

The front page

The evening before a newspaper is published, the editor and senior journalists meet to decide which story should go on the front page. The story they choose will be the first thing that anyone thinking of buying the paper will see. Choosing the right story therefore affects sales of the paper.

Here are some of the news stories on one day in 2007.

The sacking of the chief police officer investigating the disappearance of Madeleine McCann.

RECORD HIGH TEMPERATURES IN THE ARCTIC.

The man who is trying to avoid paying a £2m gambling debt.

The Prime Minister's decision to reduce the numbers of British troops in Iraq.

Pictures, not previously released, of the moments just before the car crash in Paris in which Princess Diana was killed.

The Conservative Party's plans to cut taxes if they win the next election.

Footballer Steven Gerrard meets a ten-year-old boy with whom he was involved in a car accident.

Unconfirmed news that a general election will take place in less than a month.

FEWER CHILDREN HAVE SCHOOL DINNERS.

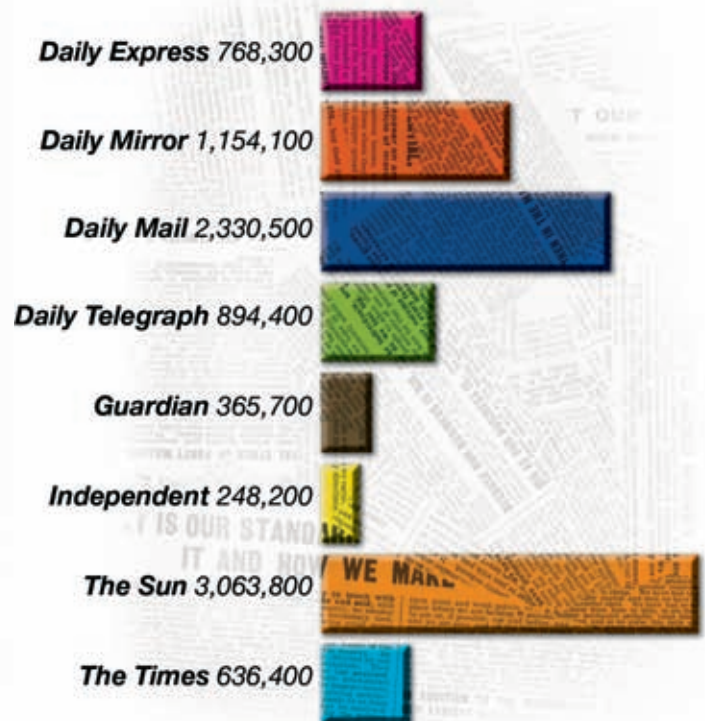
Questions

- 1 Look at each of the stories below left, and decide which you think:
 - is the most important
 - is the least important
 - has the greatest effect on people's lives
 - is the most interesting.

Explain the reasons for your choice in each case.
- 2 Now put yourself in the position of a newspaper editor. Are there any of the stories that you would not include in the paper?

Which three stories would you place on the front page or give most space to? Explain the reasons for your choices.

Daily UK newspaper sales



(Source: Audit Bureau of Circulations 2007)

3 What are the three most popular national daily newspapers in Britain? What are the three least popular?

4 How do the newspapers in these two groups differ?



Stumped

When Katherine walked into her local newsagent's she was surprised to see herself on the front page of the *Sunday Mirror*. She had just come back from Barbados where she had been playing at a music festival.

Katherine was pictured, wearing a revealing low-cut dress, with David Gower – former England cricket captain, sports quiz panellist and commentator – standing behind her, with his arms around her.

Alongside the picture ran the headline: 'Howzat! What WAS cricket hero David Gower up to in a Caribbean bar at 2 in the morning?'



In fact, the answer was: nothing. At the end of the festival, Katherine and some of the other musicians had gone to a bar for a few drinks, where they met David Gower and other cricket commentators. They all talked for a while, and then David Gower showed Katherine, and some of the others in her group, how to hold a cricket bat. This was when the front page photograph was taken. David Gower left the bar around 3a.m. and Katherine left about an hour later.

There was no relationship between Katherine and David Gower, despite the story beginning with the claim that the former England captain had 'made a tipsy bid to bowl a maiden over'.

5 Why do you think the editor of the *Sunday Mirror* chose to put this story on the front page?

6 What are the possible effects of a newspaper having a story like this on its front page?

7 Some newspapers are criticised for writing sensational stories about unimportant things. Others are accused of being hard to read and too detailed.

- 'Newspapers should be entertaining; otherwise no one will read them.'
- 'They should concentrate on important news – not gossip or scandal.'

Do you agree with either of these statements? If so, why? If not, what's your view? Explain why.



Local government

This unit looks at some of the responsibilities of local councils and asks whether they should be given more powers.

Standing for the council

Just William

At the beginning of 2007, the age at which a person could stand for election to their local council was lowered from 21 to 18 years of age.



In the local elections later in the year, several 18 year olds stood for election. The youngest was William Lloyd, a student at school in Brentwood, Essex, who beat off Liberal Democrat opposition to become Britain's youngest councillor. He had worked

as a volunteer for the local Conservative Party for two years, and stood for election while he was still studying for his A levels.

Local councils

The way in which local councils in England and Wales are organised can seem very complicated, especially because of all the different names that are used: parish councils, district councils, county councils, metropolitan, and borough councils.

The council arrangements in your area will largely depend on whether you live in a village, a small town, a large town or a city.

If you live in a village or small town, you will probably have a parish council, a district council and a county council; and the various services you receive will be supplied by these three different groups.

If you live in a large town or city, you will probably be part of just one borough or metropolitan council. These councils tend to be responsible for all the local services.

What do councils do?

Parish councils look after public areas in a village, such as litter bins, lighting, ponds and the village hall.



District councils commonly have a responsibility for housing, leisure centres and refuse collection.



Questions

- 1 What are the advantages and disadvantages of having a young person such as William as a local councillor?
- 2 Some people say 18 year olds are too young to stand for election. How far would you agree?



County councils provide the remaining

services, such as education, libraries, planning and roads, and they take responsibility for the development of the whole area.

Borough or Metropolitan District Councils provide people in their area with all of the above services. They are sometimes called unitary authorities because the services are provided by one organisation.

Where do councils get their money from?

About a quarter of the money spent by councils comes from **council tax** and rent. Councils also get money from the local tax (known as rates) paid by businesses and from government grants.

Special formulae are used to decide how much money councils receive from government. These take into account the number of people living in the area and try to make sure that poor areas are given a fair share of cash.

Local or national?

More local

In October 2007, an official report was issued into an outbreak of serious infection that took place in three hospitals in Kent. Over a period of 18 months, more than 1,000 patients who attended the hospitals picked up a serious infection – from which 90 people are thought to have died.

Soon afterwards, the person in charge of the hospitals resigned, taking full responsibility for his part in what happened. However, he

also said that the events would have been less likely to occur if more decisions about running the hospitals could have been taken at a local, rather than national level, stating that the National Health Service is far too centralised.

Today, this is a big question in politics in Britain. Should more decisions be taken at a local level? Would this be more, or less fair? There are arguments on both sides.



3 In 2005, hunting with dogs was banned throughout England and Wales. Imagine that an opinion poll found that most people in one particular region, for example the south west, were against the ban. Would it be right to allow hunting to begin again in this area?

4 What arguments can you think of in favour of more decisions being taken locally? What are the arguments against?



KeyWords

Council tax

A local tax paid by householders, based on the value of their property in 1991 (or 2003 in Wales).

Devolution

This unit looks at some of the effects of the arrangements for government in Wales and Scotland.

Going it alone

Free prescriptions

In 2007, members of the National Assembly for Wales in Cardiff voted **unanimously** to abolish all prescription charges. This allows people in Wales to get medicines prescribed by their doctor free of charge.



The government in Scotland has similar plans, which will come into force by 2011.

However, most people in England will continue to pay for their prescriptions, at a cost of around £7 a time.

This is an example of how life can vary in different parts of Britain – differences that will probably continue to grow in the future.

Self-government

More local

In 1997, people in Wales and in Scotland took part in a **referendum** to decide whether each nation should have greater control over its own affairs. This is called **devolution**.

In Wales, people narrowly voted in favour of a Welsh Assembly. The vote for a parliament in Scotland was much stronger. Two years later – in 1999 – the National Assembly for Wales and the Scottish Parliament were opened. Until this time, both countries had been largely governed from London.

Questions

- 1 How much do you think it matters if prescriptions are free in some parts of the United Kingdom, but not in others?
- 2 Some people believe that Great Britain should eventually be split into separate states. But many disagree. Draw up a list of the possible effects of separating England, Scotland and Wales.

Powers

Today, the Scottish Parliament can pass laws on many areas of life, including: education, health, housing, the police and the justice system. Some matters, however, still remain under the control of the UK Parliament in London. These include defence, foreign policy, social security, the law at work – and matters like abortion and gambling.

The National Assembly for Wales has fewer powers, but can pass its own laws on education, health, housing and social services.

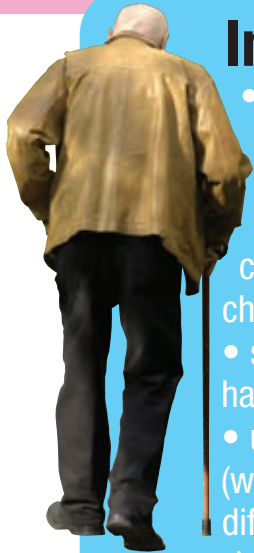
There is also an Assembly in Northern Ireland – at Stormont, on the outskirts of Belfast. This too has powers to decide on education, agriculture, health and the environment.

Change

In many ways, life in various parts of the UK is very similar – although there are important differences in culture and tradition. However, since 1999, decisions taken by the Welsh Assembly and Scottish Parliament have brought further differences between life in England, Scotland and Wales.

In Scotland

- all elderly people can receive free personal care
- anyone over 65 without central heating in their home can have it installed free of charge
- students at university do not have to pay tuition fees
- under Scotland's legal system (which has always been different from England's) children can be charged with a crime from the age of eight, and can see a doctor alone from the age of 12.



The words we use

The **United Kingdom** consists of four countries: England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. **Britain** or **Great Britain** refers only to England, Scotland and Wales. The **British Isles** describes Great Britain, Ireland and Northern Ireland, plus all the islands around our shores, including the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands.

A very short history of Great Britain

England, Scotland and Wales were originally made up of a number of small separate kingdoms. However, after the Norman invasion in 1066, most of Wales came under English control (although many in Wales opposed this), but Scotland remained independent, with its own parliament. In 1603, Scotland and England shared the same king – but the countries did not unite until 1707, when England put pressure on Scotland to unite and the two kingdoms became one.

In Wales

- there is a different education system from England and no national tests for seven-year-olds
- students pay lower university fees than those in England
- there are no prescription charges.



- 3 On balance, are you in favour of or against devolution? How far would you go in separating England, Scotland and Wales?



KeyWords

Devolution

Transferring power from central government to the UK's nations.

Referendum

A vote in which people are asked to accept or reject a particular proposal.

Unanimous

Complete agreement.

Personal identity

This unit looks at the nature of our personal identity and at some of the problems that may surround it.

Who we are

If government plans go ahead, everyone in the UK who applies for a passport from 2010 will automatically be issued with an identity card, as well as their passport. Each card will contain 49 types of information, including the holder's photograph, their name, gender, address, place and date of birth, fingerprints, signature and details of their right to stay in Britain.

The information on the card will be unique; it will describe the card holder only, and no one else.

Although the details on each card should be accurate, they will not necessarily describe the holder's personal identity – that is, how they see themselves. This is more complex. It may include many of the things on the card, but will contain other details such as values, beliefs, culture, interests and passions.

Questions

- 1 Put down as many points as you wish to describe your personal identity – that is, how you see yourself.
- 2 Now try to pick out those points that you feel are most central, and explain why they are especially significant.

Dual identity

In 1964, at the age of two, Imran arrived in England with his parents. His mother and father had both left good jobs in Pakistan to come to London, attracted by the British government's campaign to recruit people from Commonwealth countries to solve the labour shortage in Britain.



When Imran started school at the age of four, his life began to follow two separate paths. As the only black or Asian child in school, he was – at least in one way – different from everyone else. Although he gradually became aware of this, he joined in with all school activities, and did very well.

However, there were problems. Imran's parents were Muslim. At school he learnt about Jesus, but at home he learnt about Mohammed as well. Christmas could be difficult. Unlike other children, Imran couldn't talk about his presents, as he didn't really get any. Growing up had its difficulties too. Part of him wanted to mix with and go out with girls, just like most of his friends, but he didn't want to go against his religious upbringing.

Identity problem

Sometimes a person's identity causes them difficulties due to the reactions of others. This happens particularly when the person or group is in a minority.

Hugo, aged 7, was wearing his England football shirt while playing on his scooter in an Edinburgh park during the 2006 World Cup. A man walked over to Hugo and hit him across the face, shouting anti-English abuse.

Asif feels that since the terrorist attacks by al-Qaeda in New York, Madrid and London, many people have a much narrower view of what it is to be Muslim. He believes that they see Muslims as a single group of people, opposed to the way in which people live in the West. In fact, Asif says, most Muslims in Britain have a great deal in common with everyone else – and only a very, very small minority share the views of those responsible for the attacks.

Sarah, aged 14, paid £10 to have her nose pierced. When she went to school the next day, the deputy head told her to remove the stud. Sarah did as she was told, but felt very disappointed. She felt that rules about uniform, jewellery and make-up stopped students from expressing their personality. 'I am a Goth,' she told her



- 3 During the early part of his life, Imran had two separate, but overlapping, identities – one with his family, and the other at school with his friends. Which path do you think Imran should have taken when he became an adult? What difficulties do you imagine he might have faced?
- 4 Are there any other situations in which people may have more than one identity? Explain why you think this might occur.
- 5 Hugo, Asif and Sarah all faced problems because of the way in which other people react to parts of their identity. What is your view about each case?
- 6 Sarah was not allowed to be a Goth in school. Are there any identities that you feel should not be shown or stated in public? If so, what are they, and why should they be banned?
- 7 Do you think young people sometimes have to adopt identities they are uncomfortable with?

friend, 'but I can't show it because of the stupid rules. Teachers should not have the right to decide what kids do and don't do with their image – that's what makes us individual.'