

## Racism, ratings and reality TV

### Level 3 • Advanced

#### 1 Key words

Fill the gaps using these key words from the text.

falter  
furore

consternation  
elocution

allegation  
outraged

abuse  
aberration

regulator  
humiliation

1. If someone is \_\_\_\_\_, they are extremely shocked and angry.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ is cruel, violent or unfair treatment.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ is the unhappy and ashamed feeling people have when something embarrassing happens.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ is a shocked or worried feeling, often caused when something unexpected happens.
5. An \_\_\_\_\_ is something that is not normal or not what you would usually expect.
6. An \_\_\_\_\_ is a statement that someone has done something wrong or illegal even though this has not been proved.
7. If something \_\_\_\_\_, it ceases to be effective or to make progress.
8. A \_\_\_\_\_ is an organization whose job is to check that companies, systems etc act fairly and follow rules.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ is the skill of speaking clearly and with an accent that is considered to be correct.
10. A \_\_\_\_\_ is a lot of anger caused by a particular event or situation.

#### 2 Sequence of events

These six sentences about the story are not in the correct order. Reorder them and then check your answers in the text.

- a. Amongst other things, they called her a fake and made fun of her accent.
- b. The controversy has led to an increase in the number of viewers, however.
- c. Celebrity Big Brother is a reality TV show that is now in its fifth year.
- d. Some of the other contestants are alleged to have made racist remarks about her.
- e. One of the contestants in this year's show is a film actress from India, Shilpa Shetty.
- f. This led to more than 20,000 viewers complaining to the official TV regulator.

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#### Racism, ratings and reality TV: now Big Brother creates a diplomatic incident

*Complaints over Channel 4 show hit record 22,000. Police to investigate abuse of Bollywood film star.*

by Owen Gibson, Vikram Dodd and Randeep Ramesh in Delhi. January 18, 2007

Three days ago it was merely the below par fifth season of a faltering reality TV show. But as the storm over the alleged racism of its participants intensified, Celebrity Big Brother yesterday sparked demonstrations on Indian streets, consternation in Downing Street, condemnation from the chancellor on a state visit to Bangalore and a police investigation.

The Channel 4 show has always courted controversy but has never before been on the verge of sparking an international incident. Yet as the number of complaints from outraged viewers topped 22,000, the Indian government spoke out against the programme and Hertfordshire police confirmed it would investigate allegations that Bollywood star Shilpa Shetty had been subjected to racist abuse by three white fellow contestants.

The number of complaints looked sure to rise last night as Channel 4 broadcast a furious row between Shetty and Jade Goody, who earned millions after finding fame on the non-celebrity version of the show. Speaking after the argument to another contestant, Cleo Rocos, Shetty said: "I'm representing my country. Is that what today's UK is? It's scary. It's quite a shame actually." Rocos said: "I don't think there's anything racist in it." But Shetty replied: "It is, I'm telling you." Later, glamour model Danielle Lloyd, when talking to Goody, said that the Bollywood star should go back home.

India's Information and Broadcasting Minister Priyaranjan Dasmunsi appealed to Shetty to appear before the Indian High Commission in London when she came out of the house. "If there has been some racism shown against her in the show, it is not only an attack on women

but also on the skin and the country," he said. Media regulator Ofcom said last night it had received 19,300 complaints, more than double its previous record, while a further 3,000 were made to Channel 4 directly. A separate online petition launched by the newspaper Eastern Eye had last night attracted 20,000 signatures.

Hertfordshire police said it would formally investigate 30 complaints. A spokesman said: "We are investigating allegations of racist behaviour in the Big Brother house, and will be conducting an inquiry, including a review of tapes." Channel 4 executives and the show's producers met yesterday to discuss the row, but privately may be delighted. Tuesday night's show was watched by 4.5 million people, 1 million more than Monday's.

The furore was sparked by a series of incidents centred on a group of contestants led by Goody, and including her boyfriend Jack Tweed, Lloyd and ex-pop singer Jo O'Meara. At one point Goody, after a row with Shetty, had said: "You need elocution lessons. You need a day in the slums. Go to those people who look up to you and be real. You're a fake."

Channel 4 released a statement insisting that there had been no overt racism, and claiming that the clashes were based on class and cultural differences. But in India, the row has managed the rare feat of uniting all political parties. Communists, Hindu nationalists and the ruling Congress party have all demanded action be taken to preserve Shetty's dignity. "[Big Brother] is holding a mirror to British society. It is no aberration. We should thank Channel 4 for revealing the hidden biases of Britain," Mahesh Bhatt, a Bollywood director, told the Guardian.

Dozens of Shetty's fans took to the streets in Patna, eastern India, to protest against what they said was her humiliation, burning straw effigies of the show's producers. In Bangalore, UK Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, faced journalists questioning him about a reality show he said he had never seen. "I understand that in the UK there have already been 10,000

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complaints from viewers about remarks which people see rightly as offensive," he said. "I want Britain to be seen as a country of fairness and tolerance. Anything that detracts from that I condemn."

Later Tony Blair's spokesman added: "What clearly is to be regretted and countered is any perception abroad that in any way we tolerate racism in this country." In one exchange, Goody was heard saying of Shetty: "She makes me feel sick. She makes my skin crawl", while her now evicted mother Jackie continually referred to her as "the Indian". Later Lloyd claimed that the Bollywood star "wants to be white" and called her a "dog". After Shetty cooked a roast chicken dinner, Lloyd had said: "They eat with their hands in India, don't they. Or is that China?" She added: "You don't know where those hands have been."

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#### 3 Comprehension check

Choose the best answer according to the text:

1. What rare achievement did the controversy produce in India?
  - a. It made people burn straw effigies of the show's producers.
  - b. It united all the political parties.
  - c. It made the British chancellor apologize.
2. What was the effect of the controversy in the UK?
  - a. The number of viewers increased by 30%.
  - b. Shilpa Shetty appeared before the Indian High Commission in London.
  - c. People demonstrated on the streets.
3. What action will the local police take?
  - a. No action at all.
  - b. They will review the tapes and conduct an inquiry.
  - c. They will arrest Goody and Lloyd for racism.
4. What was Channel 4's version of events?
  - a. It was all part of the show.
  - b. It wasn't racism but class and cultural differences.
  - c. The show is a mirror of British society.

#### 4 Vocabulary 1: Find the word

Find the word or expression that means:

1. *not up to standard* (para 1)
2. *to cause* (para 1)
3. *to be about to do something* (para 2)
4. *to state your opinion firmly and publicly* (para 2)
5. *frightening* (para 3)
6. *a document signed by many people asking the authorities to do something* (para 4)
7. *an impressive achievement* (para 7)
8. *a model of someone, especially one destroyed in a protest against them* (para 8)

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### 5 Vocabulary 2: Verb + Noun collocations

Match the verbs in the left-hand column with the nouns in the right-hand column.

- |                |                   |
|----------------|-------------------|
| 1. spark       | a. one's dignity  |
| 2. court       | b. an inquiry     |
| 3. investigate | c. demonstrations |
| 4. find        | d. a petition     |
| 5. conduct     | e. controversy    |
| 6. sign        | f. action         |
| 7. preserve    | g. fame           |
| 8. demand      | h. allegations    |

### 6 Vocabulary 3: Prepositions

Which prepositions follow these words? Check your answers in the text.

1. subjected \_\_\_\_\_
2. row \_\_\_\_\_
3. appeal \_\_\_\_\_
4. appear \_\_\_\_\_
5. attack \_\_\_\_\_
6. based \_\_\_\_\_
7. protest \_\_\_\_\_
8. detract \_\_\_\_\_

### 7 Discussion

What do you think of reality television programmes such as Big Brother? Do they perform a valuable service by showing how people interact or are they just complete rubbish?

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### KEY

#### 1 Key words

1. outraged
2. abuse
3. humiliation
4. consternation
5. aberration
6. allegation
7. falters
8. regulator
9. elocution
10. furore

#### 2 Sequence of events

1. c
2. e
3. d
4. a
5. f
6. b

#### 3 Comprehension check

1. b
2. a
3. b
4. b

#### 4 Vocabulary 1: Find the word

1. below par
2. to spark
3. to be on the verge of
4. to speak out
5. scary
6. petition
7. feat
8. effigy

#### 5 Vocabulary 2: Verb + noun collocations

1. c
2. e
3. h
4. g
5. b
6. d
7. a
8. f

#### 6 Vocabulary 3: Prepositions

1. to
2. between
3. to
4. before
5. on
6. on
7. against
8. from