

8 Worksheet on Rhetoric: Headings

Different texts from: Michael Mitchell, *Ethnic Diversity in the UK*, Viewfinder Topics (München: Langenscheidt, 2010).

A BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON HEADINGS

In language classes, you often need to consider headings. You might be asked to “Comment on the headlines and caption and their use of language” (cp. book p. 52, task 6) when doing analysis tasks or you might have to come up with your own title for an essay. Here you’ll find a collection of definitions, rules, tips and finally some exercises.

1 TRICKY TERMS¹

A **caption** is the words printed above or below a picture in a book or newspaper or on a television screen to explain what the picture is showing (DCE).

A **title** is the name given to a particular book, painting, play etc. (DCE)

A **heading** is the title written at the beginning of a piece of writing or at the beginning of part of a book (DCE).

A **headline**² is the title of a newspaper report, which is printed in large letters above the report (DCE)

All definitions according to the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English

¹ An alliteration (i.e. the repetition of sounds – here the ‘t’ – at the start of a word) was used here to create an interesting heading as it unites the words through a kind of repetition.

² “Information Sheet 18: Newspaper Headlines” can be found on the CD-ROM accompanying the *Ethnic Diversity Resource Book*.

2 THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING A GOOD HEADING³

Many readers first scan or skim texts before they read them, so good headings help to make people read a text or enable them to find what they are looking for quickly.

3 HOW TO COMPOSE THE BEST HEADINGS EVER⁴

In general

- be short
- capitalise
- use alliterations, puns (plays on words) or other stylistic devices
- make use of variations of/allusions to well-known proverbs/sayings and titles of famous books, songs or films
- don't forget your audience (e.g. Does your audience understand your pun?).

There are many different types of headings (depending on what you need them for, e.g. a newspaper article, a website, a book), here are only some examples:

(Note: capital letters for all the important words in titles, but not in headlines)

- direct heading (also *descriptive heading*) – you say directly what you want/ what the text etc. is about
e.g. the news headline “Gaza militants fire rockets after Israeli threat”
e.g. “The Advantages and Disadvantages of Nuclear Power”
- indirect heading (also *suggestive heading*) – you arouse the reader’s curiosity
e.g. the news headline “10 apps that will matter to Kindle Fire users”
e.g. in a girls’ magazine: “What your favourite pizza topping reveals about you”
- question heading – you ask a question the reader would like to see answered
e.g. the news headline “Will Harry Potter finally get a Best Picture Oscar?”
e.g. “Does Europe need the euro?”
- command heading – you tell your reader what to do
e.g. the news headline “Stop being a victim!”
e.g. “Read this!”
- informational headings – you give a certain piece of information

³ A reference to *The Importance of Being Earnest* (title of a famous comedy by Oscar Wilde) makes readers curious. There’s also an alliteration (having/heading).

⁴ If you want to hype up your headline, use a superlative.

e.g. the news headline "The King is dead"

e.g. "Beer builds your bones"

B TASKS

1 ANALYSING HEADINGS

1 Analyse the titles "Segregation and Integration" (p. 6)/ "From Riot to Racial Harmony" (p. 23) with regard to stylistic devices.

2 Say why you think that the editor chose "Hatred begets only hatred" (p. 9) for the newspaper article instead of the original in *The Telegraph* which reads "Victim's mother renews call for end to violence at Westminster funeral".

3 Explain the play on words (pun) in "MIGRANTS TAKE US TO THE CLEANERS" (p. 51).

4 Scan the titles in the book for examples of:

- a) titles using an alliteration
- b) informational headings
- c) short, concise headings
- d) question headings

2 COMPOSING HEADINGS

1 You have to write a composition on this topic: "Home". Come up with 3 creative titles.

2 Find four headlines for this short newspaper article.

adapted from: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-16089985>

(Please copy and paste this hyperlink into your browser.)

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England riots: Twitter 'did not incite rioting'

Twitter was a force for good during the summer riots, a study has found after analysing millions of messages posted.

The social networking website helped to organise clean-up operations after rioting across London and other English cities, the research showed.

Riots broke out in Tottenham, north London, on 6 August and spread to other English cities including Birmingham, Liverpool, Nottingham and Manchester.

The study was funded by the Joint Information Systems Committee (JIC). The JIC is an education and research body paid for by higher education funding councils. The committee included experts from a range of disciplines from the universities of Manchester, Leicester,

St Andrews and Wolverhampton, and University College London. Rioting in Tottenham began two days after the fatal shooting by police of 29-year-old Mark Duggan.

Unrest quickly spread to other parts of the capital and other English cities.

The study looked at 2.4 million tweets sent during the disturbances and found "no evidence" to back calls that Twitter should be closed down for inciting unrest. Prof Rob Procter from the University of Manchester, who led the team, said: "In August this year social unrest spilled over on to the streets of English cities and the summer riots were the largest public disorder events in recent history.

"Politicians and commentators were quick to claim that social media played an important role in inciting and organising riots, calling for sites such as Twitter to be closed should events of this nature happen again.

"But our study found no evidence of significance in the available data that would justify such a course of action in respect to Twitter."

"In contrast, we do find strong evidence that Twitter was a valuable tool for mobilising support for the post-riot clean-up and for organising specific clean-up activities," he added.

Researchers analysed the millions of tweets generated during and after the riots by using experts in cloud computing from the University of St Andrews. Cloud computing allows large-scale computing facilities to be accessed and shared by multiple users over the internet. For this study, researchers set up dozens of computers to analyse the millions of messages posted during and after the riots.

Dr Alex Voss, from the school of computer science at St Andrews, said without using cloud computing the analysis would have been "practically impossible".

(Daniela Pröls)