Tabloid Journalism
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1. Defining tabloid journalism

Tabloid journalism is unique among the various journalistic genres in existence today in that it simultaneously refers to a particular format, content, and style of journalism. The term ‘tabloid’ dates back to the 1880s when a British pharmaceutical company by the name of Burroughs Wellcome & Company marketed some small, compressed tablets as tabloid pills. The term was subsequently applied to other small items, including a genre of journalism that condensed news stories into a simplified, easily absorbed format as well as the format of the newspapers themselves in which these news stories appeared.

While there is no absolute standard for the dimensions of a tabloid newspaper, it is generally considered half the size of a conventional broadsheet newspaper. While the term ‘tabloid’ originally referred to the format of particular kinds of newspapers and their news stories, over time it has taken on a broader definition which also refers to a particular content and style of journalism. Specifically, it commonly refers to dramatic and sensationalized news stories about crime, celebrities, and politicians, among many other attention-grabbing topics, told using eye-catching and bold headlines, colorful narratives and visuals, and the use of simple, straightforward grammar and vocabulary. Some observers sum up these characteristics by stating that, whereas broadsheet newspapers offer audiences what they need to know, tabloid newspapers merely offer audiences what they want to know.

Implicit in this distinction is the claim that, in contrast to broadsheet newspapers, which help inform audiences about news and current affairs so that they can participate more actively and meaningfully in democratic processes, tabloid newspapers appeal to the baser, more lurid aspects of human nature, notably our propensity to engage in gossip. Another way to define tabloid journalism is to distinguish between the different kinds of media in which this genre of journalism appears.

First, there are daily tabloid newspapers, like the New York Daily News and the New York Post in the United States, and the Daily Mail and the Daily Mirror in the United Kingdom. Second, there are weekly magazines known