

BAHIRJI SMARAK MAHAVIDYALAYA, VASMATNAGAR

Affiliated to Swami Ramanand Teertha Marathwada University, Nanded

B.A. (T.Y.) — SEMESTER V

MAJOR IN ENGLISH (CORE)

HENGVC1301

ENGLISH FOR MEDIA STUDIES – I

Comprehensive Study Notes

Prescribed Text: English for Media Studies by David Young, Thammasat University Press

Units Covered: Unit 1 — Headline, Lead, Style | Unit 2 — Article, Comics, Advertising

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Course Structure

This document presents complete study notes for the paper HENGVC1301 – English for Media Studies – I, offered as a Core paper in the Major in English for B.A. Third Year, Semester V. The paper is designed to introduce students to the language, structure, and conventions of print and broadcast journalism, along with an understanding of comics as a medium of social commentary and the fundamentals of advertising language.

Teaching Scheme

Course Code	Course Name (Paper Title)	Teaching (Hrs/Week)	Credits Assigned
HENGVC1301	English for Media Studies – I	02	02

Examination Scheme

40% Continuous Assessment (CA) and 60% End Semester Examination (ESE)

Course Code	Course Name	CA	ESE	Total	ESE Time
HENGVC1301	English for Media Studies – I	20	30	50	1.5 Hrs

Course Objectives (COs)

After completing this course, students will be able to:

No.	Course Objective
CO1	Understand the structure, language devices, and functions of news headlines, including the distinction between broadsheet and tabloid styles.
CO2	Analyse the structure and purpose of the news lead, including the 5 W's (Who, What, When, Where, Why) and the ability to write straight, anecdotal, and descriptive leads.
CO3	Examine the concept of media style, including objectivity vs. subjectivity, media bias, and the ability to distinguish between news articles and reports.

No.	Course Objective
CO4	Develop skills in writing complete news articles, including the use of quotes, interviewing techniques, reported speech, and the "tail" (conclusion).
CO5	Analyse comics as a medium for social commentary, including editorial cartoons, political cartoons, and the role of comics in highlighting injustice.
CO6	Understand the objectives and language of advertising, including slogans, logos, print ads, and the distinction between features and benefits.

Course Outcomes (COs)

On successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

No.	Course Outcome	Bloom's Level
COS1	Identify and explain the key language devices used in news headlines: play on words (pun), alliteration, rhyme, and sensationalist language.	Understand
COS2	Distinguish between broadsheet and tabloid headlines in terms of tone, content, and language style.	Analyse
COS3	Analyse the structure of a news lead by identifying the 5 W's (Who, What, When, Where, Why) and the optional "How."	Analyse
COS4	Write straight news leads, anecdotal leads, and descriptive leads for given news scenarios, incorporating hooks where appropriate.	Apply / Create
COS5	Distinguish between objective and subjective writing, avoiding opinionated language, adjectives, and first-person pronouns in news reporting.	Analyse

No.	Course Outcome	Bloom's Level
COS6	Identify different types of media bias (corporate, mainstream, liberal, conservative) in news extracts and explain how bias is conveyed through word choice.	Analyse / Evaluate
COS7	Explain the concept of circular reporting and fake news, and apply strategies to verify news before sharing (e.g., tracing original sources, checking multiple outlets).	Understand / Apply

Curriculum Details

Unit No.	Topic	Hrs. Required
Unit 1	Headline, Lead, Style	15
Unit 2	Article, Comics, Advertising	15
Total		30

Guidelines for Course Assessment

Continuous Assessment (CA): 20 Marks (40% of Maximum Marks)

Class Test	Assignment / Presentation / Viva / Quiz / Open Book	Attendance	Total Marks
10 Marks	6 Marks	4 Marks	20 Marks

End Semester Assessment (60% of Maximum Marks): 30 Marks

Paper Pattern for ESE:

Question	Description	Marks
Q.1	Write Short Notes (five sub-questions) — Compulsory Question based on the entire syllabus	10

Question	Description	Marks
Q.2	Question on Module 1 (Attempt any 2 out of Q.2–Q.5)	10
Q.3	Question on Module 2 (Attempt any 2 out of Q.2–Q.5)	10
Q.4	Question on Module 3 (Attempt any 2 out of Q.2–Q.5)	10
Q.5	Question on Module 4 (Attempt any 2 out of Q.2–Q.5)	10

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How to Use These Notes

These notes are organised unit-wise, following the exact sequence prescribed in the syllabus. Each major topic is broken down into a clear definition, an explanation of its significance, and — wherever relevant — worked examples that illustrate the concept in practice. Key terms are highlighted in bold, illustrative examples are set off in indented boxes, and important exam-oriented notes are shaded for quick revision. A glossary, a model question paper, and unit-wise practice questions are provided at the end to support both continuous assessment and end-semester examination preparation.

Students are strongly encouraged to supplement these notes with active reading of newspapers, magazines, and news websites, since the best way to internalise the conventions of headline writing, lead construction, and media style is to observe them in real, published journalism on a daily basis. Comparing how the same event is reported by a broadsheet and a tabloid, or by outlets with differing editorial leanings, is an especially effective way to develop the analytical skills tested in this course.

Why Study Media Language?

Media literacy has become an essential life skill in the twenty-first century. Citizens are exposed to an unprecedented volume of news, opinion, and advertising every day, delivered through print, television, radio, and an ever-expanding range of digital and social media platforms. The ability to critically read a headline, evaluate the reliability of a source, recognise persuasive techniques in advertising, and identify the visual rhetoric of a political cartoon empowers a reader to engage with information as an informed citizen rather than a passive consumer.

For students of English specifically, the study of media language also offers practical, transferable writing skills: economy of expression, precision of vocabulary, the ability to write for a defined audience, and the discipline of structuring information for maximum clarity and impact. These are skills valuable far beyond the field of journalism, in careers spanning corporate communication, public relations, content writing, publishing, and digital marketing.

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UNIT 1: Headline, Lead, Style

Unit 1 lays the foundation for understanding how news is packaged and presented to readers. It examines the three elements that a reader encounters first and that shape their understanding of a story before they read the body of the text: the headline, the lead, and the overall style in which news is written. Mastery of these elements is essential for anyone studying journalism or media writing, since headlines and leads determine whether a reader engages with a story at all, while style determines how trustworthy and balanced that story appears.

A Brief Note on the Evolution of News Writing

The conventions students learn in this unit — the compressed grammar of headlines, the front-loaded structure of the lead, and the discipline of objective style — did not emerge by accident. They are the product of over a century of technological and commercial pressures on the newspaper industry. In the era of hand-set type and, later, the telegraph, every word cost money and every column inch was scarce; reporters filing stories by wire were charged by the word, which encouraged extreme economy of language. Editors also needed to be able to cut a story from the bottom without losing its essential meaning, since a late-breaking story might require an already-typeset page to be shortened at the last minute — this practical necessity is the direct origin of the inverted pyramid structure discussed later in this unit.

The rise of radio and television in the twentieth century introduced new pressures: broadcast news had to be written for the ear rather than the eye, favouring even shorter sentences and simpler vocabulary. More recently, the internet and social media have compressed the demands on journalistic language further still, with headlines now competing for attention not just against other headlines on a printed page, but against an endless, algorithmically-curated stream of competing content. Understanding this history helps explain why journalistic language looks and functions so differently from literary or academic prose — every convention discussed in this unit exists for a practical reason rooted in the economics and technology of news delivery.

1.1 Introduction to Journalistic / Media Language

Media language refers to the specific conventions, vocabulary, and grammatical structures used across newspapers, magazines, broadcast media, and digital news platforms. Unlike literary or academic language, media language is designed for speed, clarity, and impact — it must communicate information accurately to a wide and diverse readership within a limited space and time.

Journalistic writing operates under several constraints that shape its language:

- Space and time constraints: Print columns and broadcast slots are limited, so language must be economical.
- Audience diversity: News must be understood by readers of varying literacy levels and backgrounds.

- Urgency: News is time-sensitive, so language favours short, direct sentences over long, complex ones.
- Credibility: Since journalism claims to report fact, language must appear neutral, precise, and verifiable.
- Attention-grabbing: In a competitive media market, language must attract and hold audience attention.

These constraints give rise to a distinct register often called 'journalese' or 'headlines' — a specialised form of English with its own vocabulary, grammar shortcuts, and stylistic conventions, which we examine in the sections that follow.

1.2 The News Headline: Meaning and Functions

A headline is the title given to a news story, printed in larger and bolder type above the article. It is the single most important line of text in any news item because it is very often the only part of the story that a reader actually reads. Headlines are written not by the reporter who wrote the story but, in most newsrooms, by a sub-editor or copy editor, whose specific skill lies in compressing the essence of a story into a handful of words.

Functions of a Headline

- To attract attention: A headline must stand out on a page crowded with competing stories and advertisements.
- To inform: Even a reader who reads nothing else should walk away knowing the core fact of the story.
- To summarise: The headline condenses the who, what, and sometimes why of a story into a single line.
- To categorise: The size, font, and placement of a headline signal the relative importance of a story to the reader.
- To create tone: Word choice in a headline signals whether a story is serious, light-hearted, tragic, or celebratory.
- To aid navigation: On a page with multiple stories, headlines allow readers to scan and choose what interests them.

Example: *A story about a rise in city bus fares might carry the headline 'Bus Fares Set to Rise From Monday' — informing readers instantly of the key fact without requiring them to read further.*

1.3 Structure and Grammar of Headlines (Headlines)

Headlines follow a distinct set of grammatical conventions that differ sharply from standard English sentence construction. This specialised style is often referred to as 'headlines'. Because headline space is extremely limited, several grammatical elements are routinely dropped or altered.

Key Conventions of Headlines

- Omission of articles: 'a', 'an', and 'the' are usually dropped. E.g., 'Fire Guts Warehouse' instead of 'A Fire Guts a Warehouse'.
- Omission of the verb 'to be': E.g., 'Minister Injured in Crash' instead of 'Minister Is Injured in Crash'.
- Use of the present tense for past events: Even when reporting something that already happened, headlines use the present tense to create immediacy. E.g., 'Government Announces New Policy' (even though the announcement was made yesterday).
- Use of the infinitive for future events: 'to' is used to indicate something that will happen. E.g., 'PM to Visit Flood-Hit Areas'.
- Use of commas instead of 'and': E.g., 'Floods, Landslides Hit Northern Region'.
- Short, punchy words in place of longer synonyms: Headline vocabulary favours short words that fit tight column space — e.g., 'row' for 'dispute', 'axe' for 'cancel' or 'dismiss', 'probe' for 'investigation', 'slam' for 'criticise', 'bid' for 'attempt', 'curb' for 'restrict'.
- Colons to separate source from statement: E.g., 'Minister: Prices Will Fall Soon'.
- Minimal punctuation: Full stops are not used at the end of headlines.

Note: Because articles, verbs, and connective words are routinely dropped, headlines can sometimes be genuinely ambiguous or unintentionally comic when read literally — a well-known hazard of headlines that copy editors must guard against.

Common Short 'Headline Words'

Headline Word	Full Meaning
Row	Dispute or argument
Axe	To cancel, cut, or dismiss
Probe	Investigation
Slam / Blast	To criticise strongly
Bid	Attempt
Curb	To restrict or control
Rap	To reprimand
Quiz	To question (usually by police)
Vow	Promise
Rift	A serious disagreement

1.4 Broadsheet vs Tabloid Headlines

Newspapers are broadly classified by physical format and editorial approach into 'broadsheets' and 'tabloids'. Although the terms originally referred to page size, they have come to describe two very different journalistic styles, and this distinction is most visible in headline writing.

Feature	Broadsheet Headlines	Tabloid Headlines
Tone	Formal, restrained, measured	Sensational, dramatic, emotive
Vocabulary	Standard, precise, often longer words	Short, punchy, colloquial, slang-heavy
Length	Can be longer and more descriptive	Very short, often just a few words
Wordplay	Used sparingly, more subtle	Frequent puns, rhymes, and alliteration
Focus	Policy, analysis, in-depth issues	Human interest, scandal, celebrity, crime
Emotional appeal	Low — appeals to reason	High — appeals to shock or amusement
Typical readership	Educated, professional, niche	Mass, general readership

Broadsheet example: 'Central Bank Raises Interest Rates Amid Inflation Concerns' — *factual, formal, policy-focused.*

Tabloid example: 'Rate Shock! Your Loans Just Got Pricier' — *dramatic, direct address to reader, exclamatory tone.*

Both approaches are valid within their own traditions, and neither is inherently 'better' journalism — a broadsheet headline prioritises restraint and information density, while a tabloid headline prioritises immediate emotional engagement. Understanding this distinction is a core skill (COS2) tested in this unit, since students are expected to identify and justify which category a given headline belongs to.

1.5 Language Devices Used in Headlines

Sub-editors use a range of literary and rhetorical devices to make headlines memorable, witty, and attention-grabbing. These devices are especially common in tabloid and feature headlines, though broadsheets use them too, particularly for lighter stories.

(a) Play on Words / Pun

A pun exploits multiple meanings of a word, or the similarity in sound between two different words, to create a witty or humorous effect. Puns are extremely common in headlines about sport, entertainment, and lighter human-interest stories.

Example: *'Bread Winners' — a headline about a bakery competition, punning on the idiom 'breadwinner'.*

(b) Alliteration

Alliteration is the repetition of the same initial consonant sound in two or more neighbouring words. It creates rhythm and makes a headline easier to remember.

Example: *'Traffic Turmoil Troubles Travellers'*

(c) Rhyme

Rhyming headlines use words with matching end-sounds to create a catchy, sing-song effect, often used in tabloid headlines for a light or humorous tone.

Example: *'Named and Shamed'*

(d) Sensationalist Language

Sensationalist language uses dramatic, exaggerated, or emotionally charged words to provoke shock, outrage, fear, or excitement in the reader, often at the cost of neutrality or precision. Words such as 'chaos', 'crisis', 'shock', 'fury', 'slammed', and 'horror' are typical markers of this style.

Example: *'City Gripped by Chaos as Storm Wreaks Havoc'*

(e) Other Common Devices

- Idioms and clichés reworked for effect: e.g., altering 'the last straw' to 'the last straw for farmers'.
- Allusion: brief references to well-known cultural, literary, or historical events understood by most readers.
- Rhetorical questions: headlines phrased as questions to provoke curiosity, e.g., 'Is This the End of the Road?'
- Ellipsis / truncation: deliberately incomplete sentences that create suspense, e.g., 'After the Storm...'

1.6 The News Lead: Meaning and Purpose

The 'lead' (sometimes spelled 'lede' in American journalism to distinguish it from the metal 'lead' used in old printing presses) is the opening sentence or short opening paragraph of a news story. If the headline is designed to catch the eye, the lead is designed to keep the reader reading. A well-written lead answers the reader's most basic questions immediately and gives them a reason to continue through the rest of the article.

The lead is arguably the hardest part of a news story to write well, because it must be simultaneously brief, accurate, complete, and engaging. Professional journalists often spend as much time crafting the lead as they do writing the rest of the article combined.

Purposes of the Lead

- To summarise the most newsworthy fact(s) of the story in a single sentence.
- To provide enough information for a reader to understand the story even if they read no further.
- To establish the angle or focus the reporter has chosen for the story.
- To hook the reader's interest so that they continue reading the rest of the article.

1.7 The 5 W's and H

A traditional and reliable checklist for constructing a factually complete news lead is the '5 W's and H': Who, What, When, Where, Why, and (optionally) How. A strong lead does not necessarily answer all six questions in a single sentence — that would make it too long and dense — but it will prioritise the two or three most newsworthy of these elements, while the remainder are answered in the paragraphs that follow.

Question	What It Establishes
Who	The person(s) or organisation(s) central to the story
What	The event or action that has taken place
When	The time or date of the event
Where	The location of the event
Why	The reason or cause behind the event
How (optional)	The manner or process by which the event occurred

Example lead using the 5 W's: 'Firefighters (Who) rescued twelve residents (What) from a blazing apartment complex (Where) in the early hours of Tuesday (When) after an electrical fault sparked the fire (Why).'

Note: A reporter must exercise judgement about which of the 5 W's is most newsworthy and lead with that element. If the identity of the person involved is the most striking fact (e.g., a celebrity), 'Who' leads the sentence; if the scale of the event is most striking, 'What' leads instead.

1.8 Types of Leads: Straight, Anecdotal, Descriptive

Not every news story is best served by the same kind of opening. Journalists choose from several established lead formats depending on the nature of the story, the publication's tone, and the desired emotional effect on the reader.

(a) The Straight (Hard) News Lead

The straight lead — also called the 'hard news lead' or 'summary lead' — states the most important facts directly and immediately, typically covering Who, What, When, and Where within the first sentence. It is factual, direct, and free of embellishment. This is the standard lead used for breaking news, politics, crime, disasters, and other time-sensitive or serious stories.

Example: *'A 6.2-magnitude earthquake struck the coastal town of Merida on Thursday night, killing at least fourteen people and displacing hundreds more.'*

(b) The Anecdotal Lead

An anecdotal lead opens with a brief, illustrative story, scene, or example involving a specific individual before broadening out to the larger news story. This technique personalises an otherwise abstract or statistical story by grounding it in one person's lived experience, making it more relatable and emotionally engaging for the reader. Anecdotal leads are common in feature writing, human-interest stories, and long-form journalism.

Example: *'When Meena Kulkarni's shop flooded for the third time in two years, she stopped waiting for the government's promised drainage project and began saving for higher shelving instead. Her frustration echoes that of thousands of shopkeepers across the city's low-lying market district.'*

(c) The Descriptive Lead

A descriptive lead opens by painting a vivid sensory picture of a scene, setting, or atmosphere, drawing the reader into the world of the story before delivering the core facts. It relies on imagery, sensory detail, and mood-setting language, and is typically used in feature articles, colour pieces, and narrative journalism rather than in urgent breaking news.

Example: *'The smell of burnt wood still hung over Elm Street on Friday morning, three days after the fire that reduced the century-old market to ash.'*

Comparative Overview of Lead Types

Lead Type	Best Used For	Style
Straight / Hard News	Breaking news, crime, disasters, politics	Factual, direct, urgent
Anecdotal	Feature stories, human-interest, social issues	Personal, narrative, empathetic
Descriptive	Colour pieces, scene-setting features	Sensory, atmospheric, vivid

1.9 The Hook

A 'hook' is any element of a lead — a striking fact, an intriguing question, an unusual detail, or an emotionally charged image — that is specifically designed to seize the reader's attention and compel them to keep reading. While the straight lead relies on the sheer newsworthiness of facts to hook a reader, anecdotal and descriptive leads rely more heavily on a deliberately crafted hook, such as an element of surprise, tension, mystery, or human drama.

- A statistic that shocks or surprises the reader.
- An unusual or ironic detail about the event.
- A quotation that captures raw emotion or conflict.
- A rhetorical question that creates curiosity.
- A scene-setting image that creates atmosphere.

Example of a hook: *'It took firefighters eleven minutes to arrive — and just four to burn down what had taken this family fourteen years to build.'*

1.10 Media Style: Objectivity vs Subjectivity

'Style' in journalism refers to the conventions of tone, voice, and language that a publication adopts in presenting news. At the heart of journalistic style lies the ongoing tension between objectivity and subjectivity.

Objectivity

Objective writing presents facts without the writer's personal opinions, feelings, or judgements. It is the traditional ideal of 'straight' news reporting, in which the reporter functions as a neutral conduit of verified information rather than as a commentator.

Subjectivity

Subjective writing incorporates the writer's own opinions, interpretations, or emotional responses. It is appropriate in editorials, opinion columns, reviews, and some feature writing, but is considered inappropriate in straight news reporting because it can mislead readers into confusing fact with opinion.

Markers of Subjective (Opinionated) Writing to Avoid in News Reports

- First-person pronouns: 'I', 'we', 'our' — these signal the presence of the writer's personal viewpoint.
- Evaluative adjectives: words such as 'terrible', 'brilliant', 'shocking', 'disgraceful' pass judgement rather than report fact.
- Unattributed claims: statements presented as fact without citing a source, e.g., 'Everyone agrees the policy failed' rather than 'Critics argue the policy failed'.
- Loaded or emotive vocabulary: word choices that steer the reader toward a particular emotional response.

- Editorialising verbs: verbs like 'claims', 'admits', or 'insists' can subtly imply doubt about a speaker's honesty; neutral reporting favours 'said' or 'stated'.

Objective Version	Subjective Version
The mayor said the new policy would reduce traffic congestion by 20 percent.	The mayor's so-called 'brilliant' policy claims it will reduce traffic — but few believe it.
Fifty protesters gathered outside the town hall on Monday.	An angry mob of fifty protesters stormed the town hall on Monday.
The company reported a 12 percent drop in profits this quarter.	The company's profits took a shocking, embarrassing nosedive this quarter.

1.11 Media Bias and Its Types

Media bias refers to the perceived or real slant in the selection, framing, or presentation of news that favours a particular perspective, interest, or ideology over strict, neutral factual reporting. Bias can be intentional or unintentional, and can emerge through word choice, story selection, source selection, placement, and even the images chosen to accompany a story.

Common Types of Media Bias

Type of Bias	Description
Corporate Bias	Coverage is shaped by the commercial interests of the media outlet's owners, advertisers, or parent companies, sometimes leading to the underreporting of stories that could harm those interests.
Mainstream Bias	A tendency to report only on stories and viewpoints already considered acceptable or 'safe' by the broad establishment, avoiding controversial or minority perspectives.
Liberal Bias	A perceived tendency to favour progressive or left-leaning political positions, policies, or framing.
Conservative Bias	A perceived tendency to favour traditional or right-leaning political positions, policies, or framing.
Sensationalism Bias	Prioritising dramatic, shocking, or emotionally charged stories over more significant but less

Type of Bias	Description
	'exciting' news, in pursuit of higher readership or viewership.
Bias by Omission	Selectively leaving out facts, context, or perspectives that would present a fuller or more balanced picture of a story.
Bias by Word Choice / Framing	Using loaded language, labels, or framing devices that subtly favour one interpretation of events over another.

Example of framing bias: Describing the same group of people as 'freedom fighters' versus 'militants' reveals a framing choice that shapes reader sympathy.

Recognising bias requires close attention to word choice, the range of sources quoted, which facts are foregrounded or omitted, and the overall tone of a piece. Media literacy — the ability to critically evaluate news sources — is an essential skill for both consumers and producers of journalism, and forms a core learning outcome (COS6) of this unit.

1.12 News Article vs News Report

Though often used interchangeably in casual speech, 'news report' and 'news article' can be distinguished in journalistic practice by their scope, depth, and structure.

Feature	News Report	News Article
Length	Short and concise	Can be longer, more detailed
Purpose	Conveys facts of a recent event quickly	May include background, analysis, and context
Structure	Strictly follows inverted pyramid	May follow inverted pyramid or a more flexible feature structure
Tone	Strictly objective and factual	May allow for more descriptive or interpretive elements (in feature articles)
Timeliness	Tied closely to a specific recent event	Can cover ongoing issues or trends, not just single events

1.13 Circular Reporting and Fake News

Circular reporting (also called 'citogenesis') is a phenomenon in which a piece of information appears to come from multiple independent sources, but all of those sources can ultimately be traced back to

a single original — often unreliable — source. As the same claim is repeated and re-reported by different outlets, it gains a false appearance of having been independently verified, when in fact it has simply been copied and recirculated.

'Fake news' refers to fabricated or deliberately misleading information presented as legitimate news. It can take several forms:

- Fabricated content: entirely false stories invented and presented as fact.
- Manipulated content: genuine information or imagery that has been distorted or altered.
- Misleading content: selective or biased use of real information to create a false impression.
- False context: genuine content shared with false contextual information (e.g., an old photo presented as being from a current event).
- Satire misread as news: content intended as parody or satire that is mistakenly shared and believed as genuine reporting.

1.14 Verifying News: Fact-Checking Strategies

Given the risks posed by circular reporting and fake news, media consumers and journalists alike must apply deliberate verification strategies before accepting or sharing information.

1. Trace the original source: Look for the earliest instance of a claim rather than relying on the outlet that most recently reported it.
2. Cross-check with multiple independent outlets: If only one outlet is reporting a claim, treat it with caution until corroborated elsewhere.
3. Check the credibility and track record of the publishing outlet: Established outlets with editorial standards are generally more reliable than anonymous or unfamiliar sites.
4. Examine the evidence provided: Reliable stories cite verifiable data, named sources, documents, or firsthand accounts rather than vague attributions like 'sources say'.
5. Check publication dates: Old stories or images are sometimes recirculated as if they were current.
6. Use reverse image search: To verify whether a photograph is genuinely connected to the story it accompanies.
7. Consult fact-checking organisations: Independent fact-checking services can confirm or debunk viral claims.
8. Be alert to emotionally manipulative language: Headlines or posts designed to provoke strong emotional reactions warrant extra scrutiny.

Note: This skill directly supports COS7 — the ability to explain circular reporting and fake news, and to apply verification strategies before sharing information.

1.14a Worked Case Study: Analysing a Headline and Lead Together

To consolidate the concepts covered so far, consider the following worked example, which shows how a headline and lead work together to summarise a story, and how the same event might be treated differently by a broadsheet and a tabloid publication.

The Event

A local factory has been fined for illegally discharging waste into a river, causing fish deaths and contaminating a downstream water supply used by a nearby village.

Broadsheet Treatment

Headline: *'Factory Fined Rs 50 Lakh for River Pollution Violation'*

Lead: *'A textile manufacturing unit on the outskirts of the city was fined Rs 50 lakh on Tuesday after regulators found it had been discharging untreated chemical waste into the Kavari river for over six months, contaminating a water supply relied upon by nearly 3,000 villagers downstream.'*

Analysis: This is a straight lead, answering Who (the factory), What (fined for pollution), When (Tuesday), and Why (illegal discharge), in a single factual, unemotional sentence — typical of broadsheet objectivity.

Tabloid Treatment

Headline: *'Poison River: Factory's Filthy Secret Exposed'*

Lead: *'For six months, a factory poisoned the water that thousands of families drink — and got away with it, until now.'*

Analysis: This version uses sensationalist language ('poison', 'filthy secret'), a dramatic hook emphasising betrayal and danger, and a more emotionally charged tone designed to provoke outrage — characteristic of tabloid style, though it conveys essentially the same underlying facts as the broadsheet version.

Note: This kind of comparative analysis — identifying identical facts treated through different stylistic choices — is a frequently tested skill in this course and directly supports COS2 and COS5.

1.14b Unit 1 — Quick Revision Summary

Concept	Key Point to Remember
Headline	Attracts attention and summarises the story; written by a sub-editor, not the reporter.
Headlineese	Drops articles and 'to be'; uses present tense for past events and infinitives for future events.

Concept	Key Point to Remember
Broadsheet vs Tabloid	Broadsheet = formal, restrained; Tabloid = sensational, punchy, emotive.
Lead	Opening sentence(s) answering the most newsworthy of the 5 W's and H.
Straight Lead	Direct, factual — used for hard/breaking news.
Anecdotal Lead	Opens with a personal story to humanise a broader issue.
Descriptive Lead	Opens with vivid sensory or scene-setting detail.
Hook	The specific element of a lead designed to capture reader attention.
Objectivity	Fact-based writing free of personal opinion or emotive language.
Media Bias	A slant in coverage — corporate, mainstream, liberal, conservative, or by omission/framing.
Circular Reporting	Multiple outlets repeating one unverified original source, creating false credibility.
Fact-Checking	Trace the source, cross-check outlets, examine evidence, check dates.

1.15 Unit 1 — Practice Questions

1. Define a news headline and explain any four of its functions.
2. What is 'headlines'? Illustrate with examples how grammar is altered in headlines to save space.
3. Distinguish between broadsheet and tabloid headlines with suitable examples.
4. Identify and explain any three language devices used in headline writing.
5. What is a news lead? Why is it considered the most important part of a news story?
6. Explain the 5 W's and H with reference to news lead construction.
7. Differentiate between straight, anecdotal, and descriptive leads, giving one example of each.
8. What is meant by a 'hook' in a news lead? How does it differ across lead types?
9. Distinguish between objective and subjective writing in the context of news reporting.
10. Explain any three types of media bias with examples.
11. What is circular reporting? How does it contribute to the spread of fake news?
12. Suggest five strategies a reader can use to verify the authenticity of a news story before sharing it.

UNIT 2: Article, Comics, Advertising

Unit 2 builds on the foundations of Unit 1 by moving from the opening elements of a news story (headline and lead) to the complete construction of a news article, before turning to two very different but equally significant forms of media communication: comics as social commentary, and advertising as persuasive communication. Together, these topics equip students to both analyse and produce a range of media texts.

2.1 Writing a Complete News Article

Once a strong headline and lead have been crafted, the reporter must develop the remainder of the story in a way that sustains reader interest, provides necessary context, and presents information in order of decreasing importance. A complete, well-constructed news article typically contains the following components:

- **Headline:** the attention-grabbing title.
- **Byline:** the name of the reporter (and sometimes their location or role).
- **Lead / Introduction:** the opening sentence(s) summarising the core news.
- **Body:** the detailed development of the story, including facts, quotes, and context.
- **Quotes:** statements from relevant individuals that add authority, colour, and human perspective.
- **Background / Context:** relevant history or related information that helps readers understand the significance of the event.
- **Tail / Conclusion:** the closing element, often containing the least essential information.

2.2 The Inverted Pyramid Structure

The 'inverted pyramid' is the classic organisational structure of a hard news story, in which information is arranged from most important to least important, rather than in chronological order. This structure emerged from the practical demands of the newspaper printing and telegraph era, when editors needed to be able to cut a story from the bottom up to fit available space without losing essential facts.

The Three Layers of the Inverted Pyramid

1. **The Lead (Most Important):** Contains the core facts — who, what, when, where, and often why.
2. **The Body (Supporting Details):** Elaborates on the lead with additional facts, quotes, statistics, and context, arranged in descending order of importance.
3. **The Tail (Least Important):** Contains background information, minor details, or additional context that, if cut for space, would not damage the reader's understanding of the core story.

Note: The inverted pyramid stands in direct contrast to narrative or literary structures, which typically build toward a climax. News writing instead front-loads its 'climax' — the key fact — at the very beginning.

2.3 Quotes and Interviewing Techniques

Quotations from relevant individuals — witnesses, officials, experts, or those directly affected by an event — lend authority, authenticity, and human colour to a news story. A quote allows a source to speak in their own words, which both increases the credibility of a claim (since it is directly attributed) and adds variety and voice to otherwise fact-dense writing.

Guidelines for Using Quotes

- Use quotes for opinion, emotion, or colourful language — facts and figures can usually be paraphrased more efficiently.
- Always attribute a quote clearly to its speaker, using a neutral reporting verb such as 'said' or 'stated'.
- Keep quotes accurate and never alter the speaker's actual words, though minor grammatical cleanup for clarity is sometimes acceptable in print journalism.
- Avoid overloading a story with too many quotes; use them selectively for maximum impact.
- Vary quote placement — quotes can open a paragraph, close it, or sit mid-paragraph depending on the rhythm the writer wants to create.

Interviewing Techniques

Gathering strong, usable quotes depends on effective interviewing. Key techniques include:

- Preparation: Researching the subject and the interviewee in advance to ask informed, specific questions.
- Open-ended questions: Asking questions that cannot be answered with a simple 'yes' or 'no', encouraging detailed and expressive responses.
- Active listening: Following up naturally on what the interviewee says, rather than rigidly sticking to a prepared script.
- Building rapport: Establishing trust so that interviewees feel comfortable speaking candidly.
- Probing follow-up questions: Asking 'why' or 'how' to draw out deeper reasoning or emotion behind an initial answer.
- Accurate note-taking or recording: Ensuring quotes can be reproduced exactly and fairly.

2.4 Reported / Indirect Speech in News Writing

Not all information from a source is presented as a direct quote. Reporters frequently convert a source's original words into reported (indirect) speech, particularly when conveying factual information efficiently or when a direct quote would be too long, unclear, or repetitive.

Direct Speech vs Reported Speech

Direct Speech	Reported Speech
The minister said, "We will complete the project by December."	The minister said the project would be completed by December.
"I am proud of my team's effort," said the captain.	The captain said he was proud of his team's effort.

Converting direct speech into reported speech generally requires backshifting the tense (present becomes past, will becomes would), and changing pronouns to match the third-person perspective of the reporter. Skilled news writers move fluidly between direct quotes and reported speech within the same article, using direct quotes for emotionally significant or distinctive statements and reported speech for routine factual information.

2.5 The 'Tail' of a News Story

The 'tail' refers to the final section of a news article, occupying the base of the inverted pyramid. It typically contains the least critical information — background context, minor supporting details, related developments, or forward-looking statements — material that adds depth for an interested reader but is not essential to understanding the core story.

Typical Content of a Tail

- Background history relevant to the story but not essential to the immediate facts.
- Related past events or precedents.
- Minor quotes or reactions from secondary sources.
- Statistical context or comparative data.
- A forward-looking statement about what may happen next.

Note: Because it is the least essential section, the tail is traditionally the first part of a story to be cut by an editor working under space constraints — a direct practical consequence of the inverted pyramid structure discussed in section 2.2.

2.6 Comics as a Medium for Social Commentary

Comics — sequential art combining images and text — are far more than a form of entertainment. Since the earliest days of print journalism, comics and cartoons have served as a powerful medium for social and political commentary, capable of conveying complex ideas, criticism, and satire in a compact, visually striking, and often humorous form.

Why Comics Are Effective for Social Commentary

- Accessibility: Visual storytelling can communicate across barriers of language and literacy.
- Compression: A single panel or strip can condense a complex argument into an instantly graspable image.

- Emotional impact: Caricature and exaggeration can provoke strong emotional and intellectual reactions more effectively than text alone.
- Memorability: Striking visual images tend to stay in public memory longer than written commentary.
- Safety of satire: Humour and symbolism can allow cartoonists to critique powerful figures or institutions in ways that might be riskier in direct prose.

2.7 Editorial and Political Cartoons

An editorial cartoon (also called a political cartoon) is a single-panel or short illustration that expresses the artist's opinion on a current political or social issue, typically appearing on a newspaper's opinion or editorial page. Unlike comic strips designed primarily to amuse, editorial cartoons are explicitly persuasive and argumentative — visual equivalents of an opinion column.

Common Techniques in Editorial Cartoons

Technique	Description
Caricature	Exaggerating a public figure's physical features for satirical or comedic effect.
Symbolism	Using widely recognised symbols (e.g., a dove for peace, scales for justice) to convey abstract ideas quickly.
Analogy	Comparing a political situation to a more familiar scenario to clarify or critique it.
Irony	Depicting a situation in a way that highlights a contradiction between appearance and reality.
Labelling	Directly labelling figures, objects, or groups within the cartoon to remove ambiguity about who or what is being critiqued.
Exaggeration	Amplifying a trait, event, or consequence beyond realistic proportions to emphasise the cartoonist's point.

Effective analysis of an editorial cartoon requires identifying the central issue being addressed, the stance the cartoonist appears to take, and the specific visual and symbolic techniques used to convey that stance.

2.8 Comics and the Depiction of Injustice

Beyond single-panel editorial cartoons, longer-form comics and graphic narratives have historically played an important role in documenting and drawing attention to social injustice — including war, poverty, racial and gender discrimination, corruption, and human rights abuses. By combining narrative with striking visual imagery, comics can humanise victims of injustice and make abstract social problems emotionally and visually concrete for readers in a way that statistics alone cannot.

- Comics can give visual voice to marginalised communities whose experiences might otherwise go unreported.
- Serialised comic strips allow ongoing social issues to be revisited and developed over time, sustaining public attention.
- Satirical comics can hold those in power accountable by publicly mocking hypocrisy, corruption, or abuse of authority.
- Graphic narratives can convey the emotional and psychological toll of injustice in ways that straight factual reporting may not fully capture.

Note: This ties directly to CO5 and requires students to be able to discuss, with examples, how comics function as vehicles of social critique and how editorial cartoons in particular use visual rhetoric to highlight injustice.

2.9 Introduction to Advertising

Advertising is a paid form of communication used by organisations, businesses, or individuals to promote products, services, ideas, or causes to a target audience, with the ultimate aim of influencing attitudes or behaviour — most commonly, purchasing decisions. Advertising is one of the most pervasive forms of media language, appearing across print, broadcast, outdoor, and digital platforms.

2.10 Objectives and Language of Advertising

Core Objectives of Advertising

- To inform: Introducing consumers to a new product, service, or feature.
- To persuade: Convincing consumers that a product is superior to competitors or necessary to their lives.
- To remind: Keeping an established brand or product in the consumer's memory over time.
- To build brand identity: Creating a consistent, recognisable image and set of associations for a brand.
- To create desire: Generating an emotional want or aspiration connected to a product, beyond its functional use.

Characteristics of Advertising Language

- Concise and memorable phrasing, often using rhyme, alliteration, or repetition.
- Persuasive and emotive vocabulary designed to create positive associations.

- Use of imperatives (commands) to prompt direct action, e.g., 'Buy now', 'Try it today'.
- Superlatives and comparative claims, e.g., 'the best', 'better than ever'.
- Direct address to the consumer using second-person pronouns ('you', 'your') to create personal connection.
- Use of rhetorical questions to engage the consumer's imagination, e.g., 'Why settle for less?'

2.11 Slogans and Logos

Slogans

A slogan is a short, memorable phrase used consistently to represent a brand's identity, values, or promise. Effective slogans are brief, distinctive, easy to recall, and emotionally resonant. They often rely on the same language devices found in headlines — alliteration, rhyme, and wordplay — to aid memorability.

Logos

A logo is a graphic symbol, emblem, or distinctive typographic treatment that visually represents a brand. Logos function as an instantly recognisable shorthand for a brand's entire identity, allowing consumers to identify a company or product at a glance without needing to read any text. Effective logos are simple, distinctive, scalable across different sizes and media, and appropriate to the brand's intended image.

2.12 Structure of a Print Advertisement

A typical print advertisement is constructed from several distinct elements, each serving a specific persuasive function:

Element	Function
Headline	Captures attention and states the core promise or benefit of the product.
Visual / Image	Creates immediate emotional or aspirational appeal; often the first element noticed.
Body Copy	Provides supporting information, details, and persuasive argument for the product.
Slogan / Tagline	A short, memorable phrase reinforcing brand identity.
Logo	Identifies the brand or company visually.
Call to Action	Directs the consumer toward a specific next step, e.g., 'Visit our store today' or 'Order online now'.

2.13 Features vs Benefits

A crucial distinction in advertising language is between a product's 'features' and its 'benefits'. Confusing the two, or relying too heavily on features alone, is a common weakness in less effective advertising copy.

Features

A feature is an objective, factual characteristic of a product — what it has or what it does. Features describe the product itself.

Benefits

A benefit is the positive outcome or value that a consumer experiences as a result of a feature — what the product does for the consumer. Benefits describe the impact on the user's life, addressing the underlying question every consumer asks: 'What's in it for me?'

Feature	Corresponding Benefit
Waterproof casing	You can use it in the rain without worrying about damage.
10-hour battery life	You can go a full day without needing to recharge.
Made from organic cotton	You feel good knowing your clothing is environmentally responsible.
Built-in GPS tracker	You always know exactly where your belongings are, giving you peace of mind.

Note: Effective advertising copy typically leads with the benefit, since this is what motivates a consumer's emotional response, and supports it with the underlying feature as justification.

2.13' Types of Advertising Media

Advertising language and structure adapt to the medium through which a message is delivered. Understanding these differences helps explain why the same brand may use very different copy in different contexts.

Medium	Characteristics
Print (Newspaper/Magazine)	Combines headline, visual, body copy, and logo; allows for detailed reading at the audience's own pace.
Television	Combines moving image, sound, music, and voice-over; relies on narrative and emotional pacing within a short time slot.

Medium	Characteristics
Radio	Relies entirely on sound — voice, music, and sound effects — since there is no visual element.
Outdoor / Hoarding	Must communicate its message in a few seconds to a passing viewer; uses minimal text and bold visuals.
Digital / Social Media	Highly interactive and shareable; often uses short, punchy copy, hashtags, and direct calls to action; can be personalised to the viewer.

2.13" Ethics in Advertising

Because advertising is inherently persuasive, it raises important ethical questions that both advertisers and media-literate consumers should be aware of.

- Truthfulness: Advertisements should not make false or misleading claims about a product's features or benefits.
- Avoiding exploitation: Ethical advertising avoids exploiting vulnerable audiences, such as children, through manipulative techniques.
- Body image and representation: Responsible advertising avoids promoting unrealistic or harmful standards of appearance.
- Substantiation: Claims — especially about health, safety, or performance — should be backed by credible evidence.
- Transparency: Sponsored content and native advertising should be clearly distinguished from independent editorial content.

Note: While ethics in advertising is not a primary focus of this syllabus, awareness of these issues deepens a student's ability to critically analyse the persuasive techniques discussed in sections 2.9 to 2.13.

2.13a Worked Example: A Complete Short News Article

The following short, fully constructed news article illustrates how the elements discussed in this unit — headline, lead, quotes, reported speech, and tail — combine in practice, following the inverted pyramid structure.

Headline: *'Local School Wins National Robotics Championship'*

Lead: *'A team of five students from Greenfield High School won the National Schools Robotics Championship in Delhi on Saturday, defeating forty-two other teams from across the country.'*

Body: The team's robot, named 'Argus', completed the obstacle course in a record 38 seconds, impressing judges with its precision navigation system. "We spent nearly eight months building and testing Argus," said team captain Ritika Shah. "There were days we wanted to give up, but seeing it finally work perfectly on stage made everything worth it." The school's principal said the win reflected years of investment in the institution's science programme.

Tail: Greenfield High School has now won the state-level competition three years in a row, and will represent India at the Asia-Pacific Schools Robotics Meet later this year.

Analysis: Note how the lead answers Who, What, When, and Where in a single sentence; the body develops the story with a direct quote (adding human voice) and reported speech (efficiently conveying the principal's view); and the tail supplies background context (the school's winning streak) that, while interesting, is not essential to understanding the core story — making it the natural point to trim if space were limited.

2.13b Unit 2 — Quick Revision Summary

Concept	Key Point to Remember
Inverted Pyramid	Information arranged from most to least important, not chronologically.
Quotes	Best used for opinion or emotion; always attributed with a neutral verb like 'said'.
Reported Speech	Tense backshifts and pronouns change to third person when converting direct to indirect speech.
Tail	Least essential information; first section cut when space is limited.
Editorial Cartoon	A single-panel visual opinion piece using caricature, symbolism, and irony.
Comics and Injustice	Comics humanise social issues and can hold power accountable through satire.
Advertising Objectives	To inform, persuade, remind, build brand identity, and create desire.
Slogan	Short, memorable phrase representing brand identity.
Logo	Visual symbol identifying a brand instantly.
Feature	An objective fact about a product.

Concept	Key Point to Remember
Benefit	The positive value the consumer gains from a feature — usually leads the copy.

2.14 Unit 2 — Practice Questions

4. List and briefly explain the essential components of a complete news article.
5. Explain the inverted pyramid structure with the help of a labelled diagram or description.
6. Why are quotes important in news writing? Suggest three guidelines for their effective use.
7. Explain any three techniques of effective interviewing.
8. Convert the following direct speech into reported speech: 'I will resign if the allegations are proven true,' said the director.
9. What is meant by the 'tail' of a news story? Why is it usually the first section removed by an editor?
10. Discuss the role of comics as a medium of social commentary with suitable examples.
11. Explain any four techniques commonly used in editorial/political cartoons.
12. How do comics contribute to highlighting social injustice? Illustrate your answer with examples.
13. What are the key objectives of advertising? Explain with examples.
14. Distinguish between a slogan and a logo, giving one example of each.
15. List and explain the essential elements of a print advertisement.
16. Differentiate between 'features' and 'benefits' in advertising language, with at least two examples.

Glossary of Key Terms

Term	Meaning
Headline	The specialised, compressed grammar and vocabulary used in news headlines.
Lead / Lede	The opening sentence or paragraph of a news story, summarising its key facts.
5 W's and H	Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How — the checklist for a complete news lead.
Straight Lead	A direct, factual news lead stating the core facts immediately.
Anecdotal Lead	A lead that opens with a specific personal story before broadening to the wider issue.
Descriptive Lead	A lead that opens with vivid sensory or scene-setting detail.
Hook	An element of a lead designed to capture and hold reader attention.
Objectivity	Factual, unbiased reporting free from the writer's personal opinion.
Subjectivity	Writing that incorporates the writer's personal opinions or feelings.
Media Bias	A slant in news coverage favouring a particular perspective or interest.
Circular Reporting	A false appearance of independent verification created when multiple outlets repeat a single unverified original source.
Fake News	Fabricated or deliberately misleading content presented as legitimate news.
Inverted Pyramid	The news-writing structure that arranges information from most to least important.
Byline	The line crediting the reporter's name at the start of an article.

Term	Meaning
Tail	The concluding, least essential section of a news story.
Editorial Cartoon	A single-panel illustration expressing an opinion on a current political or social issue.
Caricature	Exaggerated depiction of a person's features for satirical effect.
Slogan	A short, memorable phrase representing a brand's identity.
Logo	A graphic symbol or design representing a brand.
Call to Action	The part of an advertisement directing the consumer to a specific next step.
Feature (Advertising)	An objective factual characteristic of a product.
Benefit (Advertising)	The positive value or outcome a consumer gains from a product feature.

Model Question Paper

English for Media Studies – I (HENGVC1301) | Time: 1.5 Hours | Maximum Marks: 30

Q.1 Write short notes on any five of the following. (10 Marks)

- a) Headlines
- b) Broadsheet vs Tabloid headlines
- c) The 5 W's and H
- d) Anecdotal lead
- e) Media bias
- f) Circular reporting
- g) Inverted pyramid
- h) Editorial cartoons
- i) Features vs Benefits
- j) Call to action

Attempt any two of the following. (10 marks each)

Q.2 On Headlines and Language Devices

Discuss the structure of headlines and explain, with examples, any four language devices used in headline writing.

Q.3 On the Lead

Explain the three types of leads discussed in this unit — straight, anecdotal, and descriptive — and write one original example of each for a story of your choice.

Q.4 On Style and Bias

Distinguish between objectivity and subjectivity in news writing, and explain any three types of media bias with suitable examples.

Q.5 On Article, Comics, or Advertising

Either: Explain the inverted pyramid structure and the role of quotes and the tail in a complete news article. Or: Discuss the role of comics and editorial cartoons in highlighting social injustice. Or: Explain the objectives and language of advertising, with reference to slogans, logos, and the distinction between features and benefits.

Model Answer: Q.2 (Headlines and Language Devices)

Headlines are written in a compressed grammatical style known as headlines, developed to convey maximum information within minimal space. This style typically omits articles such as 'a' and 'the', drops the verb 'to be', and replaces longer words with short, punchy synonyms such as 'row' for dispute or 'probe' for investigation. Verb tense is also manipulated for effect: the present tense is used to report past events, lending a sense of immediacy, while the infinitive form is used to signal future events, as in 'PM to Visit Flood-Hit Areas'. Commas frequently substitute for the conjunction 'and', allowing two related facts to be packed into a single short line.

Beyond grammar, headline writers use a range of language devices to make headlines memorable and engaging. Play on words, or puns, exploit the multiple meanings of a word or its similarity in sound to another word, producing a witty effect especially common in sports and entertainment headlines. Alliteration — the repetition of initial consonant sounds across neighbouring words — creates rhythm and aids memorability, as in 'Traffic Turmoil Troubles Travellers'. Rhyme, the matching of end-sounds between words, produces a catchy, sing-song quality often favoured by tabloids. Finally, sensationalist language uses dramatic, emotionally charged vocabulary — words like 'chaos', 'fury', or 'shock' — to provoke a strong reaction in the reader, frequently at some cost to strict neutrality. Together, these grammatical and rhetorical devices allow a headline to perform its dual function of informing and attracting attention within an extremely limited space.

Model Answer: Q.3 (Types of Leads)

A news lead is the opening sentence or short paragraph of a news story, and journalists choose from several established formats depending on the nature of the story being told. The straight, or hard news, lead states the most important facts directly and immediately, typically covering who, what, when, and where within the very first sentence. It is factual, unembellished, and used for breaking news, crime, politics, and other urgent or serious stories. For example: 'A 6.2-magnitude earthquake struck the coastal town of Merida on Thursday night, killing at least fourteen people.'

The anecdotal lead, by contrast, opens with a brief, illustrative story involving a specific individual before broadening out to the wider issue, personalising an otherwise abstract or statistical subject. For example, a story on rising fuel prices might open: 'Every morning, taxi driver Suresh Yadav calculates whether today's fares will even cover his petrol bill.' This format is common in feature writing and human-interest journalism because it builds empathy before delivering the broader facts.

The descriptive lead opens instead with vivid sensory or atmospheric detail, drawing the reader into the scene of the story before the core facts are delivered. For example: 'The smell of burnt wood still hung over Elm Street on Friday morning, three days after the fire that reduced the century-old market to ash.' This format is typically reserved for feature articles and colour pieces rather than urgent breaking news, since it prioritises mood and imagery over immediate factual delivery. Each lead type therefore serves a distinct journalistic purpose, and skilled reporters select the format best suited to the story's content, tone, and publication context.

Appendix: Solved Short Notes

The following model answers illustrate the expected length, depth, and structure for 'short note' style questions of the kind that appear in Q.1 of the End Semester Examination (2 marks each, approximately 5–6 sentences).

Short Note: Headlines

Headlines refers to the compressed grammatical style used specifically in news headlines to save space while conveying maximum information. It typically omits articles ('a', 'the') and the verb 'to be', uses the present tense to describe past events for immediacy, and uses the infinitive ('to') to indicate future events. Short, punchy words such as 'row', 'axe', and 'probe' replace longer synonyms. Commas often replace the word 'and'. This specialised grammar allows a headline to convey a complete idea in a very small space.

Short Note: The Inverted Pyramid

The inverted pyramid is the standard structural model for hard news writing, in which information is arranged from most to least important rather than chronologically. The lead at the top contains the core facts; the body develops these with supporting detail and quotes; and the tail at the bottom carries background or minor information. This structure allows editors to cut a story from the bottom without losing essential facts, and allows time-pressed readers to grasp the main point of a story from the very first sentence.

Short Note: Media Bias

Media bias refers to a slant in the selection, framing, or presentation of news that favours a particular perspective over strictly neutral reporting. It can appear as corporate bias (shaped by owner or advertiser interests), mainstream bias (favouring 'safe', established viewpoints), political bias (liberal or conservative slant), sensationalism (favouring drama over significance), or bias by omission (leaving out relevant facts or perspectives). Recognising bias requires close attention to word choice, source selection, and what is left unsaid.

Short Note: Anecdotal Lead

An anecdotal lead opens a news story with a brief, specific story or scene involving an individual before broadening out to the larger issue the article addresses. It is commonly used in feature writing and human-interest journalism because it personalises abstract or statistical issues, making them more relatable and emotionally engaging for readers. For example, a story about rising school fees might open with one parent's struggle to pay a single term's fee before moving to city-wide statistics.

Short Note: Features vs Benefits in Advertising

In advertising, a 'feature' is an objective, factual characteristic of a product — what it has or does. A 'benefit' is the positive value or outcome the consumer experiences as a result of that feature — what it does for them. For instance, '10-hour battery life' is a feature, while 'you can go a full day without recharging' is the corresponding benefit. Effective advertising copy typically leads with the benefit, since this is what emotionally motivates a consumer, before supporting it with the factual feature.

Short Note: Editorial Cartoons

An editorial (or political) cartoon is a single-panel illustration that expresses the cartoonist's opinion on a current political or social issue, usually published on a newspaper's opinion page. Unlike comic strips meant purely to entertain, editorial cartoons are deliberately persuasive, functioning as a visual equivalent of an opinion column. Common techniques include caricature (exaggerating a public figure's features), symbolism (using recognisable images to represent abstract ideas), irony, and labelling, all used to convey a clear critical stance in a single striking image.