# Guided Reading – How did Murdoch’s biggest UK Sunday Paper close down in one week?

# Read resource A – An extract from The Guardian ‘News of the World: 10 years since phone-hacking scandal brought down tabloid’ [July 2021]

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| Add a **title** here for **each paragraph**. | **Highlight** the key points in **each paragraph** (don’t choose too much in each one) | **Summarise** **each paragraph** in 2-3 bullet points. |
|  | Ten years ago this morning, newsagents took delivery of the final issue of the [News of the World](https://www.theguardian.com/media/newsoftheworld). But for the man who, through his investigations in the Guardian, set off the events that brought down the UK’s biggest-selling Sunday newspaper, it did not feel like a victory.Over the course of a few days in July 2011, the News of the World had gone from having tens of millions of readers who every weekend lapped up its agenda-setting mix of sex, scandal and scoops to becoming a pariah publication considered beyond salvation.It began on the Monday of that week when Davies and colleague [Amelia Hill](https://www.theguardian.com/profile/ameliahill) [revealed](https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2011/jul/04/milly-dowler-voicemail-hacked-news-of-world) that the News of the World’s reporters had illegally accessed the voicemails of murdered schoolgirl [Milly Dowler](https://www.theguardian.com/uk/milly-dowler). After Milly went missing parents of the teenager believed she was alive as her voicemails were being deleted. This was false hope it was not Milly deleting them but the News of the World journalists.  By the Thursday, owner [Rupert Murdoch](https://www.theguardian.com/media/rupert-murdoch) had concluded his 168-year-old tabloid had become politically toxic and threatened his takeover of broadcaster Sky. He abruptly shut the paper down and sacked most of the 200 staff. For years Murdoch’s company had falsely maintained that just ‘one rogue reporter’ – former royal editor [Clive Goodman](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/may/21/andy-coulson-clive-goodman-phone-hacking-fall-guy-court) – had hacked voicemails, while paying off other celebrity victims and playing down Davies’ stories. But it was the Dowler revelation that caught the public’s attention. It was the desire to scoop rivals using almost any method possible that would bring about the downfall of the paper. News editor Greg Miskiw helped introduce phone hacking to the newspaper after learning about it from a private investigator: “One day during a conversation, he said, you do realise that I can listen to people’s voicemails? And I said, wow, that’s astonishing, we might use that service. And so we did.”The technique was simple. All it required was knowing an individual’s mobile phone number. The reporter would ring it, hope it went to voicemail, then guess the individual’s PIN – usually still set to the default of ‘0000’ or ‘1234’. They could immediately listen to all the voicemails left on that individual’s phone. In an era before smartphones made it easier to send lengthy text messages, a typical set of voicemails could include everything from declarations of love to private medical information.“I would choose my targets very, very carefully,” said Miskiw. “But by the time I left the London office, the people put in charge were just hacking everybody. And that’s how it eventually unravelled.”Thousands of people were targeted. Journalists [listened in to hundreds of messages](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2013/nov/07/david-blunkett-taped-by-news-of-the-world) left by the then home secretary [David Blunkett](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/davidblunkett), who was in charge of the police and security services.Blunkett said the subsequent front page expose of his relationship with a married woman caused friendships to break down: “I was in the public eye. And I was responsible for my behaviour. But it’s always the family of people that gets hurt.”Murdoch is still dealing with the clear-up bill. Fifteen years after the first phone hacking conviction, tens of millions of pounds are [still being spent by News UK](https://www.theguardian.com/media/2020/may/20/kris-marshall-settles-claim-over-news-of-the-world-phone-hacking) every year settling claims from phone-hacking victims. The practice was also widespread at the Mirror and Sunday People, all of which continue to deal with cases.The biggest UK tabloid that never admitted hacking voicemails is the Sun, the News of the World’s sister newspaper. Despite this, only last month Murdoch’s company paid substantial damages to former MP Simon Hughes who [specifically claimed he was illegally targeted by the Sun](https://www.theguardian.com/media/2021/jun/10/sun-publisher-pays-former-mp-simon-hughes-phone-hacking-damages-after-tabloid-outed). The settlement ensured Hughes’ claims were never heard in open court.When pictures of [Matt Hancock’s clinch with an aide](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/jun/26/matt-hancock-resigns-after-questions-over-relationship-with-aide) were splashed on the front page of the Sun last month, it was a rare throwback to the era where such exposes arrived almost every Sunday. Even then, much-tightened privacy law meant it was the couple’s breach of social distancing rules – as much as the affair – which helped legally justify publication.Looking back at the News of the World’s closure a decade on, Davies said a chance for real change had been missed: “There was an extraordinary period which only lasted a few weeks and it was like seeing the teacher chased out of the classroom. And just for a brief period, we didn’t have to be frightened of [Rupert Murdoch](https://www.theguardian.com/media/rupert-murdoch) and his dreadful newspapers and politicians were free to say what they thought and advertisers were free to tell him to get stuffed.“But you know, power doesn’t relax its grip easily. And slowly and insidiously Murdoch got his bony fingers back around the throat of British public life and has kept them there.” |  |