To be the world's most famous teen

by Daniel Radcliffe

Background

This informal interview with Daniel Radcliffe, star of the Harry Potter movies, appeared in the film magazine *Empire*. It is autobiographical, describing, in the first person, things that happen in his life, and how he feels about them. It includes an anecdote on the Reading Festival and his observation on events. The tone is reflective, as Radcliffe considers the nature of fame and how it affects his life. He uses the colloquial language of his peer group (*massive, a certain cool*) and the text has an easy flow, with a variety of long and short sentences.

What's on the CD-ROM

This is a brief biography, as a bulleted list, on the life of Daniel Radcliffe. Children can use it to plan and write their own biography of the star, or to construct a timeline of his life and career. They could compare this overview with the insight into the impact of fame given in the core text.

Discussing the text

● Read the text, and ask the children where it might have appeared. Point out that the photograph gives only a fraction of the subject's face, yet is enough for readers to identify him. Ask how this reinforces the focus of the text. (It shows how his fame makes him instantly recognisable.)

● Ask the children how they would classify the text: Autobiography? Interview? Why?

● Ask the children to find examples of three different tenses (present, past and continuous past). These tenses are commonly used in autobiographical writing. Discuss how each is used in this text: to describe how Radcliffe is feeling *now*, to report an anecdote that happened *once in the past*, and to describe things that have been happening *over a number of years*.

● Challenge the children to find examples of clauses linked by *because* and note how they help the writer explain feelings or reasons behind his statements. Try rewording one example using a different causal link, for example *I am now more comfortable on set… so it does balance out slightly.* Which is better and why? What other causal or sequential links are used in the text? (S*o, but* and *then.*)

● Consider the tone of the piece, and ask the children how this is generated. Find examples of colloquial words and phrases (*sort of, in your stride, massive, loads of, a certain cool*). Remind the children that we often use colloquialisms in speech that we wouldn't use in written language, and here they give the impression of speech. Circle the words *cool* and *darker.* Can the children explain what they mean literally, and the different meanings they carry here?

● Point out that the tone and style affect sentence construction, as well as the choice of words. Underline the sentence beginning *You're shut away* and try a neater way of writing it, such as *You're shut away for anything from 10 to 12 months.* Suggest that the former works here, because it is more direct and indicate Radcliffe's thought process as he is talking/writing.

● Circle the word *premieres* and ask the children what it means and where it comes from.

Talk, read and write

● Ask the children to find all the sentences in the text that contain colloquial words and phrases and try rewriting them in more formal and more precise language.

● Provide two or three celebrity or film magazines and use them to start a discussion of fame and celebrity. Do the children aspire to it? What do they think are the benefits and the downsides of fame?

● Ask the children to imagine they are an interviewer for *Empire* magazine and to compile a list of questions they would ask Daniel Radcliffe about his life. Tell them that when they are writing a biography or autobiography, it will help if they start by thinking about key questions they think readers would like answered.

Extension

Ask children to write a piece in the first person that imagines they are walking the red carpet at a movie premiere. Encourage them to describe how they feel as well as what they see and hear around them.

Children can collect and compile a glossary of film terms (such as *rushes, stills, sfx, pitch* and so on).