NTRL App UI & Ritual Experience — Product Spec (v1.0)

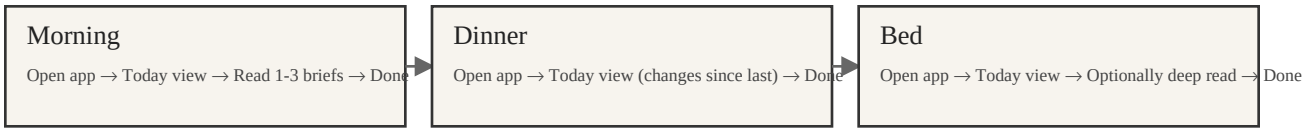
Build-ready spec for R&D; • Generated January 28, 2026

Scope: Implements the UI/UX improvements from the Jan 27, 2026 UI review: ritual-based 'Today' experience, calm navigation, literary reading typography, completion signals, and local-only history. This spec is additive and must remain compliant with NTRL brand, UX language rules, and Red Line Test.

Primary goals: (1) Make NTRL a 2–3x/day ritual; (2) reduce cognitive effort; (3) increase reading pleasure; (4) strengthen completion; (5) preserve neutrality and non-manipulative behavior.

Ritual model

Design for three short daily sessions (morning, dinner, bedtime) without increasing checking pressure.



Design goal: the user feels 'caught up' in under 2–5 minutes per session.

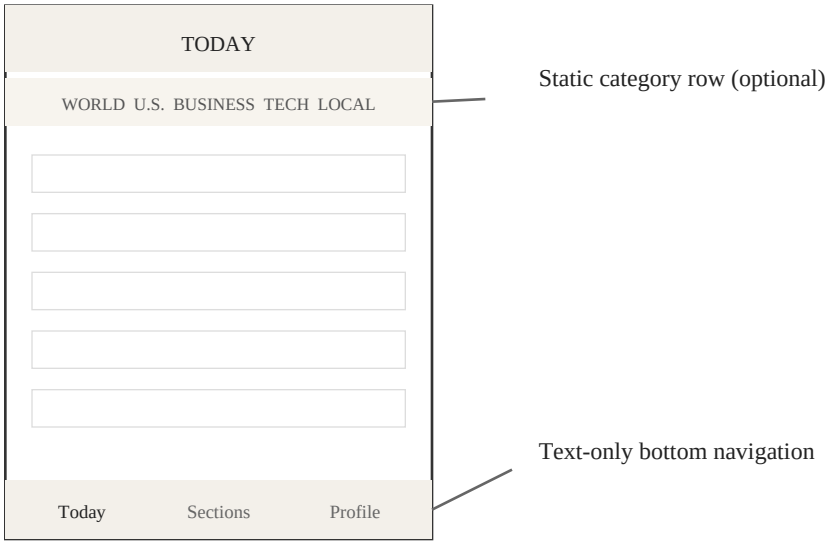
1. Information architecture and navigation

NTRL navigation must reduce effort without introducing engagement mechanics. Navigation is permitted when it makes the product calmer and more predictable.

1.1 Primary navigation (required): bottom text navigation

Add a persistent, text-only bottom navigation with three destinations:

- **Today** — the ritual entry point (changes since last visit)
- **Sections** — the full, fixed-order feed by category
- **Profile** — trust, settings, history, and transparency links



UI rules: no icons, no badges, no counts, no animation, no color-judgment. Active state uses only slightly darker text or a subtle underline.

ID	Requirement	Acceptance / Notes
NAV-1	Bottom navigation shows: Today, Sections, Profile (text only).	No icons/badges.
NAV-2	Bottom nav is visible on Today and Sections; optional on Article flows if it does not distract.	If shown on Article, replace 'Sections' with 'Read'.
NAV-3	Active state uses only subtle text weight/opacity change or a thin underline.	No color meaning.
NAV-4	No gestures required for primary navigation (no swiping between tabs).	Scroll remains vertical.

1.2 Optional secondary navigation (allowed): static category row

A static, text-only category row may be shown on Today and/or Sections to support fast orientation without creating app-like tab behavior.

Allowed format: small-caps text row below the date: WORLD U.S. BUSINESS TECH LOCAL. No pills, no boxes, no scrolling carousel, no swipe navigation.

ID	Requirement	Acceptance / Notes
CAT-1	Category row is static (no horizontal scrolling, no momentum).	Avoid 'tab bar' feel.
CAT-2	Selecting a category scrolls to that section within the same vertical page.	No page switch animation.
CAT-3	Selection styling is subtle (slightly darker text).	No color cues.

2. Today view (ritual entry point)

Today is the default destination on app open. It is designed to be completed in 2–5 minutes and to emphasize what changed since the user's last visit, without encouraging frequent checking.

2.1 Data definition

Update window: Today shows items that are new or materially updated since the user's last completed session. Session timestamps are stored **locally** (on-device). No accounts required.

Material update means: new article OR existing story with a new Brief/Full version OR updated metadata (e.g., corrected numbers) that changes understanding.

ID	Requirement	Acceptance / Notes
TD-1	Default landing is Today (not Sections).	Supports 2–3x/day ritual.
TD-2	Today shows 'changes since last visit' using local timestamps.	No server personalization required.
TD-3	Top Updates section capped at 3–5 stories.	Hard cap to preserve calm.
TD-4	Remaining sections show 0–2 items each; omit empty sections entirely.	No empty-state blocks per category.
TD-5	At the end, show a completion line: 'You're up to date.'	No celebratory language.

2.2 Layout and components

Header: TODAY — {weekday, month day}. Optional quiet subhead: 'Filtered summaries of what changed since your last visit.'

Sections (fixed order): Top updates; World; U.S.; Business & Markets; Technology; Local. If a section has no qualifying updates, omit it.

Story card in Today (condensed):

• Headline (1 line)
• 1–2 sentence summary (must fully end; no truncation)
• Metadata row: Source · Time

End of Today

You're up to date.

(No prompts, no 'more', no recommendations.)

3. Sections view (full feed)

Sections preserves the canonical Feed behavior: a single vertical scroll with fixed section order, text-only cards, and no engagement mechanics.

ID	Requirement	Acceptance / Notes
SEC-1	Sections order is fixed: World, U.S., Local, Business & Markets, Technology.	Matches canonical spec.
SEC-2	Cards are text-only; no thumbnails, badges, or ranking indicators.	No emotional amplifiers.
SEC-3	Feed does not show neutrality score; that lives in Article Detail/Transparency.	Per Feed UX Spec v1.2.
SEC-4	End-of-feed completion state exists and is visually distinct from content.	Divider + completion line.
SEC-5	Increase card vertical padding 10–15% vs current build.	Reduce scanning fatigue.

3.1 End-of-feed completion state (required)

At the bottom of Sections, render a quiet completion marker. Use whitespace + a thin divider + one line of copy. Do not show 'pull to refresh' cues or infinite-scroll affordances.

4. Article reading experience (literary)

The Article Brief is the product. The reading experience must feel like a well-set page: comfortable margins, generous line-height, and clear hierarchy between headline, brief, and full text.

4.1 View ladder

Article surfaces are a three-step ladder:

• **Brief** — 3–5 short paragraphs; calm synthesis; no headers/bullets
• **Full article** — filtered full text (publisher cruft removed)
• **What was removed** — Transparency/Redline view with soft inline highlights

UI: show a subtle selector line near the top: *Brief · Full article · What was removed*. Current view is slightly darker; others lighter. No icons.

ID	Requirement	Acceptance / Notes
ART-1	Headline is visually elevated above body (size + weight + spacing).	Distinct hierarchy.
ART-2	Brief uses larger type than Full and more generous line-height.	Brief feels essay-like.
ART-3	Move date out of top chrome; show it in metadata below headline.	Reduce top-bar clutter.
ART-4	Disclosure line: 'Manipulative language removed.' remains present but quiet.	No emphasis.
ART-5	Source link and Transparency link appear in a consistent footer block.	Text-only links.

4.2 Typography specification (implementation guidance)

Test a literary serif for reading surfaces. Recommended candidates: Canela, Ivar Text, Literata, or Source Serif 4. If using system fonts only, prefer New York for iOS reading surfaces.

Surface	Font (target)	Size	Line height	Notes
Feed card headline	Restrained sans or serif	16–17	20–22	1 line
Feed card summary	Sans/serif	13–14	18–20	2–3 lines max; must end cleanly
Article headline	Serif	22–24	28–30	Elevated above body
Article Brief body	Serif	16–18	24–28	3–5 short paragraphs; generous margins
Full article body	Serif	15–16	22–24	Filtered full text; preserve structure
Metadata	Sans/serif	11–12	14–16	Lower contrast

5. Transparency / 'What was removed' view

Transparency is opt-in inspection. It must build trust through disclosure, not persuasion. Highlights must never feel like alerts.

ID	Requirement	Acceptance / Notes
TR-1	Show original article text with soft, low-opacity inline highlights for removed/changed phrases.	Never use alert red.
TR-2	Provide a minimal legend toggle (on/off). Default: Off or last used.	No gamified labeling.
TR-3	Keep short intro text factual and calm.	No superiority claims.
TR-4	Footer link: 'View original source' (opens external).	Explicit exit.

Highlight styling guidance

Use a warm paper-tone highlight at low opacity. Do not encode change type with color. If change types are shown, use text labels in the legend.

6. Profile, trust, and local history

Profile should feel like an extension of the NTRL ethos, not a generic settings page. Local-only history is allowed to support completion and resuming.

ID	Requirement	Acceptance / Notes
PR-1	Top of Profile: 'How NTRL works' (trust first), settings second.	Earn credibility.
PR-2	Add Reading History (Today, Yesterday) stored locally on device.	No account required.
PR-3	History entries show: headline, section, time read; tap returns to article brief.	No streaks/counts.
PR-4	Provide 'Clear history' control.	User control.

6.1 Local data model (on-device)

Implement a small local state store (SQLite/CoreData/Room) with:

- **last_session_completed_at** (timestamp)
- **last_opened_at** (timestamp)
- **reading_history** (list of article_id, opened_at, section, title_snapshot)
- **highlight_legend_enabled** (bool)
- **today_view_last_seen_cutoff** (timestamp)

Privacy: local-only; do not transmit history by default. If diagnostics are added later, gate behind explicit opt-in.

7. Acceptance criteria and red line validation

Every change must pass the Red Line Test: no pressure, no emotional signaling, no engagement mechanics, no implied judgment, and a calmer feel after implementation.

7.1 Pre-ship checklist (UI)

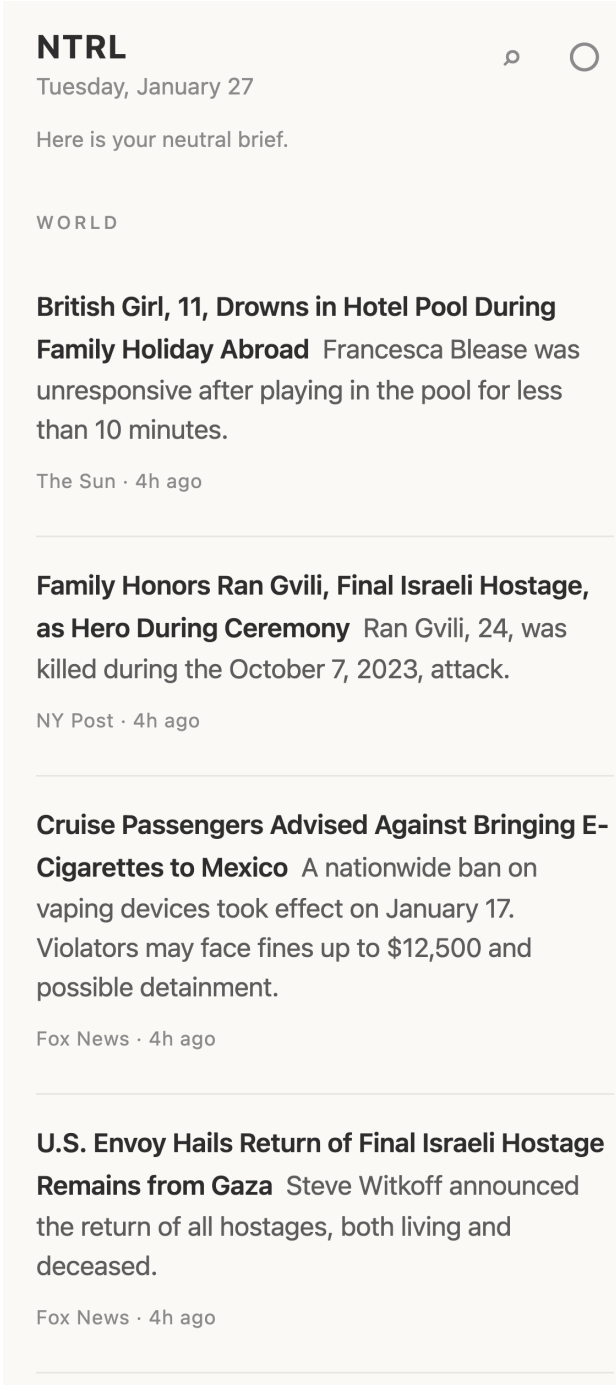
• Bottom nav: text-only, no badges, no icons, no animation.
• Today view: capped Top Updates; no empty categories; completion line present.
• Sections: fixed order; no score; no thumbnails; completion state present.
• Article: clear hierarchy (headline, brief, full); generous typography; date moved to metadata.
• Transparency: highlight opacity low; legend optional; no alert colors.
• Profile: trust-first layout; local history; clear history control.
• Copy: conforms to UX Language Rules (no 'breaking', 'urgent', etc.).

7.2 Instrumentation (allowed)

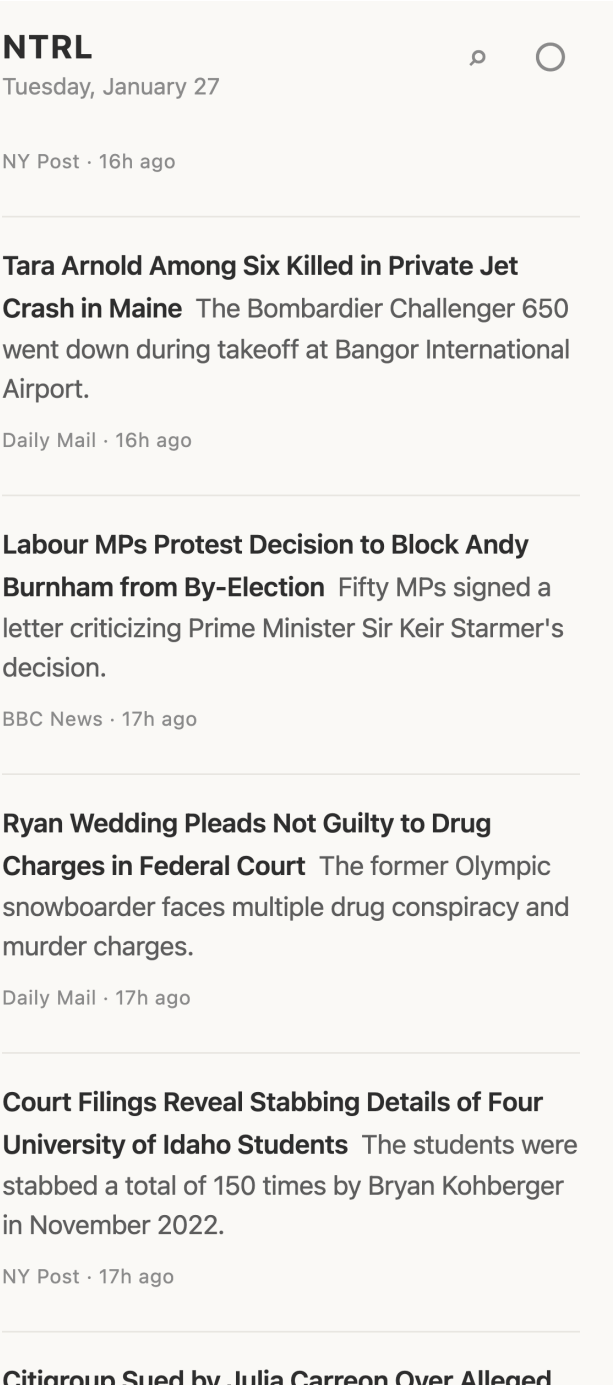
Collect only non-engagement, quality-focused telemetry necessary for reliability (e.g., crash rates, load times). Avoid metrics that optimize for attention (time-on-app, streaks).

Appendix A. Current UI reference (Jan 27, 2026 screenshots)

These screenshots are included as build reference for layout, spacing, and current states. Use them to validate that the new navigation and Today view integrate cleanly with existing screens.



01-feed-top.png



02-feed-bottom.png

British Girl, 11, Drowns in Hotel Pool During Family Holiday Abroad

The Sun · Just now **Brief** | Full ntrl view

A British schoolgirl, Francesca Blease, 11, from Crewe, Cheshire, tragically drowned in a hotel swimming pool during her first family holiday abroad in the Canary Islands. The incident occurred at the Club Jandia Princess Hotel in Fuerteventura on August 7, where Francesca had been playing with other children for less than 10 minutes before being pulled unresponsive from the children's pool.

HM Senior Coroner for Cheshire, Jacqueline Devonish, stated that Francesca could not have been underwater for “very long,” and there was no indication of distress from her or the other pool users. Two holidaymakers, a midwife and an intensive care physiotherapist, performed CPR on Francesca before paramedics arrived, and

03-article-brief-top.png

NTRL
Tuesday, January 27

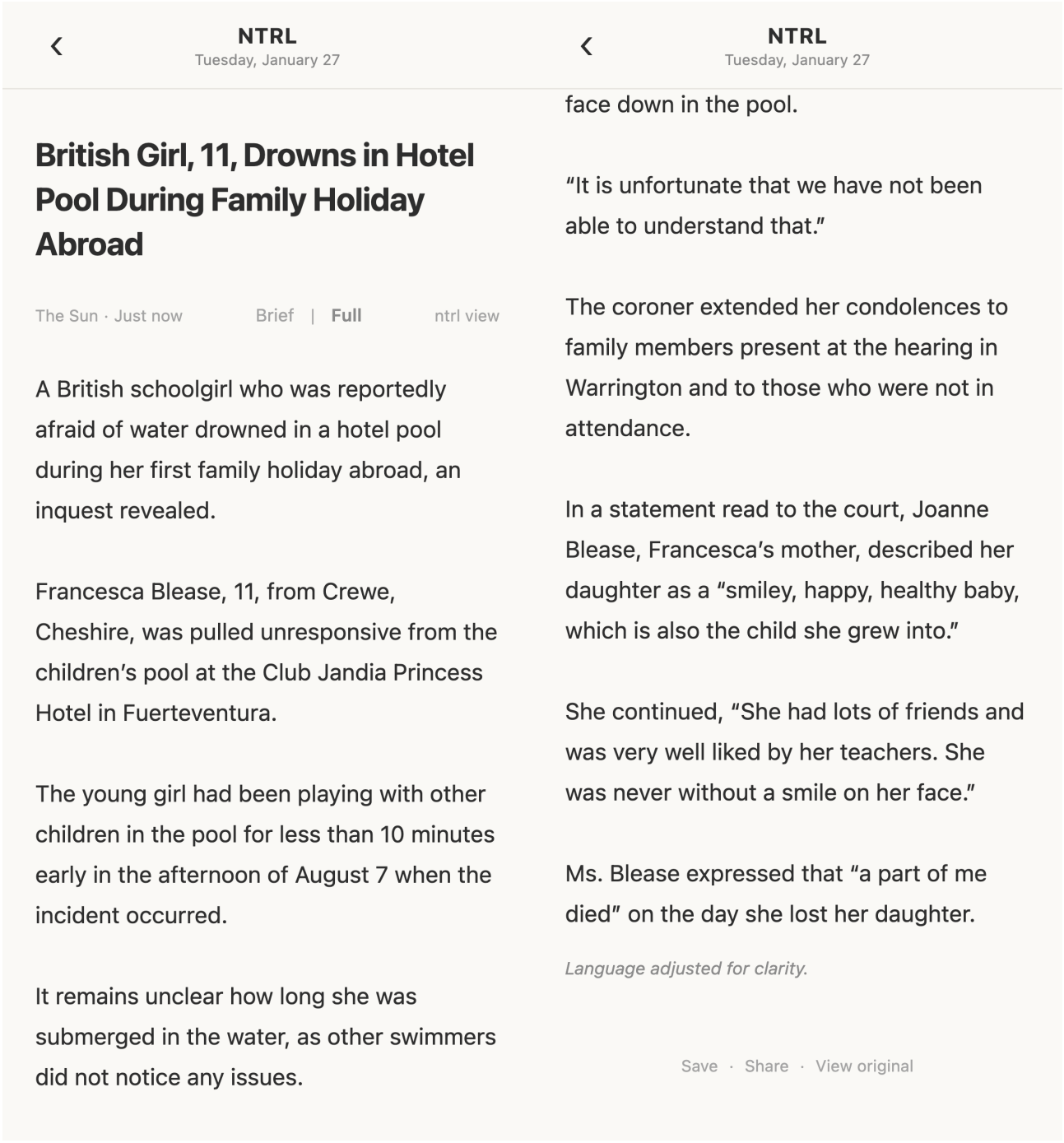
not swim and was not supervised at the time of the incident. The coroner noted that there was not a foreseeable risk for a child of her age in a “very, very shallow pool” with a depth ranging from 10cm to 60cm. Ms. Devonish concluded that the evidence did not support any expectation that such an incident could occur.

An expert on drowning physiology suggested that Francesca may have lost her footing, panicked, and inhaled water. The coroner expressed condolences to Francesca's family and acknowledged the uncertainty surrounding the exact circumstances that led to her drowning. In a statement, her mother, Joanne Blease, described Francesca as a “smiley, happy, healthy baby” who was well-liked and always had a smile on her face.

Language adjusted for clarity.

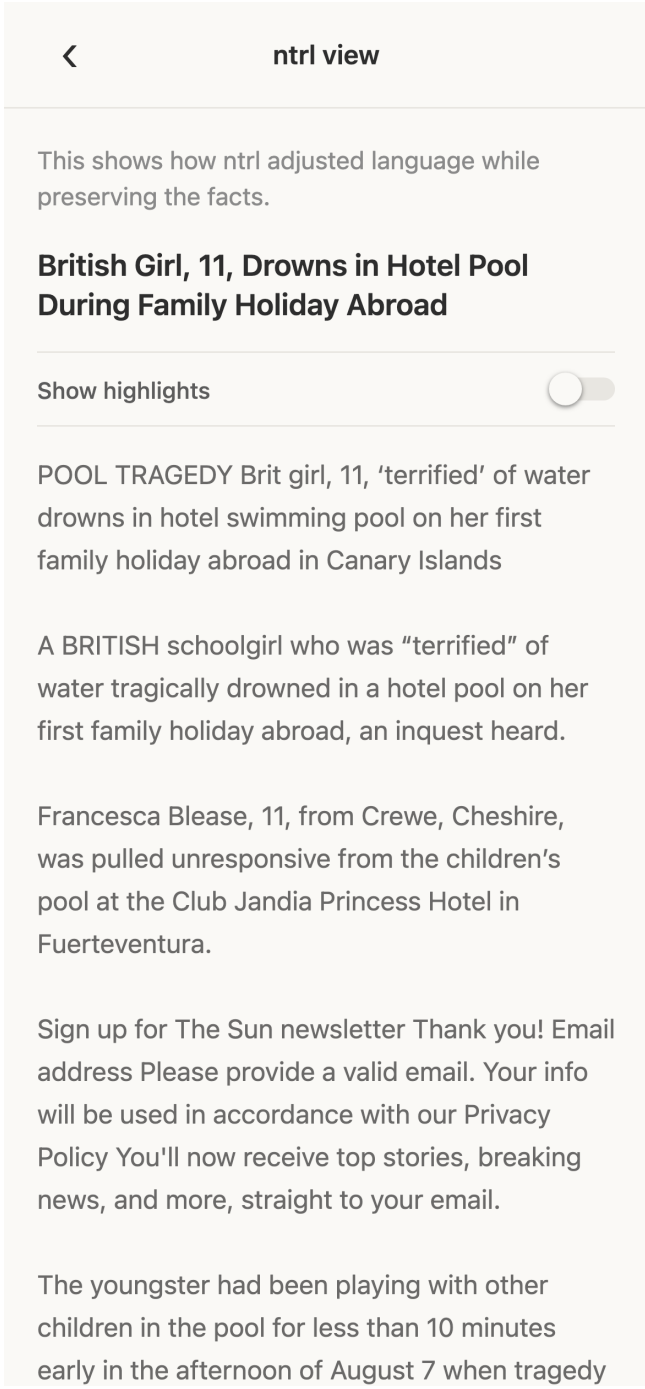
Save · Share · View original

04-article-brief-bottom.png



05-article-full-top.png

06-article-full-bottom.png



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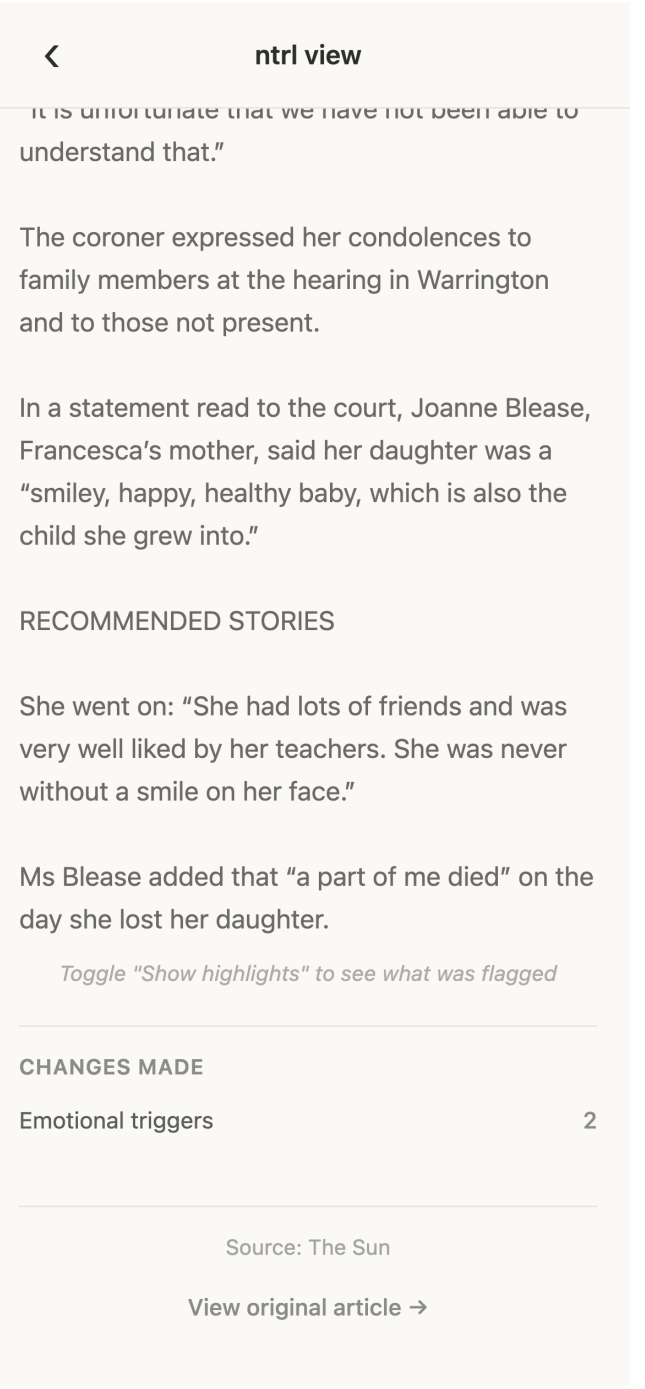

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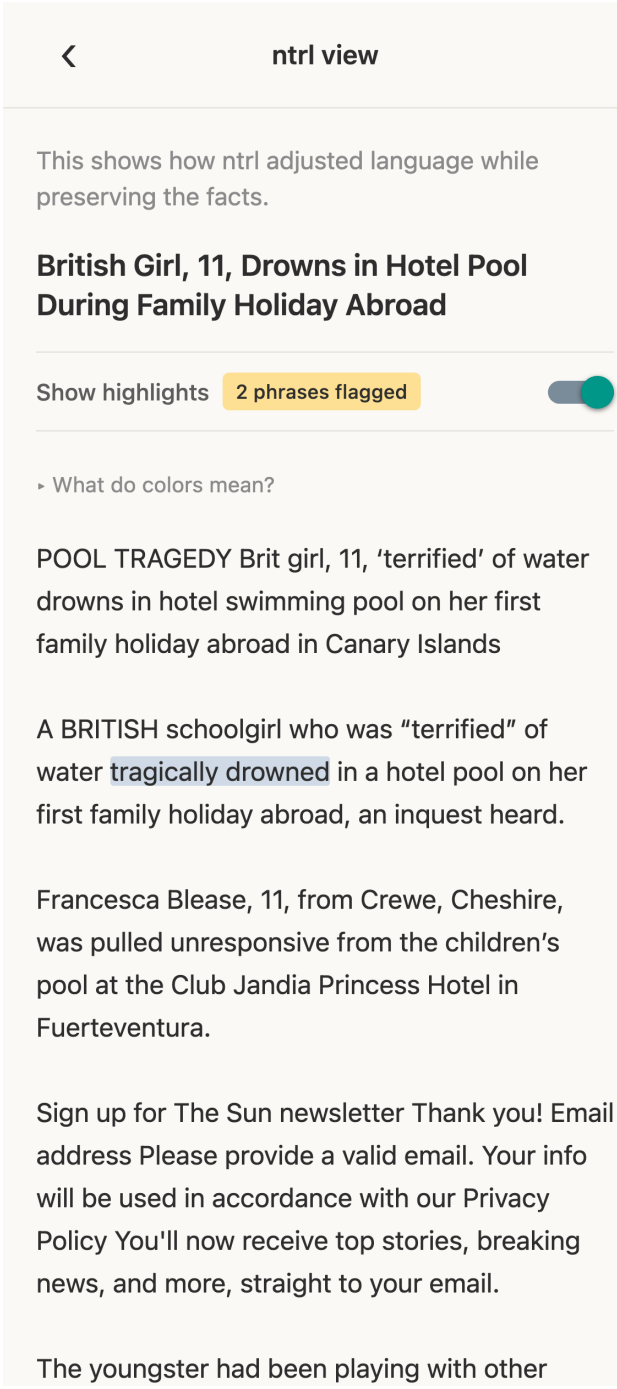

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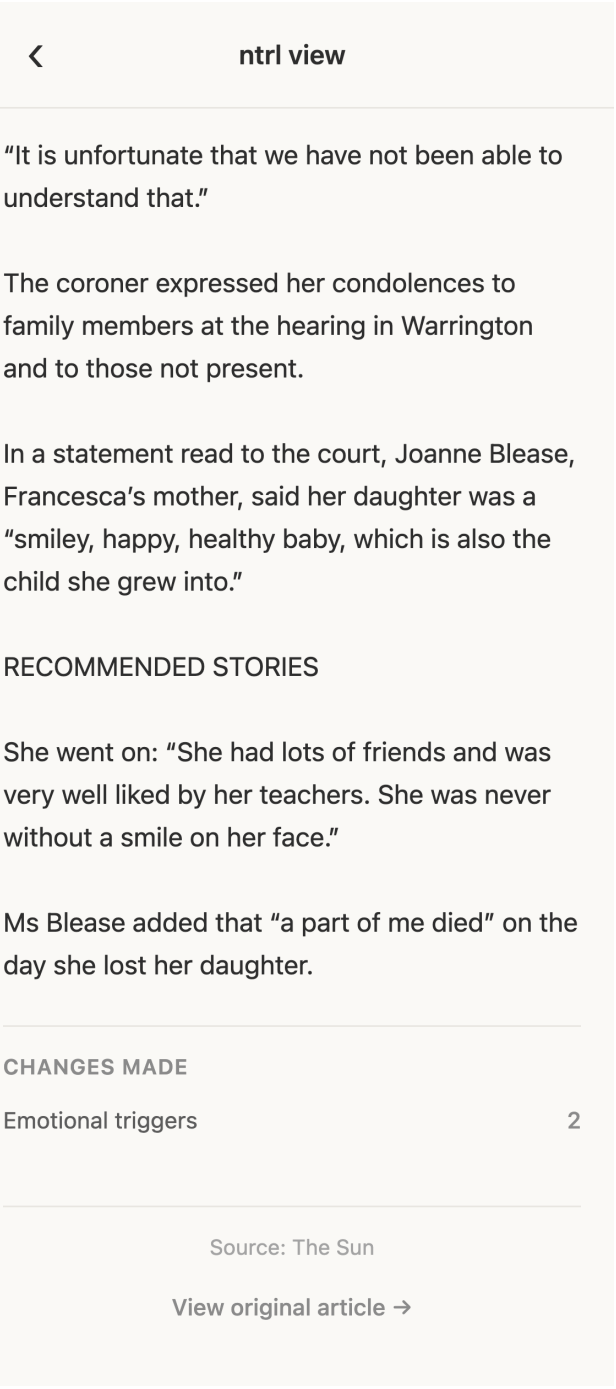
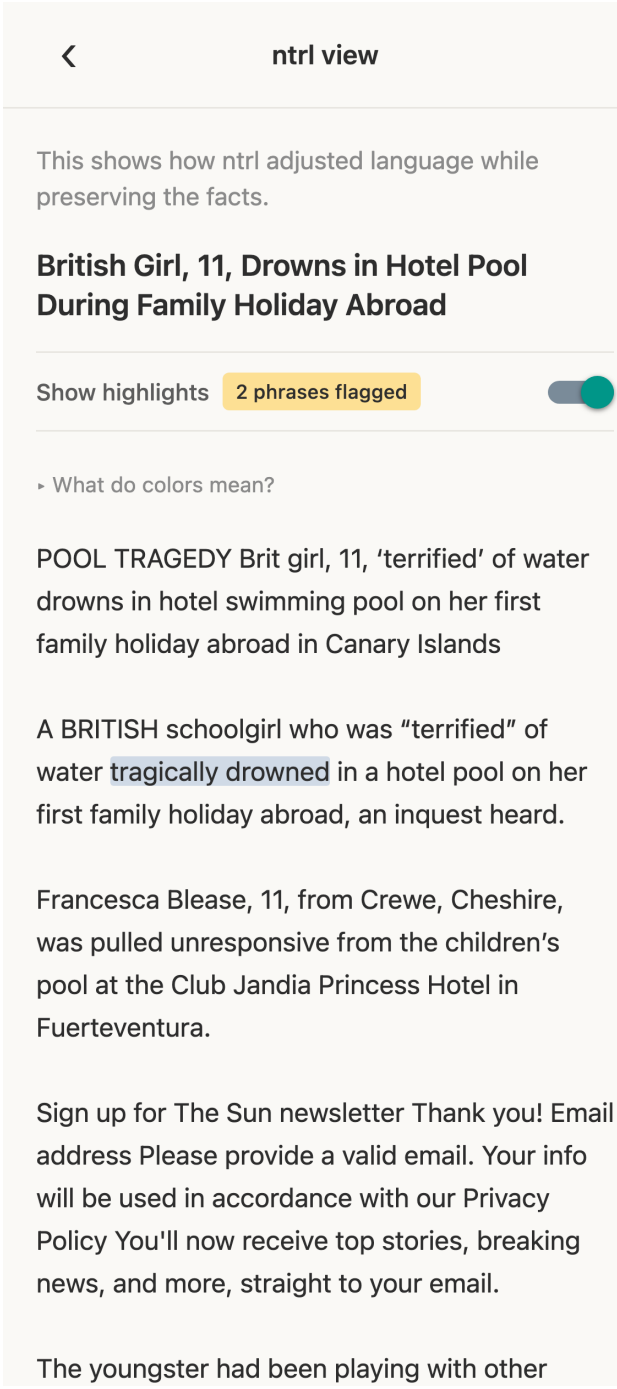
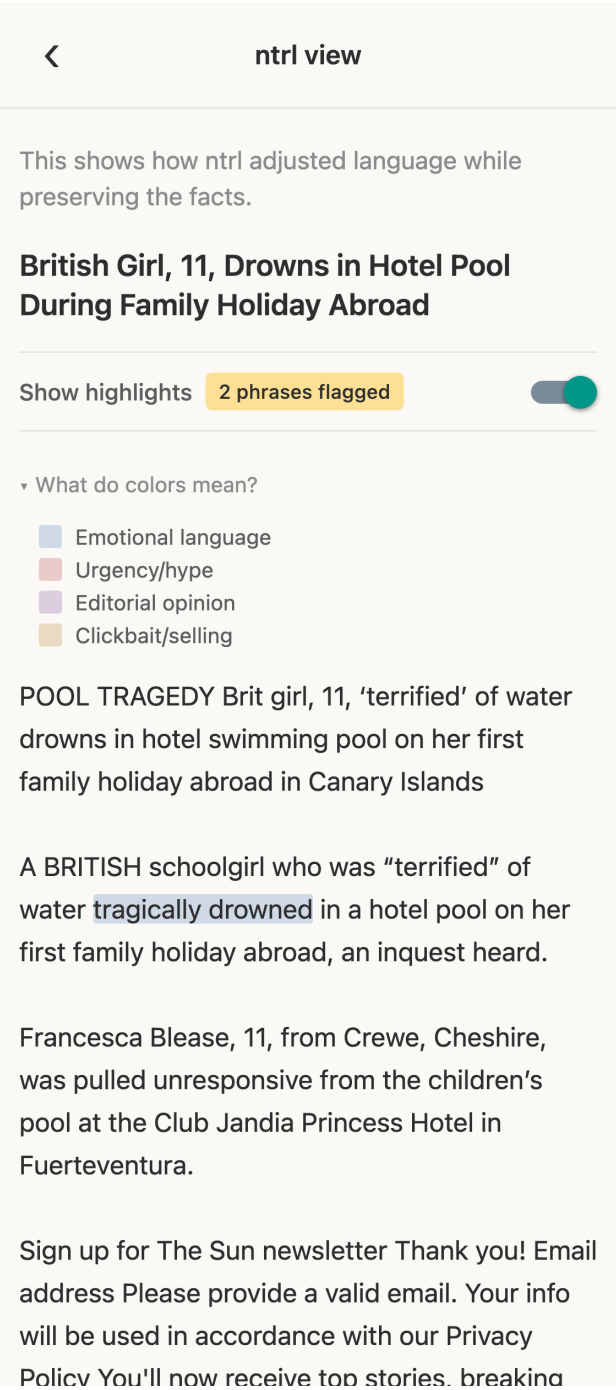


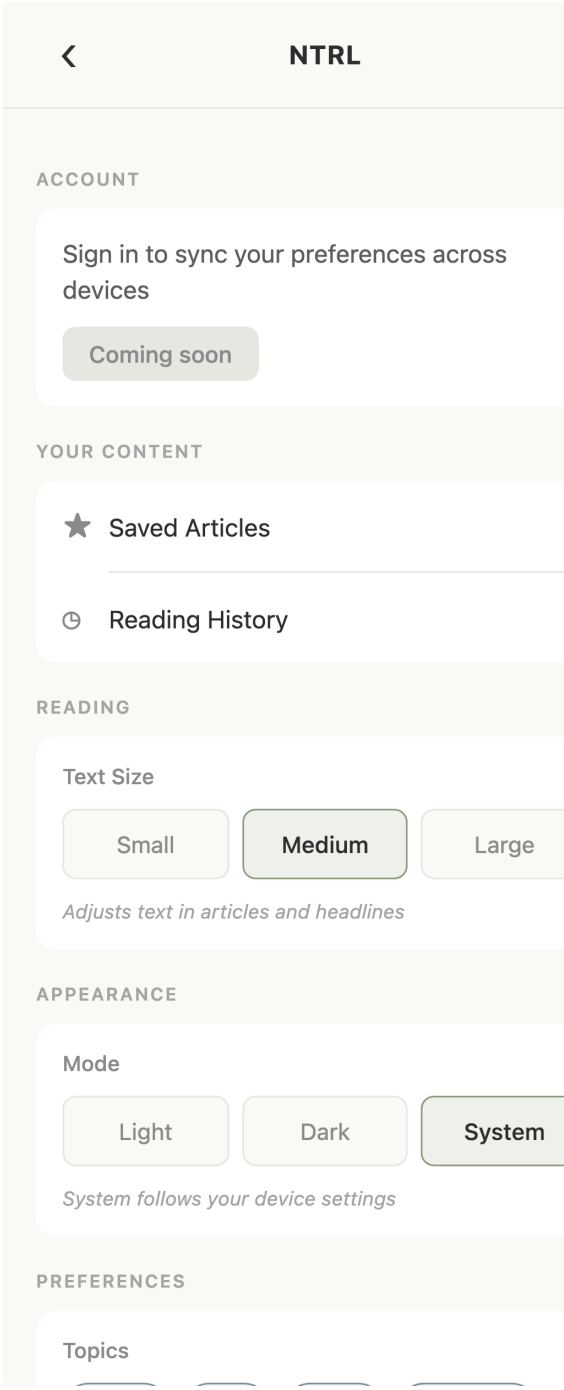
10-ntrl-highlights-on-bottom.png



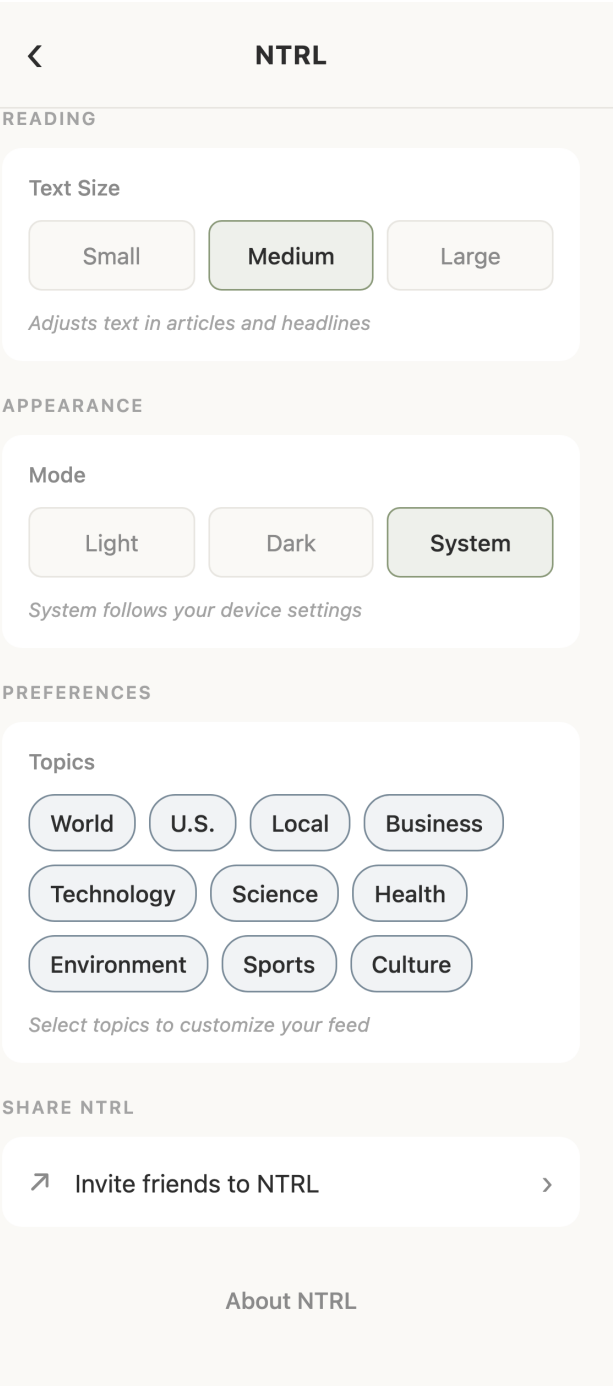
11-legend-off.png



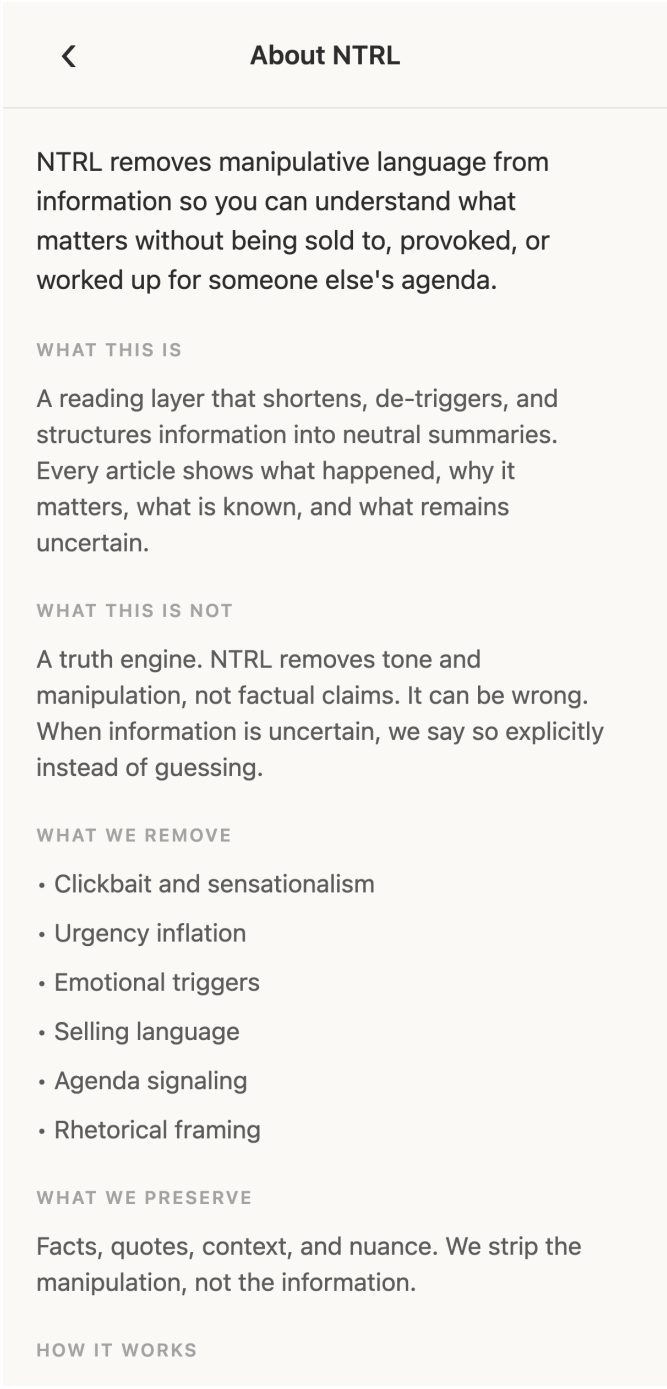
12-legend-on.png



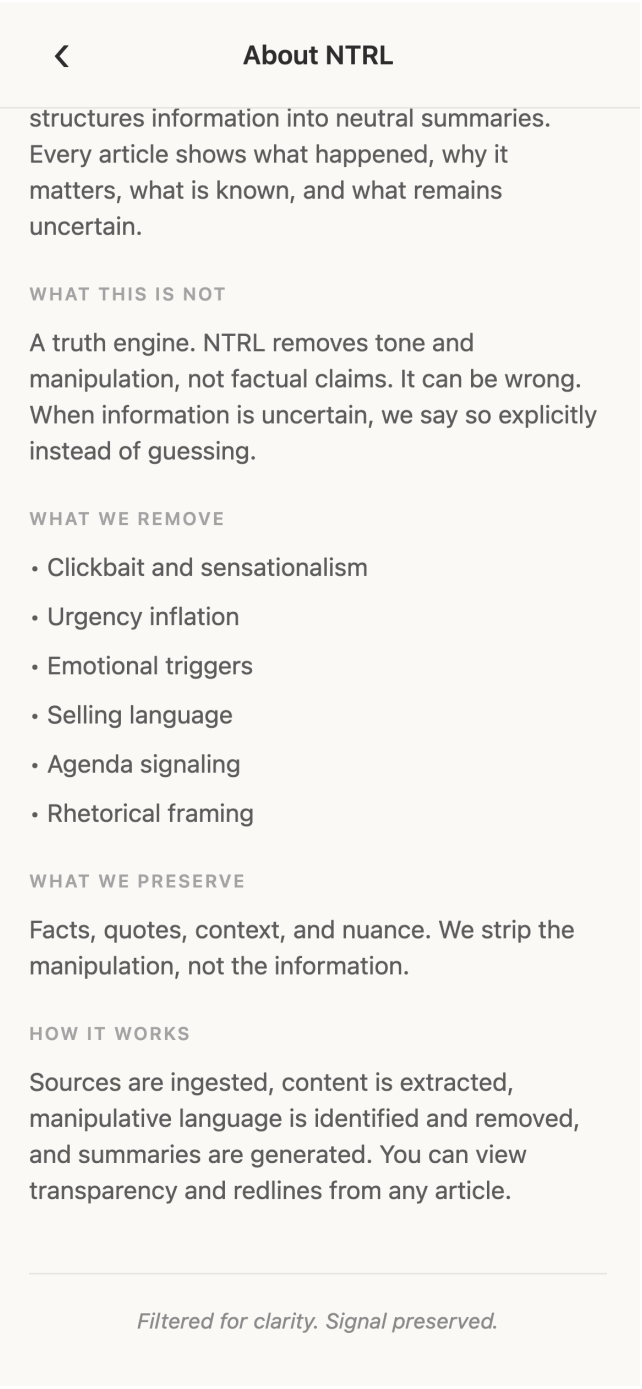
13-profile-top.png



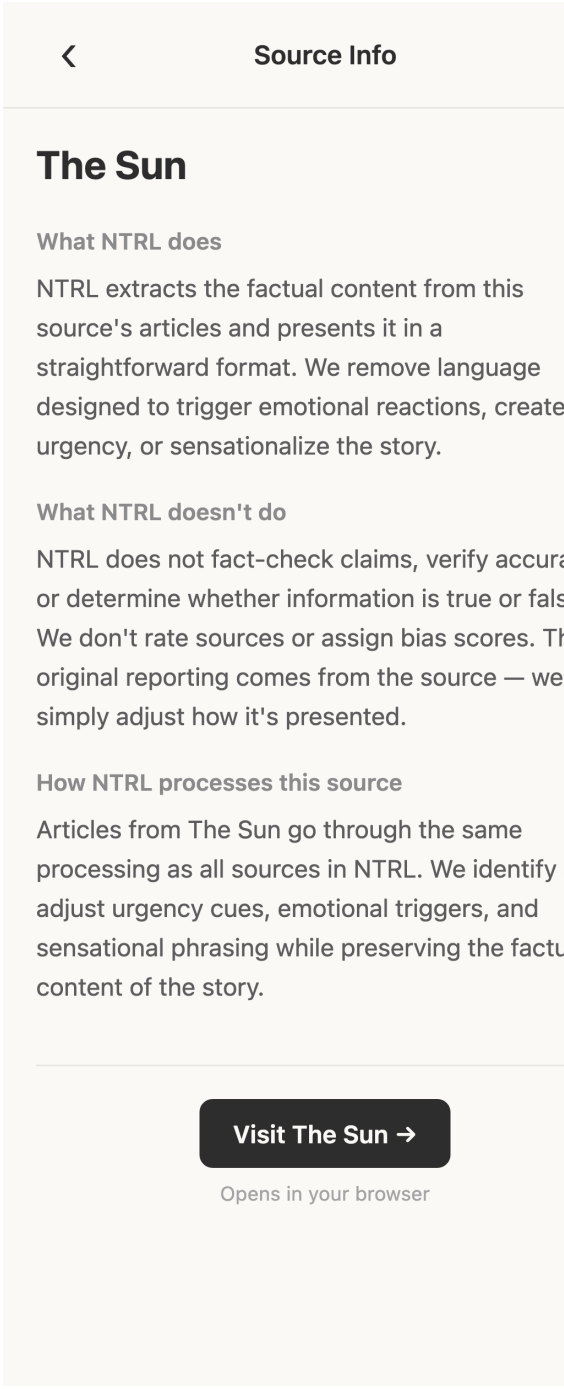
14-profile-bottom.png



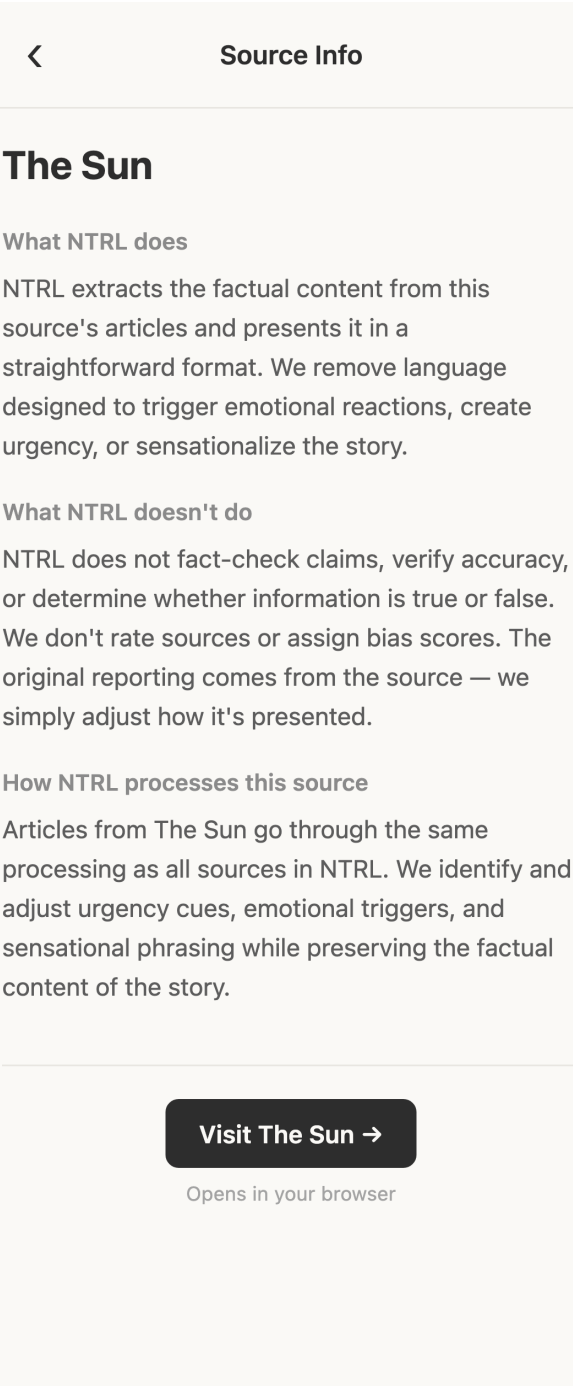
15-about-top.png



16-about-bottom.png



17-source-info-top.png



18-source-info-bottom.png

Appendix B. Canon references

This spec must remain consistent with the following canonical documents:

- Brand & Product Canon v1.0
- UX Language Rules v1.0 + Color Addendum v1.1
- Phase-1 Feed UX Spec v1.2
- Phase-1 Wireframe Spec v1.1
- Red Line Test v1.0
- Backend Content Generation Spec v1.1
- Onboarding & Trust v1.0
- Report Transparency v1.0