The boat flipped. They just slipped through my hands

Father's anguish at death of sons Aylan and Ghalib
Tragedy sparks calls for action across Europe

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Even now, one night and a day after the disaster, the severity of their devastation still lingers. This was not the place any of them should have been. They had escaped horror, faced plenty and, in the last few months, they had played on the shores and bays beached from across the world.

For Abdullah and Nohadran and their two small children, Aylan and Ghalib, the dream of a life in Canada, far from war and terror, had ended before it even began.

But then came the waves: a surge of forced evacuation overwhelmed their Makeshift plastic bags. ‘It took over and started swirling,’ said Abdullah. The waves were too high and the boat flipped. I took one, which was my arms and evolved.

The Medline ship was not the only one to run into trouble on Wednesday. Another boat capsized early in the day, leaving 13 dead altogether. The surf was high, the sea脸色, rocks and boats of the Medline were the children went. Saturday, more than six hours after the tragedy, photographs, clothes, handkerchiefs, scrap paper, personal effects, a bag, could not be found. But there was no trace of life.

Within hours of being taken, photographs showing three-year-old Aylan lying dead on the beach had sparked outrage and furious debate over the lack of international help for refugees who answered the calls of the UNHCR and the Canadian government. They appeared

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Aylan and Ghalib Kurdi were drowned after the boat they were in capsized. Photograph: Tutun Kurdi/Canadian Press/AP

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Component 1: Exploring the Media

Focus areas:
Media language
Representation
Media contexts

PRODUCT CONTEXT
• The Guardian is a British national daily newspaper with an average daily circulation of roughly 189,000 copies of their print edition in the UK.
• The Guardian newspaper targets a well-educated, relatively young, predominantly male and liberal audience. The demographic is 89% ABC1. Fifty-two percent of Guardian readers are male, and the average reader age is 44.
• The Guardian has a UK online edition which has over 42.6 million readers (as of October 2014).
• In 2006, The Guardian went through a complete redesign. It became smaller, had a new typeface and balanced the longer pieces of journalism out with many shorter stories. The reasons for this were twofold: to adapt to what was going on in the market (The Independent and The Times had already changed to a tabloid format) and to adapt to people’s reading habits, with people now having little time to spare and increasingly ‘reading on the go’.

PART 1: STARTING POINTS – Media language

Social context
In March 2011, civil war in Syria broke out and an estimated 11 million Syrians have fled their homes since then. The majority of these have sought refuge in countries that border Syria, but an estimated one million have requested asylum in Europe. Families have been broken up and many are making dangerous and difficult journeys across land and sea to get to, what they consider, a safe place. Opinions on these migrants vary: there is a lot of support and aid being offered by individuals and charities, but there is also a lot of fear and uncertainty about how countries will cope with the increased populations and the impact such migrants will have on their societies.

Cultural context
It is expected that the audience will recognize the two robots portrayed in the top third of the magazine. This recognition of such icons and their very famous film franchise helps to create social inclusion and a shared knowledge and cultural understanding. It is also a subtle form of advertising, as the front cover is dated 4 September 2015 – just 3 months before the release of the latest film in the Star Wars sequel trilogy, The Force Awakens, and the day that all the new merchandise was released. These images can be considered to be intertextual references that the audience will spot and then be able to bring a shared understanding to the text.

Consider how media language creates and communicates meaning:
• Unlike many of its counterparts that use block, capitalised text for their mastheads, The Guardian’s masthead is written all in lowercase and uses a curved font. This uniqueness makes the newspaper stand out from the crowd when competing for sales on the news-stands and, arguably, is a more personal mode of address, one which offers an alternative form of journalism to the rest of the industry.
• The dominant image of the two little boys who drowned, along with their mother who is not pictured, whilst crossing from Turkey to Greece gives a human face to the Syrian refugee crisis. The image depicts happy little boys, wearing typical clothing and a cheeky smile. This human angle is a common convention of the news, as it allows the readers to engage with the stories on a more personal level and the use of children is particularly effective as they are often associated with innocence and vulnerability.
• The photograph is anchored with the caption, “Aylan and Ghalib Kurdi were drowned after the boat they were in capsized” and the headline, “The boat flipped. They just slipped through my hands”, explaining their deaths as wholly accidental.
The emotive language used at the start of the article, “anguish”, “tragedy” and in the lead paragraph, “disaster” and “devastation”, evokes a huge sense of sympathy from the reader. The audience is positioned in such a way so as to support these families and apportion blame to Europe’s governments and international authorities who have created this crisis and allow it to continue.

Consider how choice of elements of media language portrays aspects of reality and conveys messages and values:

- Alongside the main article, there is a linked article about how the Prime Minister at the time was under increasing pressure to allow more refugees into Britain. The phrasing of the headline, “PM bows to pressure” attempts to show David Cameron in an unfavourable light, stating that he felt that he should agree because so many people were putting pressure on him to do so, suggesting that the Prime Minister doesn’t agree with the idea or wish it to continue.
- When placed alongside the main article, and more notably the image of the little boys, the subtext is that he lacks compassion and empathy for these victims of war, arguably reflecting the values and political leaning of The Guardian.

Consider the codes and conventions of media language:

- A much smaller part of the front page is given over to g2 film & music, a regular segment in the paper which, because of its placing, when displayed on news-stands may well be the section people see first. This entertainment segment offers a lighter alternative to the hard hitting news stories of the rest of the newspaper and may well be a reason why people choose this paper over others, many of which will undoubtedly be covering the same main stories.
- Iconic images of R2D2, C-3PO and Woody Allen, amongst others, engage part of the target audience who will be familiar with these and the reference to “Aciiid” and “Rave classics” along with Emma Stone may be more appealing to their younger readers.

Possible areas for further investigation:

- Code and conventions of newspaper covers – layout, use of cover photographs/images, house style, mastheads.
- Narrative – headlines used to tease people to want to read certain stories (could be linked to Roland Barthes – enigma codes).

Active/Passive audience. Historically, readers of print newspapers were considered to be passive (i.e. they read what was in front of them and believed it), especially as there is an expectation that what is shared in the news genre is true. However, today’s audiences are much more active and can interact with the news they read. They have the option to read it online, comment and discuss below an article, as well as sharing it on social media. This potentially changes the way they interpret the information they are given.

PART 2: STARTING POINTS – Representation

Political context

The Guardian is described as having mainstream left political values. It does not have an affiliation with any political party, but does lean towards the left and has a very liberal tradition. It is therefore not surprising that the language of the two main articles seeks to apportion blame to the European governments suggesting they are the reason for this crisis, and also paints a picture of an uncaring Conservative Prime Minister. It is also unsurprising that they are presenting an alternative viewpoint to the more right-wing press, encouraging their readers to see the refugees as victims of war who deserve our help.

The Guardian isn’t owned by a group of shareholders like most other newspapers, for whom making a profit is imperative. Therefore they believe that they can hold true to their core journalistic principles.

Consider the representation of refugees as a social group and the representation of the migrant crisis as an issue:

- The text of the main article is carefully constructed to position the audience into accepting the newspaper’s viewpoint, analysis and opinion. The image and the language used position the Kurdi family, and therefore all refugees, as blameless victims. It is a story of personal tragedy which, in other circumstances unrelated to a migrant crisis, would be viewed as a heartbreaking catastrophe by all who read about it. However, in the political and social context of the Syrian refugee crisis, this is the kind of story that divides people – some considering it the father’s fault, and suggesting that they shouldn’t have been making the
crossing in the first place as the journey to Europe was too dangerous and unnecessary.

Consider theoretical perspectives on representation, such as selection and omission:
- The selection of this particular image could have been to show how they look just like any other youngsters, their nationality being irrelevant. The previous day, the image used by many papers, including The Guardian, was a much more shocking picture of Aylan’s body being carried by an official. The Guardian could have used this image again or a similar one but didn’t and it’s worth considering why that was.

Consider the functions and uses of stereotypes:
- In contrast to the unfavourable dominant media stereotype of refugees as potential terrorists, benefit scroungers and criminals, this image serves to remind the readers of the reality of the situation and show just how desperate many are to flee their homes in search of safety.
- The two boys are also being used, in this context, perhaps to represent all migrant children involved in this war, and once again highlighting their innocence, vulnerability and defencelessness.

Possible areas for further investigation:
- Theoretical perspectives (e.g. Stuart Hall) – representation, stereotype, selection/omission and perhaps how, in some ways, this newspaper front page has sought to move away from the more typical right-wing representations of refugees and the migrant crisis.
- It would be helpful to compare this article with another from the tabloid right-wing press, such as The Sun which often paints refugees as potential terrorists, parasites, and people to be despised and/or feared.