

Is Reality TV Harmful?

The BBC presenter John Humphrys has described British reality TV as “seedy, cynical and harmful” to society. In a speech at the Edinburgh Television Festival, Humphrys said that shows such as Big Brother “eroded the distinction between the public and the private”.

Do you agree with John Humphrys? Has reality TV gone too far? Is it harmful to society? Or is it simply light entertainment?

Here is a selection of reactions to John Humphrys’ speech.

John Humphrys is so right! All my life I have taught young people that with adulthood comes responsibility. Reality programmes undermine the work of every teacher in the land because children accept as the norm what is actually selfish, immature behaviour. Reality shows satisfy the lowest animal instincts in youth, who also begin to believe that casual relationships are normal. Materialism and the idea that it is acceptable to be deceitful and nasty in order to win should instead be seen as being the same as the lowest of the low!

Ken, Norfolk

I think the intolerance shown by those who choose to damn “reality tv” is astounding. Reading the comments posted, I would far rather be identified with a group of people who can see reality TV shows, such as *Big Brother*, as just one form of entertainment amongst those on offer. I, for one, would certainly not set myself up as a judge of others’ tastes, nor would I have the arrogance to insult those who do not share my own tastes. Those that choose to watch reality TV would seem to be a far more balanced group of people than those who see fit to dismiss it and its viewers from the examples posted here.

Carolyn, Leeds

Seedy? Yes indeed! But also so boring, and obviously designed for a small minority of sad people who have no life. The standard of television programmes has become much worse over the last two decades. Why are people prepared to sit and watch such uninteresting and amateurish productions? Why are television producers prepared to sink to such low depths to gain an audience?

Brian, Essex

Reality TV makes false celebrities of its contestants. It idolises attention grabbing and the thirst for money. What’s more, with no control over what the contestants do there is no appearance of a moral message, whereas in even the most violent dramas there usually is. Of course this stain on TV is harmful to our society, and I am totally in support of Mr. Humphrys.

Scott, Gloucester

Reality TV? Switch off! I was persuaded to watch a couple of *Big Brother* programmes and that thing in the Oz jungle. Totally out of touch with what people call reality! How about making the fans of these programmes watch the real reality of poverty, illness, the elderly, school bullying to mention a few? That won’t happen because that’s a bit

too close to home and won't get sponsors' support. I don't always agree with John Humphrys, but on this occasion he has my full support. It shames us all as individuals in respect—real respect for ordinary, decent people.

Jade, UK

I find the likes of *Big Brother* and its counterpart programmes a little light relief from the boring and stuffy world that is twenty-first century UK.

Ed, UK

I've been saying it for years, reality TV is indeed harmful to society! The people on these shows tend to be rude, with little respect for themselves and none for others. Like it or not, putting these people on TV makes them role models for children and young teenagers. So is it any wonder that these days that we have towns full of kids who sound like cavemen and act accordingly. Reality TV fuels anti-social behaviour, and contributes to already deteriorating standards of English. I'm only 23, but even I am shocked at the stark differences between the teenagers of today and my friends & I of yesteryear.

David, Basingstoke

Seedy? Yes. Cynical? Probably... Harmful? No! Nobody sees the contestants or stars as role models. The audience watches for the entertainment value of the show, mainly derived from criticising the corrupt nature of those involved. While certainly a trashy form of entertainment, it entertains nonetheless and shouldn't be so heavily criticised; it was never designed to be taken seriously!!

Mr W, Buckinghamshire

I'm fed up with everyone criticising reality TV! Like other people, I was bored with watching the same dramas and comedies and therefore welcomed a new genre of television. I love *Big Brother* and to those who don't like it I have 3 words... don't watch it!!

James, Leicester

Looking to a box of tricks to find out what reality is? Talk to your neighbours more and get involved in social work if human behaviour interests you; it's a far more meaningful way to spend time.

Sara, England

You get what you deserve. Stupid programmes for stupid people. Bread and games.

G. Willems, Netherlands

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http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/talking_point/3607482.stm

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