

Part 3: Role Models

Is it important for young people to have role models?

I would say it is. For young people, it's very easy to feel lost and unsure about how to act or where to focus their efforts. Having a role model gives them **aspirations** and a direction for how they want their life to be. For example, career role models show young people that what they want to achieve can be achieved and often give an **indication** as to what steps need to be taken to reach that level. Similarly, behavioural role models provide young people with ideas on how to treat others with kindness and consideration.

How do people decide who to have as a role model?

Hmm, I think that we make **conscious and unconscious** decisions about who we choose as role models. When we come into contact with other people, we unconsciously evaluate them and compare them to ourselves. If we find that someone has a quality, characteristic or **trait** that we admire, they unconsciously become a kind of role model in our mind, and we'll often make small changes in our own behaviour to be more similar to them. However, there are also people that we consciously see as role models. These are often public figures that we don't necessarily know personally. Often we'll admire something about their situation or about the things that they do. For example, they might be a role model because of how they have achieved greatness through sporting achievements or through **philanthropic** charity work.

Do you think that celebrities and famous athletes have a moral responsibility to be good role models for the young?

No, I don't think that they have a moral responsibility to be good role models. I think it is good when they act responsibly: they're in a position of influence and their voice is often **amplified** by their status, so they could really **pass on** positive messages to the youth. However, I would argue that they don't have a moral responsibility to do so just because they are a public figure. In my opinion, they shouldn't be held to a higher **moral standard** any more than an average person just because of their fame.

Why do you think some people are so obsessed with the private lives of public figures?

I think there are two different reasons. Firstly, we like to follow people that we respect and admire so that we can feel closer to them and sometimes even **live vicariously through** the experiences that they have and we don't. This is often the case when we follow the lives of musicians or athletes that we admire. However, there is a second, **darker motivation** that we might not realise. Many of us enjoy finding the **flaws** in people that are in a position of power. By knowing their private life and especially the troubles that they have, we are able to bring them down to a more human level. I think that's one of the main reason why people read **glossy celebrity magazines** and tabloids, which highlight celebrity failures in the form of **gossip**.

Useful vocabulary

Aspiration

A hope or ambition of achieving something.

*"Having a role model gives them **aspirations** and a direction for how they want their life to be."*

Indication

A sign or piece of information that shows something.

*"...career role models show young people that what they want to achieve can be achieved and often give an **indication** as to what steps need to be taken to reach that level."*

Conscious and unconscious

conscious = being aware of our actions and thoughts.

unconscious = doing or thinking something without realising that we are doing or thinking.

*"I think that we make **conscious and unconscious** decisions about who we choose as role models."*

Trait

A distinguishing characteristic or quality.

*"If we find that someone has a quality, characteristic or **trait** that we admire, they unconsciously become a kind of role model in our mind"*

Philanthropic

Actions which seek to improve the welfare of others.

*"For example, they might be a role model because of how they have achieved greatness through sporting achievements or through **philanthropic** charity work."*

Amplified

Made bigger or more important.

*"I think it is good when they act responsibly: they're in a position of influence and their voice is often **amplified** by their status"*

Pass on

Pass on = spread.

*"...they could really **pass on** positive messages to the youth."*

Moral standard

Actions and ways of behaving that we think are acceptable.

*"In my opinion, they shouldn't be held to a higher **moral standard** any more than an average person just because of their fame."*

Live vicariously through (someone)

Experiencing your life events indirectly through other people.

*"Firstly, we like to follow people that we respect and admire so that we can feel closer to them and sometimes even **live vicariously through** the experiences that they have and we don't."*

Darker motivation

More evil and sinister.

*“However, there is a second, **darker motivation** that we might not realise.”*

Flaw

An imperfection.

*“Many of us enjoy finding the **flaws** in people that are in a position of power.”*

Glossy magazine

A magazine which is dedicated to fashion or celebrity lifestyle.

*“I think that’s one of the main reason why people read **glossy celebrity magazines** and tabloids”*

Gossip

Casual conversation about the lives of other people.

*“I think that’s one of the main reason why people read glossy celebrity magazines and tabloids, which highlight celebrity failures in the form of **gossip**.”*

Write your answers

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