

Part 3

You are going to read a newspaper article. For questions 13–19, choose the answer (A, B, C or D) which you think fits best according to the text. Mark your answers on the separate answer sheet.

Lights, camera, action man

Travel journalist Richard Madden reports on his first trip with a camera crew.

It was books that first captured my imagination about faraway places. TV travelogues always seemed the poor relation to the classic written accounts, although of course the pictures were rather better. And then there was the issue of authenticity. All those pretentious theatrical types dying of thirst in the desert, as if we didn't realise there was a camera crew on hand to cater for their every need. These days programme-makers know that the audience is more sophisticated and the presence of the camera is acknowledged. But can a journey with filming equipment ever be anything other than a cleverly constructed fiction?

I recently got the chance to find out, when I was asked to present two one-hour programmes for an adventure travel series. The project was the brainchild of the production company Trans-Atlantic Films, which wanted the series presented by writers and adventurers, as well as TV professionals. My sole qualification was as a journalist specialising in 'adventure' travel. However, I was thought to have 'on-screen' potential.

The first programme was filmed in Costa Rica. Within 24 hours of my arrival, I realised that this was going to be very different from my usual 'one man and his laptop' expeditions. For a start, there were five of us – director, cameraman, sound recordist, producer and presenter. And then there was the small matter of £100,000 worth of equipment. I soon realised that the director, Peter Macpherson, was a vastly experienced adventure film-maker. In his case, the term 'adventure' meant precisely that. 'Made a film with X,' he would say (normally a famous mountaineer or skier), before describing a death-defying sequence at the top of a glacier in Alaska or hang-gliding off the Angel Falls in Venezuela. Invariably, these reminiscences would end with the words: 'Had a great deal of respect for X. Dead now, sadly...'

Part of the brief for the series was to put the presenter in unusual situations and see how he or

she coped. One such sequence was the night we spent in the rainforest canopy near the Rincón de la Vieja National Park in Guanacaste province. I don't have a head for heights and would make a poor rock-climber, so my distress is real enough as the camera catches me dangling on a rope some 30 metres up, well short of the canopy platform.

Ironically, it was the presence of the camera, looking down on me from above, that gave me the impetus for the final push to the top. By this time, I'd learnt how 'sequences' were cut together and realised that one last effort was required. I had to struggle to stay coherent while the camera swooped within a few millimetres of my face for my reaction. In the end, it was a magical experience, heightened all the more by the sounds of the forest – a family of howler monkeys in a nearby tree, amplified through the sound recordist's headphones.

Learning how to establish a rapport with the camera is vital and it took me a while to think of it as a friend rather than a judge and jury. The most intimidating moments were when Peter strolled up to me, saying that the light would only be right for another 10 minutes, and that he needed a 'link' from one sequence to another. The brief was simple. It needed to be 30 seconds long, sum up my feelings, be informative, well-structured and, most important of all, riveting to watch. 'Ready to go in about five minutes?' he would say breezily.

I soon discovered that the effect of the camera on what was going on around us was far less intrusive than I had imagined. After a first flurry of curiosity, people usually lost interest and let us get on with our job. We were also flexible enough to be spontaneous. Our trip coincided with an 80 per cent solar eclipse, a rare event anywhere in the world. We were in a village called Santa Elena and captured the whole event on camera. The carnival atmosphere was infectious and made a welcome addition to our shooting schedule.

- 13** One thing the writer used to dislike about travel programmes on TV was
- A** the repetitive nature of many of them.
 - B** the dull images that they frequently contained.
 - C** their lack of respect for the intelligence of the viewers.
 - D** their tendency to copy the style of famous written accounts.
- 14** What reason is given for the writer becoming involved in making TV travel programmes?
- A** other people's belief that he might be suited to appearing on them
 - B** his own desire to discover whether it was possible to make good ones
 - C** his own belief that it was natural for him to move from journalism to TV
 - D** a shortage of writers and adventurers willing to take part in them
- 15** Shortly after arriving in Costa Rica, the writer became aware that
- A** the director had a reputation that was undeserved.
 - B** he would probably dislike working as part of a team rather than alone.
 - C** he would probably get on well with the director personally.
 - D** his role in the filming would be likely to involve real danger.
- 16** The writer uses the sequence filmed in the National Park as an example of
- A** something he had been worried about before any filming started.
 - B** the sort of challenge that presenters were intended to face in the series.
 - C** something he was expected to be unable to deal with.
 - D** the technical difficulties involved in making films in certain places.
- 17** What does the writer say about the last part of the sequence in the National Park?
- A** It taught him a lot about the technical aspects of film-making.
 - B** He was encouraged to complete it when he looked up at the camera.
 - C** It changed his whole attitude towards doing dangerous things.
 - D** He was unable to say anything that made sense at this time.
- 18** In paragraph six the writer says that he found it particularly difficult to
- A** understand what was required of him for a 'link'.
 - B** change things he was going to do at very short notice.
 - C** accept certain advice given to him about presenting a film.
 - D** meet certain demands the director made on him.
- 19** What does the writer use the experience in Santa Elena as an example of?
- A** something they filmed although they had not planned to
 - B** the friendly way in which they were treated by the local people
 - C** something they did purely for their own enjoyment
 - D** the kind of thing that viewers like to see in travel films