

## YOU BE THE EDITOR

### MAKING DIFFICULT CHOICES EVERY DAY

News organizations have to make difficult choices every day.

What gets published and what doesn't? Would certain words in a headline offend readers? Could the photo that accompanies the article be considered misleading?

Editors also have to take into account many people's points of view, including marginalised people whose viewpoints have often been overlooked in the past.

Bruce Campion-Smith is the Public Editor at the Toronto Star. ([SEE FTR May 2019](#) for more information about Public Editors.) Every year, he puts together a column called "You Be the Editor." It lists some of the difficult decisions Star editors have made during the previous year and asks, "did we make the right call?"

For instance, for an article about tennis star Novak Djokovic, who was banned from playing in the Australian Open tennis tournament, there was a question about the headline. It contained a phrase that could be considered offensive to people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Do you think the Star's editors should have used the phrase "falls on deaf ears"? The quiz gives Campion-Smith information about what readers are concerned about. With that in mind, he can change The Star's reporting policies. Campion-Smith also gives The


Star's reporters and editors the feedback from the public.

The quiz also helps readers understand a bit better the job of the journalist.


For instance, how difficult it can be to write a good headline. Headlines need to help readers know what the story is about but they also need to make the story enticing to read, without being misleading. Headlines also have to be short and concise.

At the same time, the headline has to use words that are not inappropriate. In the case of the "deaf ears" headline, the mother of a child who is deaf pointed out that the phrase was outdated and harmful to some people like her daughter. Campion-Smith agreed that the reference should not have been used. The Star stylebook carries guidance on this very point: "Avoid using disabilities as metaphors: 'the blind leading the blind,' 'falling on deaf ears,' etc."


On the following pages are some other "You Be the Editor" questions. Think about what your decisions would be in these scenarios.



**An article has the headline, "Australian Open quarantine whining falls on deaf ears, as it should." Do you run it?**



Yes. Deaf ears is a common way to describe when requests or pleas are ignored.



No. It's insensitive and insulting to those individuals who are hearing impaired.

◀ You can take the full quiz [HERE](#).

# CRITICAL THINKING

## YOU BE THE EDITOR: INSTRUCTIONS

For each of these scenarios, look at the photo and read the question underneath it. What would you have done if you were the editor? Before you finalize your decision, read the information underneath the two options. Did your initial decision change? Why or why not?

You can take the entire quiz (15 questions) [HERE](#) as well as quizzes from past years. On page 3 we've listed how Star readers voted.

(Note: Some of the scenarios involve subject matter that may not be appropriate for young people.)



The federal election has kicked off and you are designing the Star's front page with pictures of the party leaders. Do you include a photo of Maxime Bernier, leader of the People's Party of Canada?



Yes. He's the leader of a federal party with candidates running nationwide. Readers deserve to know all the leaders who are running.



No. His party is polling in the single digits and held no seats in the previous Parliament.



As the front-page editor, you have selected a profile picture of former Blue Jays general manager Alex Anthopoulos to accompany a column. But there's a microphone in the photo in the very spot where you want to place text.



Yes. It will make for nicer, less cluttered design.



No. Digital manipulation of photos without being transparent with readers goes against the Star's journalistic guidelines.



A sports headline reads, "Huskies squeak into women's Final Four."  
Does that look okay to you?

- ☐ Yes. The headline will help readers identify the team.
- ☐ No. We don't see headlines about "men's" hockey or "men's" soccer or "men's" golf so what is the difference with women's sports?



You need a photo to accompany a story about COVID-19 and schools. One choice is a photo showing a classroom in a Toronto school with desks neatly spaced apart. But the photo was taken in August, 2020, before the school year started. Do you use that photo?



Yes. The photo shows physical distancing measures implemented by the school board.



No. The photo is outdated and there's a good chance it bears little resemblance to a typical classroom.



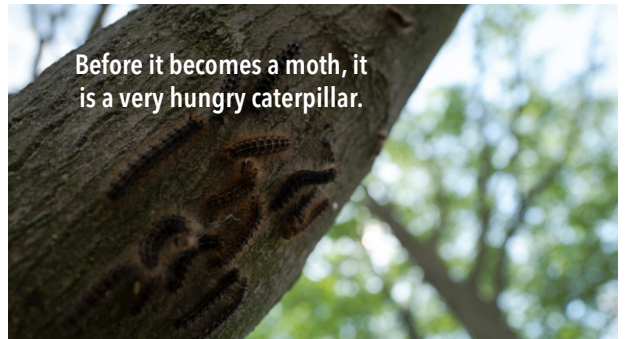
An article about rug decor references the Disney movie "Aladdin". Do you use an image from the movie showing Aladdin and Jasmine flying on the magic carpet?



Yes. It's a light-hearted way to illustrate the article.



No. It perpetuates a racial stereotype.



Before it becomes a moth, it is a very hungry caterpillar.

Neighbourhood trees are under attack as the insect to blame enjoys a population explosion. In the story, do you refer to the insect as "Lymantria dispar," rather than "gypsy moth"?



Yes. The term gypsy moth is considered ethnically insensitive.



No. People know them as gypsy moths and will be confused by the new



# ANSWER PAGE

## HERE ARE THE READERS' CHOICES IN THE 2021 YOU BE THE EDITOR SURVEY:

**1. Do you include a photo of Maxime Bernier, leader of the People's Party of Canada, with photos of other federal party leaders on the front page?**

**YES.** He's the leader of a federal party with candidates nationwide. 69.7 per cent.

**NO.** His party is polling in the single digits and held no seats in the previous Parliament. 30.3 per cent.

**2. You have selected a picture of a former Blue Jays general manager for the front page. Do you digitally edit the photo to remove a microphone to make room for text?**

**YES.** It will make for nicer design. 37.9 per cent.

**NO.** Digital manipulation of photos without being transparent with readers goes against the Star's journalistic guidelines. 62.1 per cent.

**3. A sports headline reads, "Huskies squeak into women's Final Four." Look OK to you?**

**YES.** It will help readers identify the team. 70.8 per cent.

**NO.** We don't see headlines about "men's" hockey or "men's" soccer or "men's" golf. 29.2 per cent.

**4. Do you use a photo taken in August, 2020 showing a Toronto classroom with desks neatly spaced apart?**

**YES.** The photo shows the physical distancing measures. 49.7 per cent.

**NO.** The photo is outdated and there's a good chance it bears little resemblance to a typical classroom during the pandemic. 50.3 per cent.

**5. An article about rug decor references the movie "Aladdin." Do you use an image from the movie showing Aladdin and Jasmine flying on a magic carpet?**

**YES.** It's a lighthearted way to illustrate the article. 58.7 per cent.

**NO.** It perpetuates a racial stereotype. 41.3 per cent.

**6. Do you use the term *Lymantria dispar dispar* rather than gypsy moth?**

**YES.** "Gypsy moth" is considered ethnically insensitive. 31.3 per cent.

**NO.** People know them as gypsy moths and will be confused by the new name. 68.7 per cent.

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What did Public Editor Bruce Campion-Smith have to say about these scenarios? Read his column about them [HERE](#).