

Grade 8 English First Additional Language Worksheet

Reading comprehension - "Soap operas"

Read the following factual text and then answer the questions.

Soap operas often have many fans. People become addicted to them; they sympathise with the pain and problems of the main characters. They often write letters to them giving them advice about how to deal with a particular situation. Newspapers run articles on the actors who play the leading characters. When a character is written out of the series it can become a nation-wide subject of discussion. In California, a company called "Soaps by Phone" has been set up so that viewers who have missed an episode of their favourite soap opera can ring in for a summary of what happened.

Dallas is the most successful television soap opera of all time. It began quietly in 1978 with just five episodes, as the story of a quarrel between two wealthy Texan families, the Ewings and Barneses, who were connected by marriage. By 1980 it was watched by an estimated 83 million Americans giving it a record of 66 percent share of television audience. *Dallas* has now been shown in more than ninety different countries, often in the language of the local people.

One of the main reasons for the success of *Dallas* is the character of J.R. Ewing, played by Larry Hagman. J.R., as he is known to millions, is not typical hero. He is a man that everyone loves to hate. He makes enemies of almost all his business associates, relations and lovers at one time or another. In May 1980, in the last episode of that season's series, J.R. was shot by an unknown person. Viewers had to wait six nail-biting months before the next series revealed who had done it. It could have been anyone. The culprit turned out to be his sister-in-law and former lover, Kristin. J.R. is nothing like the good hero types who played in soap operas before *Dallas*. Viewers enjoy J.R. because he represents the evil side of man.

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Questions

- 1.1 Why do so many people watch soap operas? (2)
- 1.2 Some people write letters to the characters in soap operas. What do you think of this? (2)
- 2.1 What does “written out” mean? (paragraph 1) (1)
- 2.2 Suggest TWO ways in which a character could be “written out”. (2)
3. What service does “Soaps by Phone” offer? (1)
4. Give one reason why Dallas has been so successful. (1)
- 5.1 Give TWO qualities of a “good hero type”. (2)
- 5.2 Is JR a good hero type? Give a reason for your answer. (1)
- 5.3 Why is JR so popular? (2)
6. Name your favourite soap opera and give a reason why you watch it. (1)

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Suggested Solutions

- 1.1 They become addicted to them. ✓ They sympathise with the characters' problems and pain. ✓ (2)
- 1.2 Any reasoned opinion. (2)
- 2.1 removed/taken out of the show (1)
- 2.2 death; moving away; emigrating; finding a different job//town; the actor wants to leave (2)
3. "Soaps by Phone" allow you to phone and get a summary of a programme you missed. (1)
4. JR Ewing became very popular. (1)
- 5.1 Any two qualities, e.g. honesty, integrity, loyalty, hard working, committed, brave, selfless (2)
- 5.2 No. Give the marks for the reason only. He is a bad man. (1)
- 5.3 People really like bad people; they find them fascinating; they also love to hate someone; it is satisfying. Any ONE reason well expressed. ✓✓ (2)
6. Open. The mark is for the reason. (1)

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