

Reading Comprehension Practice Passages Competitive Exams: Reality Television

Reality television is a genre of television programming which, it is claimed, presents unscripted dramatic or humorous situations, documents actual events, and features ordinary people rather than professional actors. It could be described as a form of artificial or “heightened” documentary. Although the genre has existed in some form or another since the early years of television, the current explosion of popularity dates from around 2000.

Reality television covers a wide range of television programming formats, from game or quiz shows which resemble the frantic, often demeaning programmes produced in Japan in the 1980s and 1990s (a modern example is Gaki no tsukai), to surveillance-or voyeurism-focused productions such as Big Brother.

Critics say that the term “reality television” is somewhat of a misnomer and that such shows frequently portray a modified and highly influenced form of reality, with participants put in exotic locations or abnormal situations, sometimes coached to act in certain ways by off-screen handlers, and with events on screen manipulated through editing and other post-production techniques.

Part of reality television's appeal is due to its ability to place ordinary people in extraordinary situations. For example, on the ABC show, The Bachelor, an eligible male dates a dozen women simultaneously, travelling on extraordinary dates to scenic locales. Reality television also has the potential to turn its participants into national celebrities, outwardly in talent and performance programs such as Pop Idol, though frequently Survivor and Big Brother participants also reach some degree of celebrity.

Some commentators have said that the name “reality television” is an inaccurate description for several styles of program included in the genre. In competition-based programs such as Big Brother and Survivor, and other special-living-environment shows like The Real World, the producers design the format of the show and control the day-to-day activities and the environment, creating a completely fabricated world in which the competition plays out. Producers specifically select the participants, and use carefully designed scenarios, challenges, events, and settings to encourage particular behaviours and conflicts. Mark Burnett, creator of Survivor and other reality shows, has agreed with this assessment, and avoids the word “reality” to describe his shows; he has said, “I tell good stories. It really is not reality TV. It really is unscripted drama.”

1. In the first line, the writer says ‘it is claimed’ because

- a. they agree with the statement.
- b. everyone agrees with the statement.
- c. no one agrees with the statement.
- d. they want to distance themselves from the statement.

2. Reality television has

- a. always been this popular.
- b. has been popular since well before 2000.
- c. has only been popular since 2000.
- d. has been popular since approximately 2000.

3. Japan

- a. is the only place to produce demeaning TV shows.
- b. has produced demeaning TV shows copied elsewhere.
- c. produced Big Brother.
- d. invented surveillance focused productions.

4. People have criticised reality television because

- a. it is demeaning.
- b. it uses exotic locations.
- c. the name is inaccurate.
- d. it shows reality.

5. Reality TV appeals to some because

- a. it shows eligible males dating women.
- b. it uses exotic locations.
- c. it shows average people in exceptional circumstances.
- d. it can turn ordinary people into celebrities.

6. Pop Idol

- a. turns all its participants into celebrities.

- b. is more likely to turn its participants into celebrities than Big Brother.
- c. is less likely to turn its participants into celebrities than Big Brother.
- d. is a dating show.

7. The term 'reality television' is inaccurate

- a. for all programs.
- b. just for Big Brother and Survivor.
- c. for talent and performance programs.
- d. for special-living-environment programs.

8. Producers choose the participants

- a. on the ground of talent.
- b. only for special-living-environment shows.
- c. to create conflict among other things.
- d. to make a fabricated world.

9. Paul Burnett

- a. was a participant on Survivor.
- b. is a critic of reality TV.
- c. thinks the term 'reality television' is inaccurate.
- d. writes the script for Survivor.

10. Shows like Survivor

- a. are definitely reality TV.
- b. are scripted.
- c. have good narratives.
- d. are theatre.