



APEX ENGLISH

Your voice. Global.

C1 · GENERAL ENGLISH

UNIT 4 · 4A

Making headlines

Theme · Media & Mystery



Unit 4 · 4A

Making headlines

Theme: Media & Mystery

Learning objectives

- Expand C1 vocabulary related to **media & journalism**.
- Use **adding emphasis (1): inversion** accurately and idiomatically.
- Read a discursive text and discuss inferences beyond the literal.
- Speak fluently on the unit's theme with a partner or in a small group.

This booklet accompanies the digital lesson at

alunos.apexenglish.com.br/general-c1/4a. Interactive audio, video and drag-and-drop tasks live online; use this booklet in class and to review.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Class Book

Warm-up

In pairs, talk for about a minute on each prompt before feedback:

- 1 What comes to mind when you hear the theme **“Media & Mystery”**?
- 2 How comfortable are you using vocabulary about **media & journalism**? Give one recent example.
- 3 When did you last use — or misuse — **adding emphasis (1): inversion**?

Reading

The headline you can't unsee

Every generation of journalists likes to say that headlines have never been more powerful, and every generation is, in a limited sense, correct. What has changed in the last decade is not the technique but the traffic: for the first time in the history of the press, most readers see the headline and never read the article. The headline is, effectively, the article.

Rarely, then, has the pressure on the sub-editor who writes it been greater. Not only must the headline be accurate, it must be surprising enough to earn a click and short enough to survive on a phone screen. Under no circumstances can it be dull — a dull headline in 2025 is a headline read by nobody. And yet, the moment it becomes too punchy, it drifts from summary to insinuation.

Little do most readers realise how the sausage is made. A reporter files fourteen hundred words at nine in the evening. A sub-editor she has never met writes the headline at half past nine, on deadline, from a rough desk brief. Seldom is that a recipe for nuance. Only rarely does the reporter get a chance to object before the front page is locked.

The result is a small industry of headlines that overstate what the article beneath them can prove. Some of this is fair — sharpening, not distortion. Some of it, however, tips into clickbait: a promise the article cannot keep. And here is the catch. Not only does the reader remember the headline more clearly than the article, memory researchers have shown that a striking headline can quietly overwrite the actual contents of the piece. The nuance in paragraph six rarely survives.

None of which argues for boring headlines. It argues, rather, for a small habit — one that most journalists secretly hope readers will develop. Before you retweet, before you're outraged, before you decide what a story "was about", read the article. Only then will you know whether the headline you cannot unsee was actually earned.

Comprehension — choose the best answer.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



1. The writer's central claim about modern headlines is that:
 - (A) they are worse than they used to be
 - (B) they are effectively the article for most readers
 - (C) they are less powerful than a decade ago
 - (D) they are more accurate than the pieces beneath them
2. The description of how the sub-editor works is designed to show that:
 - (A) sub-editors are careless
 - (B) the process rarely allows for nuance
 - (C) reporters resent sub-editors
 - (D) the newsroom is too slow
3. According to the article, clickbait tips over the line when:
 - (A) it uses too many adjectives
 - (B) the article beneath cannot keep the promise
 - (C) it names a specific person
 - (D) it is written in the passive voice
4. The memory-research point is that:
 - (A) a strong headline can overwrite the article's actual contents
 - (B) readers forget headlines quickly
 - (C) sub-editors are not fact-checked
 - (D) long articles are always more accurate
5. The writer's practical advice to readers is:
 - (A) never trust a headline
 - (B) share only long articles
 - (C) read the piece before reacting
 - (D) prefer print over digital
6. The writer's overall attitude to punchy headlines is:
 - (A) categorically opposed
 - (B) enthusiastically supportive
 - (C) pragmatically accepting, with a warning
 - (D) indifferent

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Vocabulary

Focus: **media & journalism**

Study these C1 items and their meanings.

a scoop — an important news story reported first by one paper

a byline — the printed line naming the article's author

an op-ed — an opinion piece by a named contributor

a retraction — a formal withdrawal of a published claim

clickbait — a headline designed to lure clicks, often over-promising

off the record — information given on condition it is not published

to break a story — to be the first outlet to publish it

spin — a slanted framing of the facts in someone's favour

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Grammar

Focus: **adding emphasis (1): inversion**

Study the online lesson notes, then complete the interactive tasks at **alunos.apexenglish.com.br/general-c1/4a**.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Speaking

- 1 Tell a partner about a personal experience connected to **media & mystery**. Aim for at least two minutes without pausing.
- 2 Compare cultures or generations on this topic. Use at least three items from the *media & journalism* list.
- 3 Discuss: *Is it possible to be objective about media & mystery?* Justify your view.

Writing

Write 220–260 words on: **“Media & Mystery — what has changed in the last twenty years?”** Use at least four items from the vocabulary list and one structure from the grammar focus (*adding emphasis (1): inversion*).

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Workbook

Home practice

Complete on your own; check answers in class.

1. _____ have I read a piece that misrepresented its own source so badly.
(A) Sometimes
(B) Rarely
(C) Often
(D) Usually
2. Not only _____ inaccurate, it was quietly retracted six hours later.
(A) the article was
(B) was the article
(C) did the article was
(D) article was
3. Under no circumstances _____ we run a headline we cannot verify.
(A) should
(B) we should
(C) must not
(D) we must
4. Only after two more sources confirmed the story _____ willing to publish.
(A) the editor was
(B) was the editor
(C) did the editor was
(D) editor was
5. Hardly _____ the piece appeared online when three other papers copied it.
(A) did
(B) the piece
(C) had
(D) was
6. Little _____ that the anonymous source was in fact a rival minister.
(A) knew the reporter
(B) did the reporter know
(C) the reporter knew
(D) reported the reporter

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

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Workbook · 4A. Making headlines

Home practice · inversion & media vocabulary · answer key included



Class Book

Full lesson · in-class material



Workbook

Home practice · with answer key

GRAMMAR

10 min

1 · Inversion — choose the correct option

1. _____ have I read a piece that misrepresented its own source so badly.

a. Sometimes

b. Rarely ✓

c. Often

d. Usually

2. Not only _____ inaccurate, it was quietly retracted six hours later.

a. the article was

b. was the article ✓

c. did the article was

d. article was

3. Under no circumstances _____ we run a headline we cannot verify.

a. should ✓

b. we should

c. must not

d. we must

4. Only after two more sources confirmed the story ____ willing to publish.

a. the editor was

b. was the editor ✓

c. did the editor was

d. editor was

5. Hardly ____ the piece appeared online when three other papers copied it.

a. did

b. the piece

c. had ✓

d. was

6. Little ____ that the anonymous source was in fact a rival minister.

a. knew the reporter

b. did the reporter know ✓

c. the reporter knew

d. reported the reporter

Score: 6 / 6

Try again

VOCABULARY

2 · Complete with a newsroom term from the box

10 min

WORD BANK — DRAG OR TAP, THEN TAP A GAP

scoop

byline

clickbait

retraction

off the record

spin

1. The paper issued a full **retraction** **retraction** on page three the following morning.
2. Everyone knew the source was speaking strictly **off the record** **off the record**.
3. Landing that interview first was a genuine **scoop** **scoop** for the paper.
4. The piece has her **byline** **byline** but not her name in the headline.
5. The headline over-promised — pure **clickbait** **clickbait**, if we're honest.
6. The government tried to put a positive **spin** **spin** on the economic figures.

Score: 6 / 6

Try again

GRAMMAR

10 min

3 · Rewrite using the inversion in brackets

1. *The paper had never faced this much pressure before. (Never before..., with inversion)*
Hide answer
Never before had the paper faced this much pressure.
2. *The reporter did not know the meeting was already public. (Little did the reporter...)*
Hide answer
Little did the reporter know the meeting was already public.
3. *The article was inaccurate and defamatory. (Not only..., but also...)*
Hide answer
Not only was the article inaccurate, but it was also defamatory.
4. *You must not name an anonymous source without a second confirmation. (Under no circumstances...)*

Hide answer

Under no circumstances should you name an anonymous source without a second confirmation.

5. *We agreed to publish only when the source went on record. (Only when...)*

Hide answer

Only when the source went on record did we agree to publish.

VOCABULARY +

8 min

4 · Newsroom collocations

DRAG THE MEANING ONTO THE WORD

Reset

publicly stated and quotable

to be the first outlet to publish it

to publish it in a place where few readers will see it

to decide not to publish a story that had been prepared

someone in a position to know reliable inside information

to break a story

to be the first outlet to publish it

Hide answer

to be the first outlet to publish it

to bury a story

to publish it in a place where few readers will see it

Hide answer

to publish it in a place where few readers will see it

to spike a story

to decide not to publish a story that had been prepared

Hide answer

to decide not to publish a story that had been prepared

a well-placed source

someone in a position to know reliable inside information

Hide answer

someone in a position to know reliable inside information

on the record

publicly stated and

quatable

Hide answer

publicly stated and quatable

LISTENING

5 · Podcast · Off The Record — a sub-editor's confession

10 min

Listen to Tom, a veteran sub-editor, talk about how headlines actually get written.

▶ 0:00 / 0:00

1. What does Tom claim is the fastest way to lose a reader for good?

Hide answer

A headline that promises more than the article can deliver.

2. Who typically writes the headline, and under what conditions?

Hide answer

A sub-editor who never spoke to the reporter, on deadline, from a rough desk brief.

3. What single habit does Tom ask his listeners to develop? Hide answer

Read the article before deciding whether the outrage over the headline is earned.

4. What emphasis-through-inversion structures does Tom use in the monologue? Hide answer

'Rarely does anyone read past the first paragraph', 'Never in the history of journalism have readers been more headline-dependent', 'Under no circumstances should it promise more than the article can deliver', 'Little do most people realise', 'Only then will you know'.

WRITING

22 min

6 · A short opinion piece (170–200 words)

Write a short opinion piece titled: "*The headline is doing the reader's thinking for them — and we are letting it.*" Use at least four inversions from three different triggers, and at least four items of media vocabulary. End with a clear personal position.

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