

CELEBRITY IN AMERICA READING QUESTIONS

The Arts of Deception: Playing with Fraud in the Age of Barnum:

“Introduction: Thinking With Tricks”

James W. Cook

1. What significance does Cook place on Barnum’s decision to exhibit Joice Heth?
2. What was the significance of the location of Barnum’s exhibit?
3. To what show business formula did Barnum adhere in his exhibition of Heth? Describe her performance.
4. Trace the evolution of Barnum’s approach to his exhibition and promotion of Heth.
5. What was Heth’s role in the deception?
6. What was the significance of the exhibition of Heth, according to Cook, on the broader history of 19th century American popular culture?
7. What did Barnum say about the public’s reception of cultural fraud? What does it tell you about the culture of the times?
8. Define and compare and contrast the terms “illusion” and “illusionism.”
9. What types of aesthetic modes did Barnum mix in his exhibition of Heth?
10. Describe the role of race in the Heth exhibition.

E Pluribus Barnum: The Great Showman and

The Making of Popular Culture:

Chapter 2

“The Jenny Lind Tour: ‘Where’s Barnum?’”

Bluford Adams

1. Compare and contrast the public personas of Lind and Barnum.
2. Describe the class ramifications of Lind and Barnum’s tour.
3. How does Bluford describe the tour’s importance to US commercial entertainment?
4. What was the role of the ideology of separate spheres on Lind and her tour?
5. How did the Lind tour mark a change in Barnum’s public persona?
6. To what sorts of charitable organizations did Lind donate some of the proceeds from her shows? How did she choose them?
7. What was the effect of Lind’s retirement from opera on her American tour?
8. How did Lind’s fans negotiate her celebrity?
9. What effect did Lind’s marital status have on her tour and the press coverage of it?
10. Describe the effect of class on the actual tour dates? How did it affect the audiences?

“The Discourse on Acting”

Richard de Cordova

1. When, according to de Cordova, did the star system begin? Why did the cinema not have a star system before this date?
2. How did the owners of vaudeville houses regard the kinetoscope in particular and motion pictures in general and why?

3. What sweeping changes began to take place in the motion picture industry after 1905 and why?
4. What was crucial in the move toward more rationalized production practices? What is its eventual result?
5. How did the industry attempt to gain control over the production of motion pictures?
6. How did exhibitors solve the problem of product differentiation in motion pictures?
7. In the early days of cinema, what comprised the moving picture “act?”
8. How were the “picture performer” and “film actor” made a subject of discourse?
9. Why was it necessary to make distinctions between the filmic, the profilmic, and the real in order to allow picture performers to emerge as a subject of discourse?
10. What was the role of the fictiveness of the filmed scenes on the emergence of the idea of film stars as actors?
11. de Cordova asserts that there was at least one significant difference between the Film D’Art movies and those made by Vitagraph. What was it and what was its significance?
12. What was the effect of Pilar-Morin’s conflation of pantomime and moving picture performance?
13. de Cordova asserts that the establishment of the actor as subject is closely linked to a specific economic strategy. What is it and why was it necessary at this time?

**“Goodness Had Nothing to Do With it:
Censoring Mae West”
Marybeth Hamilton**

1. Initially, what was the problem for the censors with West’s material?
2. What changes did the censors make in *She Done Him Wrong*? What was the final result of those changes?
3. As a result, how did West’s next film, *I’m No Angel* differ from its predecessor? How did the critics react to the film?
4. Who made up West’s fan base?
5. Describe how West’s films and audience reflected larger gender relations in the US at that time.
6. What was the main problem that the censors faced when attempting to censor West’s films?

***Hitch Your Antenna to the Stars: Early Television Broadcast Stardom*
“Chapter 1: Radio and the Saliency of a Broadcast Star System”
Susan Murray**

1. What is the relationship of network TV to network radio?
2. Trace the evolution of radio broadcasting in the 1920s.
3. Why were vaudeville stars chosen, and why did they agree, to perform on the radio in the 1920s?
4. What is indirect advertising? How and why was it used during the early years of radio broadcasting?
5. Define the term “public interest” as it relates to radio broadcasting during the 1930s and 1940s.

6. Which radio program was the first variety program to hire a familiar talent as its star? Who was this star and what did he do?
7. Explain the significance of *Amos 'n' Andy* to the medium of network radio?
8. What were two of the major accomplishments of 1930s broadcasting? What advantages did radio networks have over local programmers?
9. What elements did radio borrow from other types of entertainment?
10. What roles did advertising agencies play in the production of national sponsored programming in the 1930s?
11. Name the four national radio networks broadcasting in America in the 1930s.
12. When was radio's golden age? What were the most popular prime-time formats during this time and how did they differ in terms of their stars?
13. How does reading endnote #27 change your understanding of the development of radio studio audiences?
14. How was it simultaneously safe and risky for advertising agencies to develop radio shows around one or two star performers?
15. Define vaudeville's "new humor." How did it change so that it would be better adapted to the radio?
16. How, according to Tino Balio, were radio stars utilized in the movies during the 1930s?
17. Which stars fare better, movie stars on radio or radio stars in the movies and why?
18. How did radio's relationship to both vaudeville and movie industry change beginning in 1932 and why?
19. Compare and contrast the attitudes about on-air selling on radio held by the following groups: ex-vaudevillians; legitimate stage stars; and Hollywood film stars.
20. Explain how the movie industry regarded a star's presence or image? How did this change based upon which tier of the industry was considered?
21. How did studio-era Hollywood regard itself vis-à-vis radio broadcasting and what was the effect of this? (Hint: Note #52 is a good place to look.) How did this affect TV stars?
22. How did radio's star system differ from that of Hollywood?
23. Compare and contrast the aural presence and the visual images of the radio stars when they were employed for commercial purposes.
24. What is the "interweaving" technique of radio advertising?
25. Why did CBS and NBC sell their artist bureaus?
26. What made CBS' talent raid of 1948 so successful?

Hitch Your Antenna to the Stars: Early Television Broadcast Stardom
"Chapter 2: 'A Marriage of Spectacle and Intimacy'"

1. Why did commentators initially believe that stage actors were best suited to television stardom?
2. What type of performers were the first television stars?
3. How did both stage performers and movies stars initially react to performing on television?
4. Why did radio stars, initially, avoid appearing on television?
5. What caused Fred Allen's lack of success on television?
6. How did vaudeville performers have to alter their style to thrive on television?

7. Why did radio networks prefer live performances over filmed ones in television's early years? What was the effect of this on viewers at home?
8. What aspects of Milton Berle's television performance made him so successful?
9. Why was *Your Show of Shows* initially cancelled after 19 months on the air? (Hint: read the endnote.) What aspects of the show
10. What aspects of *Your Show of Shows* were innovations in the production of television comedy programs?

Hitch Your Antenna to the Stars: Early Television Broadcast Stardom

“Chapter 4: “Television is a Killer!”:

The Collapse of the Vaudeo Star and Television's Talent Crisis”

1. What were some of the watershed events that occurred in the television industry in 1952? How did these affect the popularity of the vaudeo star?
2. What were some of the television genres, besides vaudeo variety, that were on television in the early 1950s?
3. How did the demands television made on its performers differ from those made by radio and vaudeville? What was the result of this difference?
4. What changes did performers make to their shows to address these demands?
5. Were television stars able to work in other mediums? Why or why not?
6. How did the building of television studios in Los Angeles change the network television industry?
7. Compare and contrast the way that TV networks and sponsors signed their stars.
8. Why did the salaries of TV guest stars on network television shows increase so dramatically after 1949?
9. What caused more top Hollywood stars to appear on TV during the 1953-1954 season?
10. How did the business relationship of advertisers to TV and radio change during the early 1950s?
11. How much control did TV stars have over their programs' content? How did the sponsors react to this level of control?
12. What aspects of vaudeo draw complaints from the government? How did the sponsors react to these complaints? How did the stars and the television networks respond to all of this?
13. What made the amateur format attractive to both the television networks and the sponsors?
14. Describe NBC's comedy talent development strategy?
15. How did the traditional vaudeo programs react to changes in the variety format?
16. Why was *Texaco Star Theatre* taken off the air?
17. What was the effect of the expansion of the length of the comedy sketches and the addition of more cast members on the vaudeo stars?
18. What aspects of the vaudeo variety shows were precursors to the domestic situation comedies that dominated network TV after the mid-1950s?
19. Why was the 1951-1952 season a turning point for the television industry?

**“Stars As Images
Richard Dyer**

1. Knowing the meaning of the words you read can greatly enhance your reading comprehension. Define the following words: dialectic, ideological, radical, subversion, *haute couture*, provenance, paradox, endemic, hegemony, *auteur*, neurosis, Byzantine, denouement, and *mise en scene*. Dyer is British and so uses their conventions in terms of spelling and grammar. Identify all these you find in the article.
2. What is conspicuous consumption? Who coined this phrase and what are the elements that are crucial to this process?
3. Explain the shift in the nature of American idols and their function, according to Leo Lowenthal. How does this alter the American Dream and the myth of success, according to Dyer?
4. How is love made the central element of fan magazine discourse? Do you believe the way births and parent/child relationships are portrayed in the media has shifted since Dyer wrote this article? Why or why not?
5. Provide one current example of actors who fit Klapp’s three “social types.” Have their attributes changed since he first described them? Support your answer with evidence from actors working today.
6. Describe the characteristics of the “pin-up,” as defined by Klapp. How does Laura Mulvey’s analysis complicate Klapp’s characterization of her?
7. Explain the difference between “anomie” and “alienation,” as characterized by Klapp.
8. Who are three currently working film actors who fit the social type of “the rebel.” Does inarticulacy play in role in their media image? Describe why or why not.
9. Compare and contrast the two subcategories of “the independent woman.”
10. Quoting feminist theory, Dyer asserts “that films are unable to conceive of, or cope with, anything that is female, which means in effect that the only way a woman can be accepted as a person (except as a demeaned, and still ultimately threatening, sexual object) is for her to become ‘non-male’; that is to say without gender.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why or why not? Provide one example from a recent film to support your point of view.

**“Elvis Presley and the American Dream”
Peter Guralnik**

1. Guralnik asserts that “out of this seeming contradiction...arose the tension that was rock and roll.” What was the contradiction and how did it create rock and roll?
2. Explain the influence of African Americans on Presley, his music and his style.
3. Guralnik states that Presley was greeted with “cultural schizophrenia.” What does he mean?
4. Who was Colonel Tom Parker and what was his entertainment background?
5. Compare and contrast Presley’s recordings and recording sessions for Sun and RCA.
6. What was Elvis’ career like after he came out of the army?
7. What were the two exceptions to the trajectory of Presley’s post-army career, according to Guralnik?

“Faded Love”
Peter Guralnik

1. Explain Guralnik’s take on Elvis Presley fandom.
2. Guralnik asserts that Elvis never grew up. What does he mean and do you agree with him?
3. What was the effect of Elvis’ death on Guralnik and his fans?

“Beatlemania: Girls Just Want to Have Fun”
Barbara Ehrenreich, Elizabeth Hess, and Gloria Jacobs

1. How did the media explain Beatlemania?
2. Explain the relationship of sex to Beatlemania.
3. Characterize the construction of female sexuality in America at this time.
4. What were the dreams of the future of the girls of this era?
5. Explain the economic aspects of Beatlemania.

“Fandom as Pathology: The Consequences of Characterization”
Joli Jenson

1. Describe the obsessed individual and the hysterical crowd.
2. How do the characterizations of fans in question #1 serve as a critique of modern life?
3. Compare and contrast the characterization of fans and those of *aficionados*.
4. What are the consequences of defining fans as abnormal “others?”
5. Explain the class aspects of the characterization of fan culture.
6. List several types of fandom that are considered “high” culture and several that are considered “low” culture. Explain the differences between the two and the bases for these differences.
7. Write a list of all the things of which you are a fan.

“From Hero to Celebrity: the human pseudo event”
Daniel Boorstin

1. What elements of the first paragraph date this article?
2. What was the Graphic Revolution and how did it change ideas about human greatness, according to Boorstin?
3. What, does Boorstin assert, is the “root” of the problem that has caused changes in our conception of heroes?
4. Comment on Boorstin’s assertion that “the universal lament of aging men in all epochs, then, is that greatness has become obsolete.”
5. How do, according to Boorstin, our celebrities differ from the heroes of the past?
6. What is the difference between fame and notoriety?
7. Why does Boorstin believe that there are fewer heroic figures in the old-fashioned mold today?

8. How does American democracy discourage the traditional heroic figure?
9. What is Joseph Campbell's "monomyth"?
10. How do the social sciences complicate our understanding of the hero, according to Boorstin?
11. How have changes in history and biography altered our view of public figures and/or heroes, according to Boorstin and in your opinion?
12. Explain Marx's influence on conception of the hero, according to Boorstin.
13. Does the hero fare any better in fiction, in Boorstin's opinion and your own?
14. How have the rise of media and improvements in public education affected our conception of the hero, in Boorstin's opinion and your own?
15. Why does Boorstin believe that recent heroic events in the sciences and arts remain "on the edges of our comprehension"?
16. What has been the decline of "the folk" and the rise of "the masses," according to Boorstin?
17. How does Boorstin define the word "celebrity"?
18. Characterize Boorstin's use of the terms "serious" and "light" in reference to celebrities, then compare and contrast the two terms in that context.
19. How does Boorstin characterize the lives of these "new-model heroes"?
20. Compare and contrast Boorstin's characterization of the hero versus the celebrity in a temporal context.
21. Compare and contrast Boorstin's conceptions of the personalities of the hero and the celebrity.
22. Why, does Boorstin assert, was Lindbergh's celebrity so remarkable? On what was it based?
23. What actions of Lindbergh's, downplayed by Boorstin in the essay, might account for his disappearance from the news after 1942?
24. Boorstin asserts that, "the celebrity is usually nothing greater than a more-publicized version of us." Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?
25. Boorstin writes that, "the hat, the rabbit and the magician are all equally news." What does he mean and do you agree or disagree with him?
26. Ultimately, who does Boorstin assert are the true heroes? Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?

**"Celebrity, The Tabloid and the Democratic Public Sphere"
Graeme Turner**

1. Turner asserts that celebrity has changed certain types of media product. What are they and how have they been changed?
2. There are two major types of interpretations offered by cultural and media studies accounts, according to Turner. What are they and what do they say?
3. What caused mass market women's magazines to change? How have they changed and what have these changes been unable to prevent?
4. Describe the spectrum of mass market magazines and celebrity gossip weeklies, as listed by Turner.

5. Describe the degree of commercial alignment between the mass market magazines and celebrity gossip weeklies and the publicity industries.
6. In which area of the market is the commercial alignment discussed in question five most pronounced?
7. Describe the convergence between the editorial content of certain sectors of the magazine market and the mainstream newspaper market. What is “bonk journalism?” What is the relationship between newspapers that do this sort of journalism and the celebrity industry and why?
8. What does “tabloidisation” mean? Describe its characteristics. What does Turner mean when he describes tabloidisation as a “portmanteau” description?
9. Describe the opinions of tabloidisation held by those on the political left and right. Compare and contrast these opinions to those held by Ian Connell.
10. Describe the class and gender binarism that “places information against entertainment, hard news against soft news, the public sphere against private lifestyles and public service media against the commercial media.”
11. What does Turner believe is a key location for the moral panic associated with tabloidisation? Explain how this replaces older patterns of class and privilege in media.
12. Define “DIY citizenship,” “semiotic self-determination,” and “democratainment.”
13. What are the limits of the “ordinary” in the new media environment? What are the two kinds of people created by this new media environment?
14. Why do some people assert that the presence of more diverse participants in the new media environment is not necessarily a democratizing force? What does Turner assert to answer this charge?
15. What does Turner assert are the limits to and the problems with the new media in terms of their ability to democratize? What does “demotic” mean?
16. What function does “the ordinary” serve in this new media environment?
17. Describe the cycle that Turner associates with treatment of “ordinary people” who become participants in the new media environment. What is the reason for this cycle?
18. Turner asserts that the new media environment is creating “a new process of identity formation” and “new modes of production of cultural identity.” What does he mean?
19. What does Turner conclude are the implications of the industrial cycle, alluded to in question 17? What does Turner conclude is the most interesting implication of the celebrity created by the new media environment?

“Walter Winchell: Stardom”
Neal Gabler

1. What did Walter Winchell believe he had to do to “stay ahead of the pack”?
2. How was Winchell’s film *Wake Up and Live* received by the critics and the public?
3. Did Winchell’s acting style have any influence on that of subsequent stage and film actors?
4. How did *Love and Hisses* fare with the critics and why?
5. Explain the public’s reaction to Winchell’s column. How did people in the entertainment industry regard the column? How did Winchell regard the column?
6. What did Winchell do after he published mistaken items in his column?

7. Who were Winchell's contributors? On what terms did they contribute to his column?
8. What reasons did Herman Klurfield and Rose Bigman give for their continuing to work for Winchell, despite his shabby treatment of them?
9. Explain the press agent's relationship to Winchell's column.
10. During what years did press agents develop? What do they do? What caused both their creation and their continued existence?
11. Why were press agents afraid of Winchell? What was his Drop Dead List and what caused an agent's inclusion on this list? What action was a "capital crime" and would put an agent on this list for life?
12. How and why did Winchell regard press agents? How did the press agents regard Winchell?
13. Describe how the press agent system worked and the effects of this system on the agents?
14. How profound were the effects of the press agent system on the country as a whole?
15. How did Winchell refer to his fellow columnists?
16. What aspect did all of the Broadway columnists of the late 1930s have in common?
17. What did Winchell think of celebrities?
18. Who was the Queen of Hollywood gossip?
19. Compare and contrast the gossip columns of New York City and Hollywood.
20. How did Hedda Hopper's entrance into the Hollywood gossip business change both it and Louella Parsons?
21. Compare and contrast Hopper, Parsons and Winchell.

**“Systematizing Scandal: *Confidential* Magazine, Stardom,
and the State of California”
Mary Desjardins**

1. List the four factors that accounted for the success of *Confidential* and other tabloid magazines in the 1950s, according to Desjardins.
2. Define what Desjardins meant by the terms libel, privacy, and obscenity in this article.
3. What methods did *Confidential* use in the creation and publication of its articles? How effective were they and why?
4. Compare and contrast the methods and approaches of the tabloid magazines to the non-tabloid magazines.
5. How did both the Hollywood studios and the State of California respond to *Confidential* magazine?
6. What strategies did *Confidential* magazine use to defend itself against the charges brought by the stars and the state? Was it successful? Why or why not?

**“Intimately Intertwined in the Most Public Way:
Celebrity and Journalism”
P. David Marshall**

1. What caused the development of the celebrity as a social category?
2. What caused the emergence and expansion of celebrity journalism? What was the role of consumption in this process?
3. Define the terms “anomie” and “the lonely crowd” and explain who coined them and why, as discussed in this article.
4. Explain the role of the rise of the literary celebrity on the evolution of celebrity journalism.
5. What was the result of the development of the mass circulation newspaper on the emergence of celebrity journalism?
6. Explain the relationship of celebrity journalism on the representational dimension of the public sphere and the emergence of national markets and national politics.
7. Compare and contrast press agents and public relations people. What is a press release?
8. Explain the cycle of news and events of entertainment journalism. How does this become normalized into the structure of the stories?
9. What are the standard structures and motifs of the celebrity profile or feature interview for newspapers and magazines? When was it developed?
10. Explain the relationship of the celebrity profile to magazine journalism. Be sure to include a discussion of the cover story and the exclusive interview.
11. How do celebrity scandals affect the relationship of the journalists covering the stories to the entertainment publicity machine?
12. What have celebrities involved in media scandals become for contemporary society?
13. What is the down side to the creation of journalists who become celebrities?

**“The Private Ownership of People”
Kembrew McLeod**

1. What is “the right of publicity?”
2. What are the three most reproduced images in the world? Compare and contrast them.
3. What group helped set the first precedents concerning copyright and cyberspace?
4. What were the earliest examples of the mass production of famous people’s likenesses? Why do you believe that these objects were chosen?
5. How did the printing press affect the mass production of famous people’s likenesses? Explain the changes in the economic status of those who reproduced these likenesses and its affect on these images. When did the distribution of celebrity likenesses become big business?
6. Why was the reproduction Ben Franklin’s likeness not a big money maker for him? Compare and contrast the way celebrity images were commodified in the early and late 19th century.
7. What was the first judicial recognition of a person’s image and when did it occur?

8. Explain why movie stars were one of the first realms of fame that recognized the commercial value of images. There were two exceptions to the standard use of stars' images in the early 20th century. What were they?
9. Explain the facts of the *Haelan Laboratories, Inc. v. Topps Chewing Gum, Inc.* decision. How did the court justify its ruling? Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?
10. Explain how "right of publicity" has been expanded.
11. What were the facts in the *Vanna White v. Samsung Electronics America, Inc.*?
12. Elvis Presley Enterprises (EPE) has not been universally successful in its court challenges of those who use Presley's name and/or image. Name one exception and explain why you believe EPE was not successful in this instance.
13. Explain the effect the expansion of the "right of publicity" has had on average people.
14. Characterize the assertions on the way people actively "read" media texts using celebrity images: De Certeau, Silverstone, Fiske, and Jenkins. What are these scholars reacting against, according to McLeod? Does McLeod agree or disagree with the four scholars listed above? Why or why not?
15. Explain the effect of the current construction of "right of publicity" on future artists, writers, and performers using Madonna as an example.
16. Why is "fair use" no guarantor of an exception to "right of publicity"?
17. What does McLeod ultimately conclude about the privatization of culture?
18. What "rights of publicity" do consumers possess and why?
19. Who, according to McLeod, has more control in defining authorship and ownership of private property in our society and why? Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?
20. How does McLeod characterize the battle between studios and film stars? Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?
21. How is a star's image constructed, according to Dyer and McLeod? Who is the author of this image?

**"New Media—New Self:
The Changing Power of Celebrity"
P. David Marshall**

1. Explain the function of individuality in consumer capitalism. What is the relationship of celebrities to individuality.?
2. What are the three ways individualism, identity and celebrity relate to one another, according to Marshall?
3. What have been the cornerstones of the celebrity system for most of the 20th century, according to Marshall?
4. What question is Marshall attempting to answer in this article?
5. Explain the relationship between celebrities and their audiences in traditional media forms, i.e. film, television, and popular music.
6. What is the key collective subjectivity developed in traditional media?
7. What is the difference between representational and presentational regimes, according to Marshall?
8. Explain how technological developments, such as the Internet and the ability to digitize information, have created anew media subjectivity, according to Marshall.
9. What is the new type of individualism created by new media culture?

10. What is “public privacy?” How does it express itself in the new media culture? What is its basic function?
11. How does the mediatizing of the self through new media challenge the traditional structure and construction of the world of celebrity culture?
12. On what does the subjectivity depend in electronic game playing, according to Marshall?
13. How have new media forms allowed the meaning of celebrities produced by traditional media to be altered or engaged with differently?
14. What decides how user generated content is labeled, according to Marshall? Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?
15. How does the less discretely controlled cultural world created by new media affect the shape and nature of media products?
16. In which media industry has the most upheaval occurred, according to Marshall? How has it reacted to this upheaval?
17. What has been the effect of the fluctuations in the economic models of the various culture industries on celebrity culture?
18. Marshall asserts that, “In this transformed industry, there is a correlated downgrade of the significance in the film celebrities produced.” What evidence does he offer to support this assertion?
19. What, according to Marshall, is reality television? What has been the effect of its creation on the ordinary text? Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?
20. Marshall establishes that celebrity presentation has been altered and that there has been a proliferation of new discourses created in new media. He then states, “what we are missing is why this is occurring now.” What do you think and why?