

Here comes Mr Bean!

He's a comedian, he's an actor, he's British and the whole world knows him as the silent, black-haired, tweed-jacket-wearing character Mr Bean. That's right, he's Rowan Atkinson.

Atkinson was born in Newcastle, England, and was educated at Newcastle University and Oxford. While at Oxford, he met the writer Richard Curtis, who was studying there too, and they became friends. Curtis was the opposite of Atkinson. He had a great love for words while Atkinson enjoyed non-verbal comedy. Together they began writing comedy reviews for the Oxford Playhouse. Shortly afterwards, Atkinson began appearing in smaller theatres in Edinburgh. After a show at the Hampstead Theatre in 1978, he was offered a part in the BBC series *Not the Nine O'Clock News*. This series got off to a slow start, but soon became a huge success, with Atkinson winning a BAFTA award for his work. While this series showed some of Atkinson's physical comedy, it also showed what he could do with the spoken word. However, being a very sensible man, Atkinson saw the whole acting job as a hobby, along with his growing interest in car racing.

His big-screen debut came in 1983's unofficial James Bond film, *Never Say Never Again*. That same year Atkinson appeared in a BBC series called *The Black Adder*. The main hero, a cowardly and cunning Tudor prince named Edmund Blackadder, tries unsuccessfully to become King of England after accidentally killing his uncle Richard III during a battle. The first series was followed by three hugely successful sequels, each set in a different era of England's history. The fourth and final *Blackadder* series was awarded the BAFTA for Best Comedy Series in 1990.

Atkinson then went on to create Mr Bean. A walking disaster, Bean was purely physical comedy, the opposite of Edmund Blackadder. This clumsy character was a huge success and became another national treasure. In 1997 *Bean* came to the big screen. A few years later, *Scooby Doo* became a box-office hit in the US, followed in 2003 by Johnny English, a hilarious parody of James Bond films.

In his spare time Atkinson collects classic cars and takes part in races. He also writes for the British magazine *CAR*. He is a very shy man, and has managed to keep his private life private.

1. What is true about Richard Curtis?
   A. He is Atkinson's childhood friend.
   B. He has nothing in common with Atkinson.
   C. He starred in the same series with Atkinson.
   D. He went to the same university as Atkinson.

2. What did the BBC series *Not the Nine O'Clock News* do for Atkinson?
   A. He became immediately successful.
   B. It showed some of his weaknesses as an actor.
   C. It brought him fame.
   D. It made him give up physical comedy.

3. What did Atkinson do at the beginning of his career?
   A. He started car racing.
   B. He wrote comedies.
   C. He had an argument with Curtis about comedy.
   D. He only worked as an actor occasionally.

4. What is true about Mr Bean?
   A. He was not a successful character.
   B. He is different from Blackadder.
   C. He is similar in many ways to Johnny English.
   D. He was originally created for the theatre.

5. Which of the following is **NOT** mentioned as one of Atkinson's leisure activities?
   A. collecting car magazines
   B. collecting cars
   C. writing articles
   D. taking part in car races

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