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# How Thomas The Tank Engine highlighted a key issue with modern day journalism

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If I'm honest, I didn't expect to get worked up over Thomas the Tank Engine this week. Sure I'd enjoyed the show as a young kid and have a collection of short stories that my father used to read me, hanging in my cupboard, ready to be read to my children, but that's it.

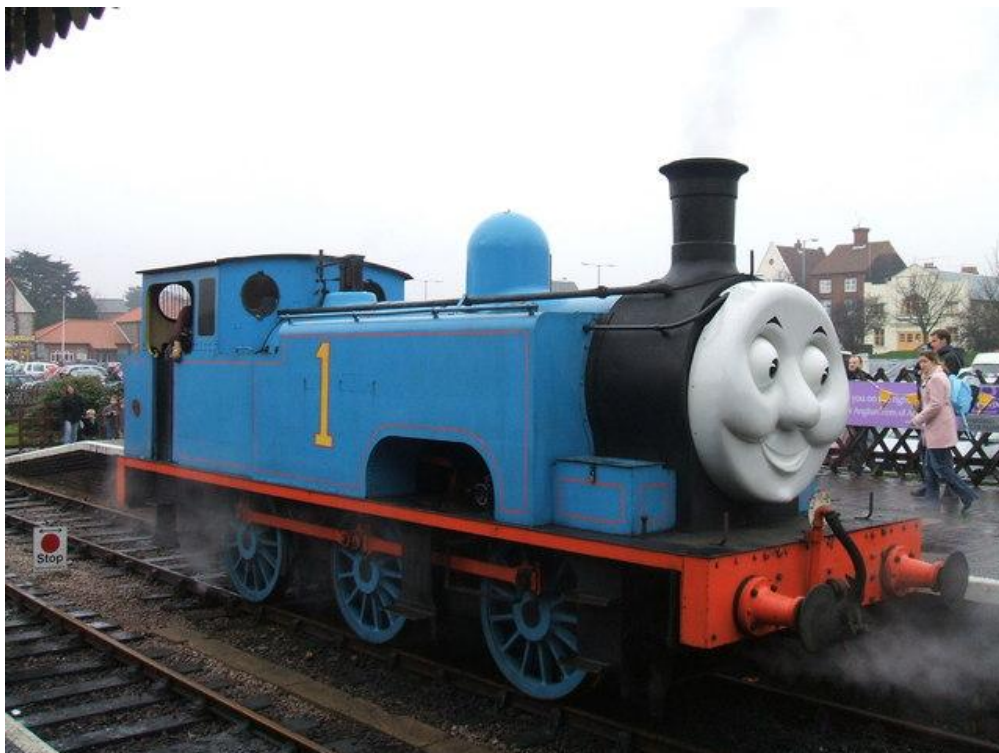




Then - I saw [this article in the Daily Mirror](#).

It noted shock at an episode in which Henry refused to move, scared the rain will ruin his paintwork. As a punishment, he's bricked into the tunnel. The article talks about how "horrifying" this is. I remembered the episode and story vaguely so

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"horrificing" this is. I remembered the episode and story vaguely so was interested to read more.

The article tries to be a bit light-hearted referring to the Fat Controller as a "part-time despot" and then stating the character was "bossing others around to build a wall (sound familiar?)"

I'm sure Donald Trump won't be happy with the negative covfefe but there you go.

Completely dumbfounded about how children were subjected to watching this, the article ends by quoting narrator Ringo Starr: "I think he deserved his punishment, don't you?" before adding: "Not really Ringo, no."

Now, bearing in mind, that as Henry has featured in other episodes since he didn't actually die and no-one ever said he was going to. This lesson was teaching children that people have responsibilities and that there are consequences for not fulfilling them. Which, surely, is a good lesson to instill in children?

But, then, I laughed at myself. This doesn't really matter anymore, does it?

I was pulled in with the headline: "Terrifying Thomas the Tank Engine 'death' scene puts dark new spin on popular show."

I imagine a lot of readers would've been pulled in by this. But then, this isn't really newsworthy, is it? Someone notices something in a show from three decades ago, that nobody really cares about but that isn't as good a headline a guess.

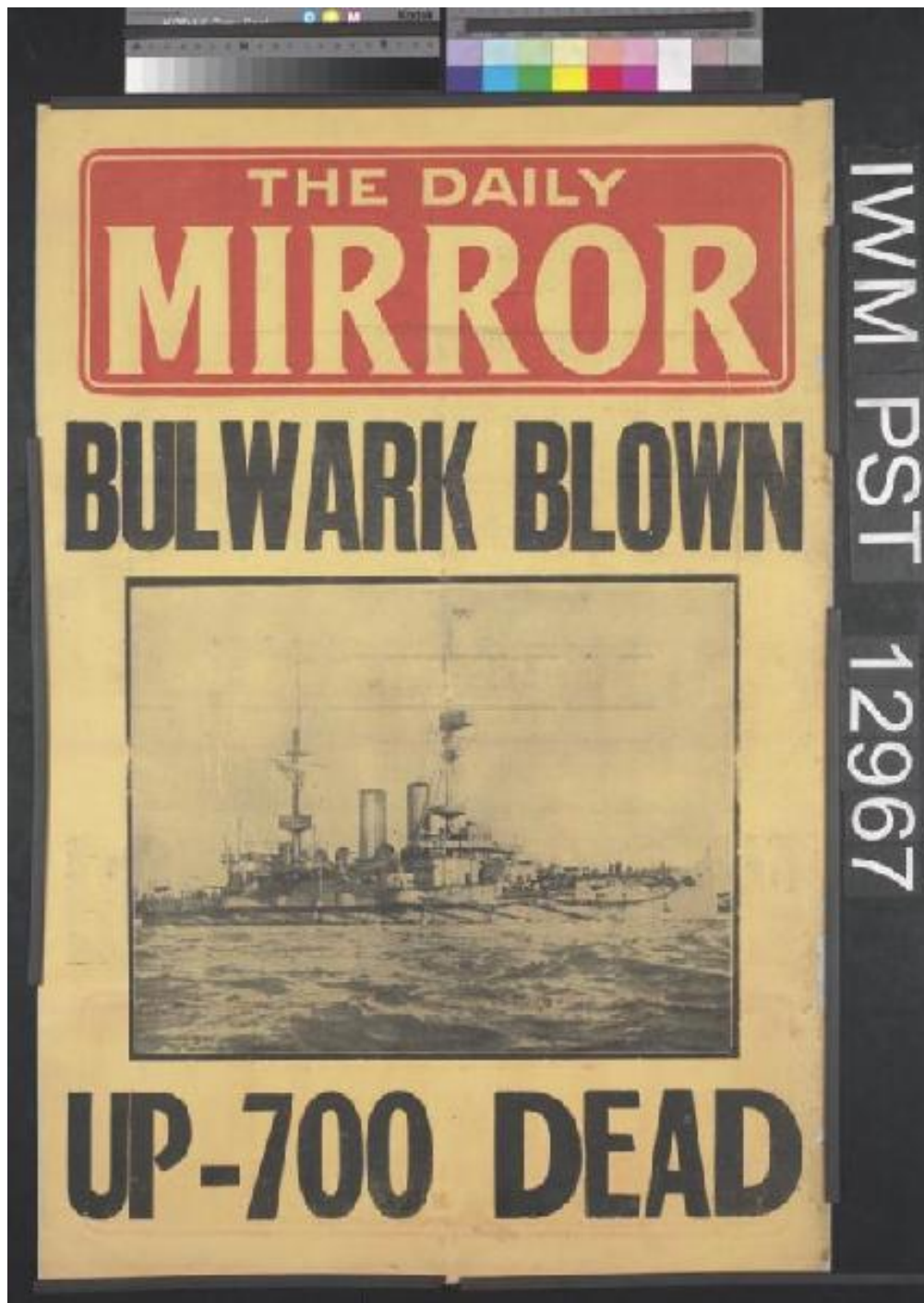
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But, then again, the newspaper, all newspapers need reads.

Because hits on an online page generates money through advertising. And good journalism costs money and time.

But at the same time, newspapers have been growing less profitable. This is because we're in an age of apps, 24/7 on-demand news cycles, and something needs to be done to satisfy demand. The article produced is short, so wouldn't take too long to right and would grab in readers.





Journalism isn't valued as highly as it should be. In the 20th Century, lots of sectors were competing for finite resources, journalism was barely involved in the debate. People use ad-blockers, which cuts revenue streams, meaning newspapers make even less.

As a result, journalism has to run what most would regard as non-stories, to get the money and readership to survive. You can shout as loud as you like, but if no-one is around to hear you, what's the point?

If you want good high-quality journalism, it requires a good level of funding. It costs money to travel from place to place, buy the equipment you need to take photo and video, conduct research and take out contacts to lunch.

People have had news-on-demand and free for over a decade. I don't for a second want people to be forced to pay money to access news, as that would essentially be a taxation on knowledge, that some may not want or be able to pay.



But journalism needs a new business model to survive, the Thomas article wouldn't take long, yes, but it still takes time. That time could be spent doing something else, doing some research into a hard-hitting piece of investigative work for example.

That it is in the financial interests of a paper to run a short article on an episode from a children's TV show from the 1980s, surely tells you everything you need to know about the issue.

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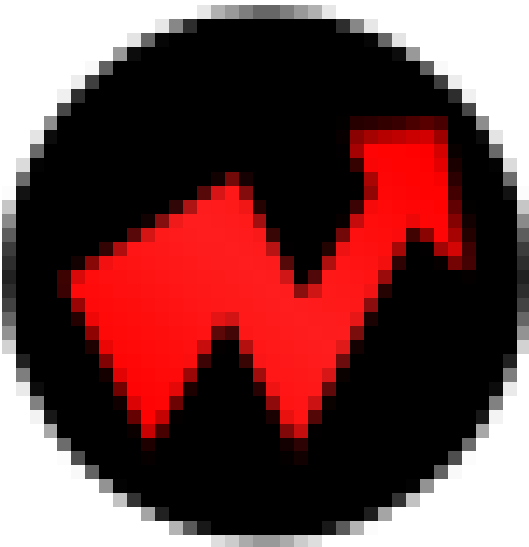
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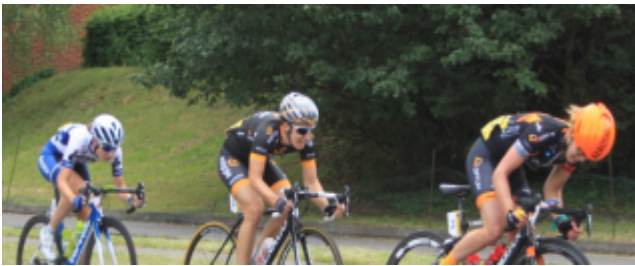
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