

This essay explains why tabloids are rendered dull and uninteresting because of strict adherence to genre rules i.e. the characteristics, structures, and conventions attributed to different forms of literature (Siegel, "Genre Criticism"). My review is based on a genre criticism approach which Bonyadi (2012) defines as textual analysis wherein the focus is on the regularities of structures that distinguish one type of text from another.

Genre is the french translation of the Latin "genus", a word originally referring to phenomena which resemble each other (Jensen, 2012, p. 147). A tabloid is a small format newspaper associated with popular and/or mid-market journalism focusing on sensationalism, scandal, sport and sex (Harcup, 2014, p. 296). Tabloids are one of two genres of newspapers (the other being broadsheets). Below is a non-exhaustive list of reasons the tabloid genre is dull and interesting because of how the format adheres strictly to certain conventions:

Tabloids are dull and uninteresting, first and foremost, due to the core aspect that classifies them as a genre: their communicative purpose, which Swales argues is the principal criterial feature that turns a collection of communicative events into a genre (1990, pp. 45-46). The purpose of communication when it comes to tabloids is to make money, a practice catalysed and fueled by the existence of a free market and profit-orientated owners (Sparks & Tulloch, 2000, p. 288). As of 2011, tabloids generated an advertorial revenue stream of more than three billion dollars annually in the US alone (Rutenberg, 2011, para. 6) meaning that the more copies of a tabloid sold, the higher the revenue earned. This focus on making revenue results in lowbrow, unserious reporting (Edwards, 2011, para. 3) that is not interesting for readers, who have a reasonable expectation for news to contain value. The very nature of tabloids means editorial freedom and professional ethos are set aside by market analyses (Sparks & Tulloch, 2000, p. 288) and this renders the genre dull and boring.

Another reason tabloids are a boring genre is their employment of image-led journalism. In other words, they have more pictures than other newspapers, with which they accompany short stories with simple language (BBC Bitesize, n.d, para. 6). The style and content of tabloids are so boring that Johansson found that 'flicking through' was a commonly used term to describe the reading, with readers keen to point out they may only read a small amount of the content (2007, p. 121). This selective pattern of reading is an indicator that the

content in tabloids is too simple to be interesting and so the genre can be described as boring and dull.

Another reason tabloids are dull and uninteresting is because of the practice of yellow journalism i.e use of lurid and sensationalized reporting (Danesi, 2009, p. 309). The use of yellow journalism bores readers because of exaggerated presentation and far-fetched stories that cannot be taken seriously (Brichta, 2010, p. 200). The hyperbolic use of language that characterises tabloids and renders them dull and uninteresting is known as tabloidese i.e. a news writing style that features downgrading of hard news and upgrading of sex, scandal and infotainment (Watson & Hill, 2012, p. 296). These excessive, over-the-top stories are boring to readers because they lack the nuance needed for readers to actually engage with them.

The last reason the genre is dull is because of the genre's focus on celebrity news which tends to be the dominant subject matter for tabloids. This devotion to trivial news about film stars, musicians and other famous individuals has led tabloids to be referred to as the epitome of trash reading (Bird, 1992, p. 107). This is not interesting for readers especially as celebrity news is an ever-growing phenomenon; such that a large proportion of tabloid celebrity news comes from celebrities themselves, often by way of their publicists (Grabianowski, 2005). Ergo, tabloid journalism is effectively rendered a PR machine with an extremely dull continuous cycle.

To conclude, tabloids are boring and dull because of genre convention that are adhered to namely; i) their communicative purpose of making a profit over informing the reader, ii) the practice of image led journalism, iii) the overabundance of yellow journalism and tabloidese, and iv) the dominance of celebrity news in the genre.

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