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Word Generation - Unit 3.14

Focus Words

emerge | exploit | furthermore | confront | interfere



WEEKLY PASSAGE

In August 2012, seven-year old Alana Thompson debuted in her own reality TV show called Here Comes Honey Boo Boo. Alana, or Honey Boo Boo, **emerged** as an audience favorite in the hit show Toddlers & Tiaras, a reality TV show about beauty pageants for young girls. She is a little heavier than many of the other girls and did not win the beauty pageant, but her funny lines and overly-confident personality won the hearts of TV viewers. During the first few weeks of the program, 2.3 million viewers watched Here Comes Honey Boo Boo.

Some people argue that shows like Here Comes Honey Boo Boo and Toddlers & Tiaras **exploit** young children for the purposes of entertainment. They say that people are not watching these shows because they are interested in learning more about pageants or the people who participate. They say that people watch because they like to make fun of these girls and their parents.

Furthermore, they claim that the children are not able to make a decision as to whether or not they want to have their lives recorded and broadcast to the world. They worry that these children will be **confronted** by viewers throughout their lives and reminded of embarrassing childhood behavior that they would rather forget. They point to the tragic lives of many child TV stars from the past that struggle with addiction and other emotional problems.

Advocates of kids participating in reality TV shows argue that kids have an opportunity to be

discovered doing something that they loved to do. For instance, the hit TV show Dance Moms features a dancing class of talented young dancers and their mothers who make tremendous sacrifices while pursuing a dream. They argue that these kids have an opportunity to share their determination and talent with the world so that other children may be inspired to work hard at something they love to do. Just like Alana Thompson was discovered, other children on these shows may find themselves starring in a Broadway musical or a Hollywood movie.

Some people also argue that participating in a reality TV show does not **interfere** with a child's ability to be a happy and productive adult. They say that this experience makes them more confident and not afraid to take risks. They say it develops leadership qualities in these young people. For example, many childhood movie stars, such as Emma Watson from the Harry Potter movies, have been able to lead very successful lives. Emma Watson chose to attend Brown and Oxford Universities and is a successful model. If childhood movie stars can go on to lead successful and happy lives, why can't childhood reality TV stars?

Do you think children should be allowed to star in reality TV shows? Do you think there is a certain age where a child should be able to participate? Do you think children who participate in reality TV are more or less likely to have problems due to their fame?

Are child actors exploited by the film and TV industry?

FOCUS WORDS OF THE WEEK

confront : (verb) to face, especially in challenge

FORMS:

EXAMPLES OF USE:

NOTES:

interfere : (verb) to get in the way of

FORMS:

EXAMPLES OF USE:

NOTES:

emerge : (verb) to become known

FORMS:

EXAMPLES OF USE:

NOTES:

exploit : (verb) to make use of, often unfairly

FORMS:

EXAMPLES OF USE:

NOTES:

furthermore : (adverb) in addition to what came before

FORMS:

EXAMPLES OF USE:

NOTES:

Are child actors exploited by the film and TV industry?



PROBLEM OF THE WEEK

Option 1: In 2007, CBS aired a reality show called *Kid Nation*. On the show, 40 kids from 8 to 15 years old ran their own community without adult **interference** in a small town deserted since the late 1880s. As time went by, certain kids **emerged** as leaders and helped resolve **conflicts**. **Furthermore**, the leaders were able to **exploit** opportunities to bring kids together, as when a girl named Morgan helped set up a no-pressure prayer time. Over the course of the season, Morgan was awarded two gold stars, worth a total of seventy thousand dollars.

Which of the following choices represents seventy thousand dollars?

- A) \$7,000
- B) \$70,000
- C) \$700,000
- D) \$70,000,000

Option 2: Some people accused CBS, the company that produced *Kid Nation*, of **exploiting** kids. These kids were put in situations designed to create **conflicts** that would make the TV show exciting. When kids got upset, their angry words or sad tears were broadcast to millions of people. The kids were on camera all the time, which would normally be a violation of rules about child labor hours. CBS said that the program was like summer camp, so the station did not have to follow child labor laws that protect kids who work. Parents had to sign a contract stating they would not sue the television network if anything bad happened to their kids.

On the other hand, some people said that if the kids chose to participate and their parents consented, why should anyone else **interfere**? Many of the kids wanted to be actors, and they loved the attention. Some **emerged** as celebrities who appeared on talk shows and got acting roles. **Furthermore**, each participant was paid \$5000 and some of the kids won bonus cash prizes of \$20,000 and \$50,000.

Out of 40 contestants, 16 won bonus cash prizes. When the show began, what was the probability that any one kid would earn a bonus cash prize?

Math Discussion Question: Different observers tell **conflicting** stories of what happened on *Kid Nation*. Did adults **exploit** innocent kids to make money? Or did **emerging** young actors **exploit** an opportunity to become famous? **Furthermore**, who should decide if kids are being **exploited**? If kids *are* being **exploited**, who should **interfere** or step in to protect them from **exploitation**?

Are child actors and exploited by the film and TV industry?



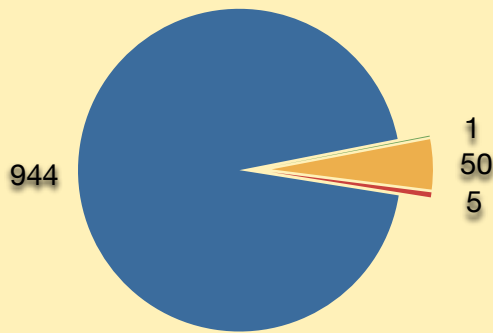
THINKING SCIENTIFICALLY

Mr. Seemey's students were talking about the history of cinema. Kyra, who was a movie buff, mentioned that child actors have been at risk of being **exploited** since the early days of film. "Jackie Coogan was about seven years old when he was in Charlie Chaplin's silent movie *The Kid* in 1921, and he played the title role in *Oliver Twist* in 1922. He kept working in show business as sound pictures began to **emerge**. He was the first person under 21 to earn a million dollars. He earned three or four million, actually. **Furthermore**, that's the equivalent of about 50 million of today's dollars! But a fat lot of good it did him: his mom and dad spent it all on cars, jewelry, and fancy clothes."

"That's right," said Mr. Seemey. "When a judge **confronted** them, Jackie's mother said, 'Every dollar a kid earns before he is 21 belongs to his parents.' It was too late for Jackie, but after Jackie's case the California legislature **interfered** with the ability of adults to **exploit** their children this way. They passed the Coogan Act, which says that 15 percent of the money a child actor earns must be put into a 'Coogan Bank Account.' When the child turns 18, the Coogan Account money is theirs to keep."

→ Kyra and Anna were interested to discover if child actors really make much money. Is a child actress or actor likely to get a job? Are child actresses financially **exploited** by the movie and television industry?

In California in 2010, about 21,000 child actresses and actors were looking for work (that's how many work permits were issued to child actors between 8 and 16 years old). On average, 1,000 children apply for every new job in a film, TV shows, or commercials. For those child actors and actresses able to find work, the average salary was \$52,000.

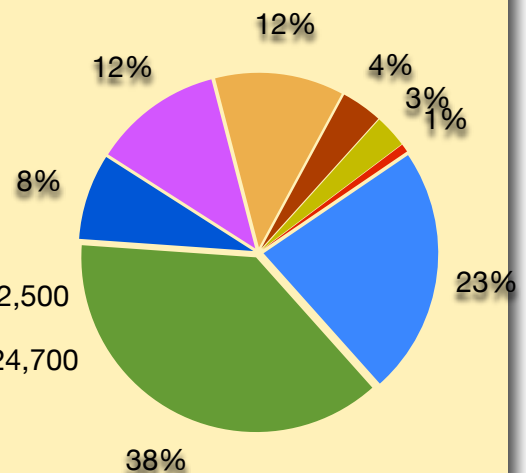


Out of every 1000 children who apply for a particular job...

- 944 don't even get an audition
- 1 gets the job
- 50 get an audition but no call back
- 5 get called back but don't get the job

What happens to the average child actor's salary of \$52,000?

- To Agent: \$5,200
- \$ put into Coogan Account: \$7,800
- Travel to locations: \$2,000
- Taxes: \$15,000
- To Manager: \$7,800
- Photos and Portfolio: \$2,500
- Union Dues: \$500
- "Take Home" Salary: \$24,700



✍ Imagine for a moment that you want to be a child actress or actor and appear in a car commercial. Your talent agent sends your name to the company that is filming the commercial. What is the probability of you getting the job? What percent of aspiring child actors and actresses don't even get a first audition?

✍ Based on the information about what happens to the money that child actresses earn, do you think that they are exploited by adults and the film and TV industry?

Are child actors exploited by the film and TV industry?



DEBATING THE ISSUE

I. Get ready...

Pick one of these positions (or create your own).

A

Children should not be allowed to participate on reality TV shows until they are 18 years old and can make an informed decision as to how much of their lives they want the public to see.

B

Children should only be allowed to participate on reality TV shows if they are at least 14 years old and are aware of the possible risks of having their lives recorded and broadcast to the public.

C

Parents should be able to decide if their child, regardless of age, wants to participate in a reality TV program that will allow for the child to show off their talent and potentially inspire other children.

D

Parents should be able to decide if their child wants to participate in a reality TV program regardless of whether or not the child will be portrayed positively or negatively to the public.

E

GO!

Be a strong participant by using phrases like these.

...because...

I disagree with part of that...

An example might help convince me. Can you give me an example?

What part of the passage makes you think that?

2. Get set...

Be ready to provide evidence to back up your position during your class discussion or debate. Jot down a few quick notes:



Focus Words

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