

Same Story, Different Online Newspapers

The following tasks are all based on the reporting of an incident on 17th January 2008 when a British Airways 777 airplane from China to London Heathrow lost power as it came in to land and crashed near the runway.

1. Read through the following first lines from each of the articles:

'A heroic British Airways pilot averted catastrophe yesterday by gliding his jet into Heathrow after its engines failed.'

From: www.mirror.co.uk

'More than 150 passengers and crew escaped disaster yesterday after a British Airways jet crash-landed short of the runway at Heathrow airport, just missing a road.'

From: www.guardian.co.uk

'A formal investigation is under way to find out what led one of the safest aircraft in the world to crash land at Heathrow airport this afternoon.'

From: www.timesonline.co.uk

'Hero pilot John Coward said today that he feared the Heathrow crash-landing would end in catastrophe.'

From: www.dailymail.co.uk

2. Make a list of the information you discover from each first line.
3. What impressions about what happened do you get from each newspaper and how is this done?
4. Look at the following words which were used in the articles to describe the pilot. What impression do you get of him from the vocabulary?

A heroic British Airways pilot	Cool-headed Capt Peter Burkill
Supreme skill and bravery of the pilots	... pilot's professionalism

5. The words above all come from the tabloid newspaper articles; why do you think they are included and why do these type of phrases not appear in the broadsheet articles?

6. Read through the following words and phrases which were used by the writers to describe the accident:

... averted catastrophe ... kept Flight BA038 airborne ... before crash-landing in a field. The jet swooped in a few feet above cars heading for the airport. ... managed to keep it airborne above houses, schools and offices – clearing Heathrow’s perimeter fence by just five feet. The undercarriage of Flight BA038 was partially ripped off ... As the jet from Beijing crash-landed it gouged huge chunks out of the field. It skidded along ... leaving a trail of debris in its wake. Nightmare as the plane belly-flopped ... when it smashed into the ground. ... six-year-old aircraft came screaming in at 12.42pm.

From: www.mirror.co.uk

... jet crash landed short of the runway ... just missing a road. ... struck the ground ... crushing its undercarriage ... and skidding on its belly ... in difficulty before the landing ... badly damaged by the impact.

From: www.guardian.co.uk

... crash land ... when the stricken aircraft tore into the tarmac. ... at an unusual angle, plunging beyond the runway. It finally came to a halt ...

From: www.timesonline.co.uk

... just seconds to bring the aircraft down successfully. As the stricken Boeing 777 narrowly cleared the perimeter fence ... the plane suffered a catastrophic power failure in both engines ... With time running out ... By then, the plane was seconds from the ground ... so sudden and dramatic was the failure that the crew did not have time to sound a warning. ... narrowly missing the perimeter fence, before skidding across grass and tarmac.

From: www.dailymail.co.uk

7. What impressions do you get of the crash from each of the extracts? Do some articles make the incident seem more dramatic than others?
8. In each article, how does the writer’s language affect your understanding of what happened?