

Unit 14: Creative Careers

Reading Practice

I. Read the article

THE TRUTH ABOUT BEING A FILM EXTRA

— by Anna Murphy



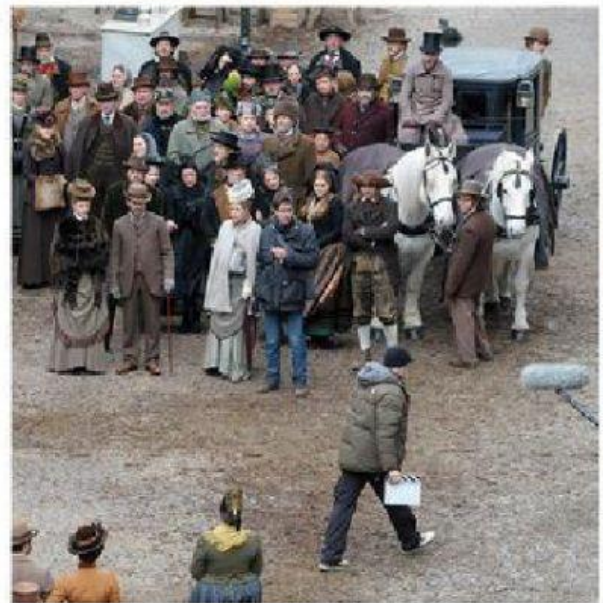
When people discover that I work as a film and TV extra, they always ask me the same questions: *Is it easy to get work? Isn't it boring? Do you get to meet famous actors? Does it pay well?* My answers are pretty standard as well: yes, sometimes, once in a while, and . . .

kind of. The life of an extra is both more interesting and more boring than you might imagine.

Extras, who play the people in crowds, on streets, or in the background of indoor scenes, can come from all walks of life. Unlike many extras, I'm a trained actor. I do get real speaking roles, but work can be hard to come by if you're not an in-demand star. I'm registered with an agency that deals exclusively with extras, so I get calls all the time. The agency explains who I'll be – someone in a crowd, a member of a jury, a clerk – and tells me where to go. Call time is usually bright and early, so I try to get to bed at a reasonable hour.

Sometimes being an extra is a "hurry up and wait" job. In my first extra role, I was one of a group of office workers who come out of a building just as a car explodes in the street. We waited for hours for the scene to be shot, and then went in and out of the building about fifty times, trying to act horrified by a nonexistent explosion. Then we had lunch, changed clothes, and spent the afternoon as customers in a department store.

It may sound like I don't enjoy the work, but I do. Being part of the background in a convincing way is challenging, and being on a film or TV set is always fascinating. A lot of famous actors don't even notice the extras, but the ones who do make the job a lot of fun for everyone. As for the money, it's nothing compared to what the big actors make, but it pretty much pays the bills. And, as a bonus, I've beaten my high scores on all my phone games, thanks to all the time I spend sitting around, waiting for something to happen.



II. Answer the questions

1. What training has the writer had?
2. How does she get work as an extra?
3. What was her first role as an extra?
4. What unexpected advantage of the work does she mention?

Find words or phrases in the article that mean the same as the following.

1. have very different jobs and life experiences _____
2. wanted or needed by many people _____
3. first thing in the morning _____
4. imaginary _____
5. difficult _____