and Northern Ireland except for Loch Ness. This may be because Scotland and Northern Ireland both voted to remain, so are not part of The Sun's **target audience**. The Sun does have specific Irish and Scottish editions, so this may also explain the focus on England.

The **strapline** 'For A Greater Britain' implies, along with 'The Sun Says...' suggests The Sun has a clearer definition of what makes Britain great than others, and implies the reader should trust its vision.

The Sun isn't just **reinforcing** these **stereotypes**; it is saying that if we don't celebrate and protect them then we will be 'betraying' Britain. The only way to 'protect' British identity is for MPs to vote in favour of the Brexit bill.

