



**GCSE**

4171/02



A14-4171-02

**ENGLISH/ENGLISH LANGUAGE  
HIGHER TIER  
UNIT 1 (READING)**

A.M. TUESDAY, 4 November 2014

1 hour

**ADDITIONAL MATERIALS**

Resource Material.

An 8 page answer book.

**INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES**

Use black ink or black ball-point pen.

Answer **all** questions.

Write your answers in the separate answer book provided.

**INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES**

The total mark available for this unit is 40.

The number of marks in brackets will give you an indication of the time you should spend on each question or part-question.

Answer **all** of the following questions.

On the opposite page is an internet blog, 'Not all reality TV shows are bad for kids',  
by Hollie McKay.

The **separate Resource Material** is a magazine article, 'Should We Really Watch Reality TV?'  
by Austin Cline.

**Read the internet blog on the opposite page.**

1. What does Hollie McKay think and feel about reality TV programmes? [10]

**Read the first page of the magazine article in the Resource Material: 'Should We Really Watch Reality TV?'.**

2. According to the magazine article, why do people watch reality TV programmes? [10]

**Now read the second page of the article.**

3. What does Austin Cline dislike about reality TV programmes? How does he make it clear he dislikes them? [10]

**To answer the next question you will need to refer to both texts.**

4. Compare and contrast what these two writers say about the people who take part in reality TV programmes. [10]

*You must make it clear which text you are taking your information from.*

## Not all reality TV shows are bad for kids

Barely a week goes by without an article in the press about the dangers of television. Reality television, which features ordinary people rather than celebrities, takes a lot of this criticism, with studies and parenting experts pointing the finger of blame at programmes such as *Geordie Shore* and *Big Brother*. Critics of reality television claim that the people who appear on these shows promote irresponsible behaviour and have a negative impact on impressionable young viewers.

But not all reality TV shows are ruining today's youth. Several shows can actually have a very positive impact on toddler to teen audiences, experts say. Many reality TV programmes are educational, even if they are not explicitly labelled as such. Take *Junior Apprentice* for example, which gives kids an interesting insight into the world of business. It helps them to develop good leadership and public speaking skills as well as attention to detail. These skills are essential in everyday life and for the world of work. Indeed, kids learn many things from TV role models such as emotional intelligence, social skills, the value of cooperation and the importance of helping others.

Many of these are quality shows families can watch together. They tackle real life issues and they also introduce kids to new ideas in science and technology. Reality TV is a different way of exposing kids to big topics because they are focused on real people going to real places and doing real things. It can be extremely motivational. Reality TV is also a new way to tell involving and interesting human stories, stories that make a difference to people's lives. *Real Lives* for example, is a show where two inspirational teams race around the world facing physical and mental challenges as well as having to navigate, interact with locals and solve clues.

Nicole Weider, founder of a teenager advice website, gives her thumbs up to a popular weight loss challenge show, *The Biggest Loser*. This programme is about much more than just losing weight. It shows what is possible when people set goals for themselves and work hard at it, without making excuses.

However, encouraging young viewers to watch sensible programmes such as *Cake Boss* instead of the controversial and exciting *Real Housewives* is difficult. Young viewers are so hooked on watching people in painful and embarrassing situations that it's hard for them to see that there's more to reality TV than complete idiots in drunken arguments and catty drama. The networks also know that this over-the-top drama hooks viewers and ultimately increases the size of the audience. Sadly, viewing figures mean success and success means money in the world of television; quality doesn't always come into it.

Most networks are focused on what already works, and sadly that means crazy and senseless reality shows are going to triumph over shows that are educational, inspirational and informative.

Hollie McKay

*Adapted from [www.foxnews.com](http://www.foxnews.com)*



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**Resource Material**

# Should We Really Watch Reality TV?

TV channels around the world have discovered that 'reality' shows are very profitable, resulting in a huge increase in the number of these shows. That does not mean, however, that they are good for society or that they should be shown.

Reality TV is nothing new. It began with the fairly amusing *Candid Camera* in which completely innocent victims had silly tricks played on them and their reactions were filmed. Now, these shows put people in painful, embarrassing situations for the rest of us to watch – and, presumably, laugh at. But should it really be entertaining to see people injure themselves or put themselves in potentially dangerous situations?

Reality shows wouldn't be made if we didn't watch them and we obviously do, since 7 million viewers tune in for shows such as *Big Brother*. Either we genuinely find them to be entertaining, or we find them so shocking that we are unable to turn away. Sadly, I'm not convinced that these are valid reasons for watching.

So why do we find entertainment in the suffering of others? Perhaps we are simply happy that these things aren't happening to us. But surely this suffering is only funny when it is accidental rather than something deliberately staged for our amusement. According to a TV expert, "People are humiliated for no other reason than to gain viewers. The producers don't care about human feelings. They don't care about being decent. They only care about money."



Although reality television provides escapism and enjoyment for its viewers by presenting supposedly unscripted, unplanned situations, the fact is that it isn't nearly as 'real' as it pretends to be. In TV dramas, viewers understand that what they see on the screen doesn't necessarily reflect the actors' lives; the same cannot be said for heavily edited, artificial reality TV scenes. Producers know what their audience wants to see, so they do their best to make it happen.

Apparently, we want to see stereotypical characters similar to those found in fiction. There's the captivatingly sweet, naive person looking for fame. There's the controversial party animal looking for a good time and who shocks those around them. Viewers want to see these stereotypes, so producers find them and then exploit them for fun. Reality TV is hardly demanding to watch, after all, and the simplicity of such programmes may explain their appeal.

Reality television shows are not documentaries. People are not put into natural situations to see how they react – the situations are artificial, they are altered to interest viewers, and the footage is heavily edited into what the show's producers think will attract viewers. Entertainment often comes from conflict – so conflict is deliberately created by TV producers. If the producers cannot create conflict during filming, it can be created when footage is carefully edited.

If a production company creates a show with the intention of trying to make money from the humiliation and suffering created for unsuspecting people, then that is immoral and wrong. I cannot think of any excuse for such actions – knowing that viewers are willing to watch an unpleasant situation does not relieve producers of the responsibility for having organised the events. The fact that they want others to experience embarrassment or suffering is unethical. Choosing to broadcast it is even worse.

Finally, what about the reality TV viewers? If you watch these shows, why? If you find that you are entertained by the suffering and humiliation of others, that's a problem. Perhaps an occasional viewing would be acceptable, but a weekly schedule of such rubbish is another matter entirely.



I think that people's ability and willingness to take pleasure in reality TV is due to the fact that we just don't think about others. The more distant we are from each other, the more readily we fail to experience sympathy when others around us suffer. The fact that we are witnessing events not in front of us but on television, where everything has an unreal and fictional air about it, probably adds to our detachment.

I'm not saying that we shouldn't ever watch reality TV programmes, but the reasons for being a regular viewer are questionable. Instead of just accepting whatever media companies try to feed us, it would be better to take some time to reflect on why such programmes are made and why we feel compelled to watch. Perhaps we will find that our own reasons for watching are not so attractive.

Austin Cline

*Text adapted from [www.atheism.about.com](http://www.atheism.about.com)  
Images: Tom Dymond/Thames/Rex, Rex Images*