

PRUEBA/PROVA: CELEBRITY NEWS

EXAM and ANSWERS including SMART TIPS

CELEBRITY NEWS

In her quest to meet the rich and famous, Emma has bribed security guards, donned disguises, and even climbed through windows! But she does not think of herself as a criminal. 'I'm just doing my job. I only get paid for good stories, so I have to take extreme measures if I want to earn a decent income!' Emma Worth writes for a famous gossip magazine. She is one of a growing number of journalists who are using their professional skills to hunt and capture the so-called 'glitterati' unawares, each hoping to score an exclusive, and preferably shocking, scoop.

Gossip-mongering is nothing new. Indeed, sensationalist stories about the royal family (the A-list of their time) were published only a century after the invention of the printing press – in 1453! However, in recent years, our celebrity obsession seems to have escalated. Last year, *Heat* and *Closer*, the two best-selling UK gossip magazines, sold over a million copies every week, and new celebrity websites and TV programmes pop up every month. Even the traditionally more 'serious' press are turning to celebrities to boost sales. For example, the broadsheet newspaper *The Telegraph* now has a regular gossip column called 'The Spy'.

But many people are critical of celebrity gossip hunters like Emma. Some stars complain that they are being denied a basic right to privacy and respect, and even that their lives have been ruined by press intrusion. What's more, the gossip trade is often very cruel and hurtful. It seems that there is a big reader demand for articles that dig the dirt on the stars that cheat, or the 'babes' with eating disorders. Some non-celebs are unhappy too. According to one highly-regarded news reporter, 'Our hunger for gossip means that there is less media coverage of vitally important issues, such as politics and the environment. I didn't join the profession to write kiss-and-tell stories. We need to stop taking this trivia so seriously!'

1. Read the text. Indicate whether the following statements are TRUE or FALSE and write down which part of the text justifies your answer. [2 POINTS]

- a) Gossip writers are particularly keen to be the first to write about a story, especially if that story is likely to be a big surprise to readers.
TRUE. 'She is one of a growing number of journalists ... hoping to score an exclusive, and preferably shocking, scoop.' (paragraph 1)
- b) In the sixteenth century, people were equally as obsessed with celebrity gossip as we are today.
FALSE. '... in recent years, our celebrity obsession seems to have escalated.' (paragraph 2)

SMART TIP: checking comparative and qualifying expressions

It is important to pay attention to any comparative or qualifying expressions, as these can influence the meaning of a statement. According to the text, it is true that a century after the invention of the printing press people were interested in gossip. But the next line states that we are *more* interested in gossip today, not *equally* as interested. Accordingly, the statement is false.

- c) Editors of traditional newspapers now publish celebrity gossip in a belief it will help sell more copies.
TRUE. 'Even the traditionally more "serious" press are turning to celebrities to boost sales.' (paragraph 2)

SMART TIP: finding key words in the text

It can be helpful to search for key words in the text to locate the information you need. Remember that key words in the statement may appear in the text in a slightly different form, so search for words with the same root but a different part of speech. In 1 c., the key words 'traditional', 'celebrity' and 'sell' in the statement appear in the text as 'traditionally', 'celebrities' and 'sales'.

If you cannot find any key words in the text, try searching for synonyms or words with a similar meaning instead.

- d) People are no longer interested in reading about the unflattering or shocking secrets of celebrities.
FALSE. 'It seems that there is a big reader demand for articles that dig the dirt on the stars.' (paragraph 3)

2. Answer the following questions in your own words according to the text. [2 POINTS]

- a) Why does Emma wear disguises and break into buildings?
Suggested answer: She behaves like this so that she can find and interview celebrities, before writing about them for a gossip magazine.

SMART TIP: using linkers and time expressions

You may need to include several ideas in your answer. Try to organize your ideas with linkers, such as *because* or *so that*, or time expressions, such as *before* or *after*. Read your answer carefully afterwards to make sure it has the correct grammar, spelling and punctuation.

- b) Why is one journalist unhappy about the fashion for celebrity gossip?
Suggested answer: He is unhappy because he thinks it is trivial, and the current enthusiasm for it prevents more important articles about political and environmental issues from being published.

3. Find words or phrases in the text that correspond to the words and definitions given. [1,5 POINTS]

- a) put on clothes to hide your true identity (paragraph 1) *donned disguises*
b) a piece of exciting news that is reported for the first time (paragraph 1) *exclusive / scoop*
c) encouraging or spreading rumours (paragraph 2) *gossip mongering*
d) became worse or more serious (paragraph 2) *escalated*
e) find out unpleasant or harmful information about someone and tell others about it (paragraph 3) *dig the dirt*

4. Choose the correct option, a, b, c or d for each question and COPY the sentence onto your answer sheet. [1,5 POINTS]

1. Journalists want to become celebrity hunters because ...

- a) they are obsessed with the rich and famous.
- b) they enjoy breaking the law.
- c) *they hope to make money.*
- d) celebrities are easy to write about.

2. In the past, people were ...

- a) just as interested in gossip as we are today.
- b) mainly interested in gossip about kings and queens.
- c) *able to read gossip stories shortly after printing was invented.*
- d) not interested in gossip stories.

SMART TIP: thinking about comparative expressions and other qualifiers

Look carefully at any comparative or qualifying words or expressions before selecting your answer.

At first, option *a* might look correct, because the text states that people in the past were also interested in gossip. However, it does NOT state that people in the past were '**just as** interested in gossip': in fact, it says that our interest in gossip has grown ('*escalated*').

Option *b* looks correct, because the text states that people in the past could read stories about the royal family. However, it does NOT state that people in the past were '**mainly**' interested in this type of gossip.

3. One journalist is not in favour of gossip, because he or she ...

- a) thinks that all gossip is a waste of time.
- b) *would prefer to write about more serious news.*
- c) hates having to write kiss-and-tell stories every day.
- d) thinks it is too difficult to find interesting stories.

5. Write 120–150 words on the following topic. [3 POINTS]

Celebrities have a right to privacy. Do you agree?

Suggested answer:

In my opinion, celebrities do have a right to privacy.

I agree that we should be able to read about major events in a celebrity's life. However, I believe that some topics should remain private. Some issues are very personal, such as ill health or relationship problems, and it is cruel to make this information public.

What's more, gossip hunters and the paparazzi follow stars everywhere they go. This must be very stressful, and celebrities can end up feeling harassed and depressed.

It is my view that celebrities deserve the same respect as everyone else, which includes having some privacy.

SMART TIP: using paragraphs

You will receive points for the way you organize your writing, as well as for the accuracy of your work. Each time you talk about a new subject, use a new paragraph. The model essay above is organized as follows:

- paragraph 1) introduction, giving the writer's opinion
- paragraph 2) first main argument (some topics should stay private)
- paragraph 3) second main topic (the press is very intrusive)
- paragraph 4) conclusion, summarizing the writer's opinion.