Australian Curriculum Year 9 English Sample assessment | Assessment resource

Navigating celebrity: A guide

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# Exploring celebrity: activities

This resource provides teachers with examples of classroom activities to assist students explore the issues related to celebrity and to develop a position on the influence of celebrity culture on adolescents. Students could keep a research journal to record the outcomes of these activities as background information and ideas to use when they prepare their feature article (guide).

## Gathering ideas and information: What are the issues?

### Keep a research journal

Show students how to record their ongoing findings in a research journal to monitor their developing understanding of celebrity culture and help them diagnose and solve problems in discussions with others, the teacher, classmates and friends.

Explain to students that the notes they make in their research journal and the resources other class members gather will be very important in the drafting phase of their feature article (guide). Remind students that issues are hardly ever cut and dried, and advise them to try to capture the complexities that come out of class discussions and debates about the issues related to celebrity and the potential of celebrities to influence adolescents.

### Debate issues

* Discuss the proposition that celebrities have become mere commodities who are marketed and traded for profit. Consider the notion that celebrities are constructed through a process of ‘celebrification’.
* Consider the ethics of the treatment of celebrities by journalists and gossip columnists.Journalists and gossip columnists can enhance the status and social esteem of the celebrities in the eyes of the public or they can destroy them. The pursuit of celebrities can be excessive, even obsessive, in the case of some paparazzi.
* Consider the rights or wrongs (ethics) of the behaviour of tabloid newspapers, celebrity programs, gossip magazines and websites that make money by sensationalising celebrity behaviour. Examine excerpts from magazines and identify the use of language that relies on negative word connotations designed to hurt, rather than help the reputation of celebrities.

### Examine the rise of the ordinary celebrity

Consider the following statement from a celebrity agency:

These days everyone wants to be a celebrity. I get approached all the time by people wanting me to represent them. Lots of business people, a lot of reality stars, people from all walks of life. (Anderson, cited Corbett, 2012)

Anderson’s reference to ‘reality stars’ raises questions about the current spate of reality TV shows that thrive on exploiting public interest in ordinary people who then become overnight celebrities. In the following table, identify two current reality shows and give your opinion on their economic and social worth to society.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Current reality shows (list 2)** | **Economic and social worth to society** |
|  |  |

People are now able to become celebrities and achieve ‘fame’ without having any of the talents associated with traditional celebrities. Where advertising agencies once competed for famous celebrities to endorse their brands and products, these agencies now seek out ‘ordinary’ reality stars and pay them large sums to appear in public places wearing or using particular products. The agencies also use the reality stars social networking profiles to reach many more people.

Find an example of how these new celebrities (e.g. Kim Kardashian) make use of social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter) to extend their sphere of influence.

### Closely examine a feature article on celebrity

Reciprocal reading is a technique designed to improve reading comprehension through sharing roles in dialogues about segments of text. Students are taught four key reading strategies:

* summarising the main content
* formulating questions
* clarifying ambiguities
* predicting what might come next(Palinscar and Brown, 1984).

Organise a reciprocal reading of a feature article on celebrity such as *Trivia the new reality when Kim Kardashian and fellow celebrities set standard in shallow, vain world*, with students taking the roles of Boss, Predictor, Questioner, Clarifier or Summariser. Follow with a whole-class discussion of the groups’ summaries.

* Online resource for Reciprocal Reading strategy:
  + Building Reading Proficiency at the Secondary Level: A Guide to Resources www.sedl.org/pubs/catalog/items/read16.html.Clarifying your position

### Gather evidence: what do you and others think?

The celebrity survey questionnaire below is designed to gather information about the way celebrities might be influencing/have influenced teenagers’ lives. Analysing your own experience is an important starting point before offering advice to others.

|  |
| --- |
| Celebrity Survey Questionnaire |
| 1. Have you currently/at some time in the past been interested in a celebrity? How and why did you become interested? Has your interest changed? 2. Were you ever interested enough in the celebrity to access information about them? For example, from friends, newspapers, magazines, websites? 3. Have you ever shared your interest in celebrity with friends? 4. Have you ever bought a celebrity’s merchandise? What? Do you know anyone else who has? 5. Can you think of examples of the use of celebrities by businesses to endorse their products? Do you usually trust what celebrities say? 6. From your observations do you think celebrities serve as effective role models for teenagers? Explain. 7. From your experience do you think males are different from females in their response to celebrity? Do you think cultural groups (e.g. Aboriginal peoples, Asian, African) are different in their responses? |

### Draw conclusions

Draw up a table like the example below and make a list of the positive and negative aspects of celebrity in the lives of people your age. This table will be relevant in the drafting of your feature article (guide) and help you to:

* take a position on the nature and degree of the influence of celebrity culture on the lives of adolescents
* make recommendations to your adolescent readers on how to negotiate their way through celebrity culture.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Celebrity culture and adolescents: plus, minus or interesting?** | | |
| **+** | **-** | **?** |
| * Many celebrities are of genuine talent and worth much as role models because of what they say and do. * Celebrity culture is responsible for a great deal of employment. | * Many celebrities are merely commodities and in danger of being exploited. * Celebrity merchandise causes teenagers to waste money. |  |

### Take a position on the issue

To help clarify your thoughts on the central issue, mark your position on the continuum below. You might strongly agree or strongly disagree that adolescents are highly susceptible to the influence of celebrity, or your response may lie somewhere in between. Be prepared to explain your reasons for taking this position to the class.

**Strongly** **Strongly**

***Adolescents are highly susceptible to the influence of celebrity.***



**Agree** **Disagree**

### References

Anderson, cited in Corbett B 2012, ‘Star Power’, *Australian Women’s Weekly*, Feb, pp. 54–60.

Palinscar, AS & Brown, AL 1984, ‘Reciprocal teaching of comprehension-fostering and comprehension-monitoring activities’, *Cognition and Instruction*, 2, pp. 117–175.

Peterson, CL, Caverly, DC, Nicholson, SA, O’Neal, S, Cusenbary, S2000, *Building Reading Proficiency at the Secondary Level: A Guide to Resources,* Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, http://www.sedl.org/pubs/catalog/items/read16.html.