

**TV 1** Can you remember the lessons based on This American Life podcast? Who is the host? Can you remember the lesson on the poem by David Rakoff?



**1.** Do you have a TV set? How often do you watch it? If you needed to watch TV for 29 hours a week, could you do this? What programs and shows would you watch then?

Listen to Ira Glass, the host of This American Life, and answer the questions \_\_\_\_\_:



- 1) When did David Rakoff stop watching TV?
- 2) Why was he asked to watch TV for 29 hours in particular?
- 3) What word meaning 'an abundant supply of something' you have just heard in the snippet? Can you spell it correctly? \_\_\_\_\_

**2.** Read the chunks out. What do they mean? Can you find the correct place in the script for each one? Listen and check \_\_\_\_\_

above the medium

smarmy, superior

lost on me

lives in the closet

broke up

only results in

to set me up with

looks down on

Television and I \_\_\_\_\_ a long time ago. Before this assignment, it would have taken me at least four months to watch 29 hours of TV. I know how that sounds –

\_\_\_\_\_ like one of those people who \_\_\_\_\_ others for watching television and says things like, "Well, I enjoy *Nova*."

It's not that I'm \_\_\_\_\_. It's that I can't be trusted around television. Watching television was forbidden when I was a child, a tactic which anyone knows \_\_\_\_\_. raising an addict. When my parents weren't around, I secretly watched it all. I had no standards, no filter. I loved everything. These days my set \_\_\_\_\_. Yeah, the cheap metaphor of that isn't \_\_\_\_\_. Television is my secret shame. And that was fine with me until Alex Blumberg – my producer from *This American Life* – called and offered \_\_\_\_\_ cable for this story.

**3.** Unjumble the sentences and try to find the correct place for each one in the text (type in the correspondent letter in each box). There is one extra gap. Listen and check.

A. / because I didn't /but was I / have cable/ terrible company /?

B. / I really/ terrible company /had / been such/?

?

C. /the news/ too excited/my friends/ about/ were a little/.

\_\_\_\_\_. When I tell Jodi that I'm getting cable, she is as thrilled as if I'd told her I'd just fallen in love. "Thank God," she says, "Now we'll have something to talk about."

\_\_\_\_\_. I mean, I know, of course I was. I am terrible company. I can be a joyless, little rain cloud of a thing. \_\_\_\_\_. Does that explain everything that is wrong with me? All the therapy, the brief experimentation with serotonin reuptake inhibitors, all that money thrown away, when all the while help lay on the other end of an 800 number at Time Warner Cable. \_\_\_\_\_

*For many who work in the TV business, the Nielsen household – a family whose TV-viewing habits are monitored by the research company – is like a unicorn. Somewhere in America are these magical homes with the power to determine whether a show – your show, which you give everything to – lives or dies. Okay, that's extreme. Maybe sometimes.*



≡ macmillan dictionary 

**talk down** DEFINITIONS AND SYNONYMS

PHRASAL VERB TRANSITIVE

OTHER ENTRIES FOR THIS WORD

+

WORD FORMS

+

DEFINITIONS

-

1. talk louder than someone
2. talk to someone to calm them
3. help someone to land a plane
4. persuade someone to lower price
5. make someone/something seem bad

**Read out the verb phrases below. Explain the meaning in your own words (or use a dictionary). Try to find the correct place for each one. Listen again and check.**

**4. Listen to the snippet (under the picture) . What did David do instead of watching TV? There is the phrasal verb **talk down** in the snippet. Look at the possible meanings on the left and choose the most suitable one for this context.**



watching paint dry

inveighing against

gotten the monkey off my back

talks me down

to turn it off

sets me up

has been taken over

The installation guy arrives and \_\_\_\_\_ . And I gingerly settle into my new life as a Nielsen family of one. Things don't begin well. I go looking for *Project Runway* and find instead that the channel \_\_\_\_\_ by a show called *The Real Housewives of Orange County*. It's an all-day marathon. And yet, nothing happens. It is like \_\_\_\_\_ – stupid, shallow, fake-breasted, Republican paint.



It seems that in the intervening years of TV-lessness I've \_\_\_\_\_ a little bit too well. I can't keep the housewives on for longer than eight minutes before I have \_\_\_\_\_ . And for the next few days, I do anything but watch television. That's right. I procrastinate from watching television. I bake bread – three loaves. I clean my apartment. I make meals and take them to sick people. I even write. I am procrastinating from TV by doing my job.

Alex, my producer, calls about a week later to see how it's all going. He can hear the suspicious lack of television in the background. "Aren't you supposed to be working?" he asks.

I tell him, "I don't want to be that curmudgeonly guy \_\_\_\_\_ the kids with their rock and roll music, but I'm appalled by what

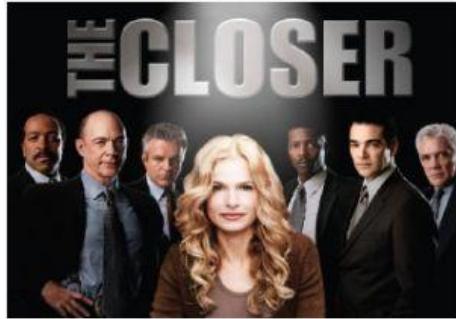
I've seen so far. He listens patiently to my Rip Van Winkle just-up-from-his-nap jeremiad explaining how I've missed the reality TV moment, how my muscles of appreciation for the form aren't developed. He \_\_\_\_\_ . And even as he is doing so, I know how ridiculous I am being. Who needs to be talked down from watching TV?

**get the monkey off one's back**

**idiom**

: to remove or solve a problem that has been difficult to get rid of or solve : to get rid of a problem or situation that makes one unhappy and that lasts for a long time

He finally got the monkey off his back and kicked his drug addiction.



**5\_A Listen to the snippet and complete the chunks with 1-2 words, then try to explain the meaning or simply translate them**

I get \_\_\_\_\_ myself

I wade \_\_\_\_\_

I sound like Bambi \_\_\_\_\_ a flower

I \_\_\_\_\_ an Evangelical channel

a movie I love and know virtually \_\_\_\_\_

the characters all swill \_\_\_\_\_, sleep \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ around for something to watch on TV



**5\_B Listen again and number the paragraphs in order you hear them**



\_\_\_\_\_ I would drink Jon Stewart's bath water. And Channel 93 – New York City public access – is nothing but a mesmerizing, silent traffic camera at the corner of Canal Street and the

**Jon Stewart Brutally Confronts Republican Lawmaker Over Gun Deaths**

Stewart blasts pro-gun GOP politician who is loosening Oklahoma gun laws but draws the line at drug performers reading to children.

BY JAMES HIBBERD MARCH 2, 2013 12:45PM



West Side Highway. It is as pretty as waves. I would happily fill out the rest of my quota watching just this.

\_\_\_\_\_ I get over myself, and I wade back in and actually watch entire programs. I even enjoy some of the things I see, enjoy them immensely. Kyra Sedgwick is amazing on *The Closer*, and Lisa Kudrow's almost unendurable humiliation in *The Comeback* – to name just two.



\_\_\_\_\_ And I feel safe in saying that of all the prayers out there in the ether that the Pray channel most hopes to answer, those of an aging, Jewish, homosexual movie buff in New York City trolling around for something to watch on TV aren't really high on that list.

\_\_\_\_\_ Do I sound like Bambi sniffing a flower? Well, my TV forest is suddenly new and filled with wonder and discovery. I stumble upon an Evangelical channel called Pray. And hallelujah, they are showing *All About Eve*, a movie I love and know virtually by heart. It seems an odd choice for an Evangelical channel. The characters all swill gin, sleep around, and work in the theater.

**6. Listen to the snippet and fill the gaps with numbers \_\_\_\_\_ . What do you think the phrases in bold mean?**

It also **doesn't sit very well with Alex**, who calls the next week. When I proudly tell him that I've **upped my tally** to \_\_\_ hours, he seems unimpressed, pointing out that I am \_\_\_ weeks and \_\_\_ hours behind schedule. And in fact, **he docks me two hours**, saying that a movie I've seen over \_\_\_ times doesn't count. Homophobe.

The purpose of the exercise, it seems, is to watch television. Well, I can't do that. Clearly I need a guide through this underworld, someone who truly loves the medium. I call up Jodi and I invite her over. I will cook her supper in exchange for some patient instruction. Jodi has been one of my closest friends for \_\_\_ years. But suddenly, I am as awkward as a schoolboy.



*The High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle (HMMWV; colloquial: **Humvee**) is a family of light, four-wheel drive, military trucks and utility vehicles.*

**7. Unjumble the questions in the first line of the dialogue. Listen to the snippet, check yourself and fill the gaps with adverbs**

**David Rakoff:** OK, / supper at/ so should/ the table/ we eat/?

?

/supper /or should/ in front of/ the television set/ we eat/?

?

/ good /is/ now/ TV on/ there /?

Because it's only about 6:40.

**Jodi:** I feel like we're about to have sex. It's not that complicated. We're just watching TV.



**David Rakoff:** Things begin \_\_\_\_\_ enough. We bop around the dial \_\_\_\_\_ for a while, \_\_\_\_\_ landing on an MTV program called *My Super Sweet 16*. I get into the spirit at first. But for a reality virgin like myself, I'm in over my head in short order – the callow, young sailor on shore leave looking for some tenderness who \_\_\_\_\_ finds himself handcuffed to the bed. This particular episode of *My Super Sweet 16* stars a bumptious blond from Tennessee. They might as well call the show, *My Last Birthday Before Rehab*.



She seems an improbable 16, \_\_\_\_\_ not 16 earth-years because she looks, \_\_\_\_\_, 35. A hard 35. A two ex-husbands, pack a day of Merits, trying her hand at real estate, sun-damaged kind of opening-your-robe-for-the-grocery-delivery-boys 35. Do you get the picture? When we meet her, she is

behind the wheel of a stretch Humvee, which costs upwards of \$100,000. She'd like it for her very own, and indicates this desire to her thuggish, hairy-knuckled father, just the first in what will be a series of men during her lifetime she will refer to as "Daddy."

I looked over at Jodi , and she's having a great time, whereas I want to tear my eyes from my head and soak them in lye.

"Why do you always add this weird layer to things?" she asks me. "Doesn't it just remind of when you were 16?"

#### **Join the chunks from the snippet**

bop around

handcuffed to the bed

landing on

some tenderness

get into

from Tennessee

looking for

an MTV program

finds himself

the dial

stars a bumptious blond

the spirit

trying her hand

hairy-knuckled father

she is behind

from my head

her thuggish,

at real estate

to tear my eyes

to things

and soak

the wheel

add this weird layer

them in lye

