

Reading: Guessing the meaning from context

The best method?

While Daniel Day-Lewis was playing the lead role in the movie *Lincoln*, he is reported to have started signing his text messages "A" for Abraham, so entangled had his identity become with his screen character. His friends found ^athis strange, but it was all part of the way he worked.

Day-Lewis was practicing "method acting," a technique developed by the Russian actor and director Konstantin Stanislavski. Ideas about method acting have evolved over the years, but the central aim has always been for the actor to achieve complete emotional identification with the character he or she is playing. In practice, ^bthat often means preparing for a role by having the same experiences as the character or, at the very least, making an effort to learn as much as possible about such experiences.

Such preparations can take many forms. Actors may move to another country and immerse themselves in an unfamiliar culture. They might learn a language or a skill such as horseriding or playing a musical instrument, or interview people who witnessed a particular event. Some actors, however, take things further. Much, much further. Christian Bale, for example, shed a massive 28 kilos to play Trevor Reznik, a man with severe psychological problems, in *The Machinist*, while Jamie Foxx actually glued his eyes together to bring added authenticity to his role as the blind musician Ray Charles. However, it was so uncomfortable that he soon gave ^cthis up.



Probably the most famous recent example of extreme method acting is Leonardo DiCaprio in *The Revenant*. DiCaprio put himself through an unbelievably punishing regime of sleeping out in the wilderness, swimming in freezing rivers, and even eating the raw flesh of a bison (and he's a vegetarian!). ^dThat gave him a real taste of the life he was about to portray.



Sadly for him, however, not everyone appreciated his efforts, with some people seeing them primarily as an attempt to gain the Oscar that had been eluding him for so long. ^eThis meant that the Internet was soon awash with spoof posters showing DiCaprio's character in various desperate situations, with captions such as: "Do this man a favor. Just give him his Oscar!"

1 Read the article and choose the best options to complete the sentences.

- 1 Daniel Day-Lewis wrote "A" on his texts because
 - a he admired Abraham Lincoln so much.
 - b he confused himself with Abraham Lincoln.
 - c he didn't want people to know who they were from.
- 2 In method acting, the actor aims to
 - a look as much like the character as possible.
 - b use a range of different acting methods.
 - c think the same way as the character.
- 3 If a movie is about a particular event in history, the actor can find out more by
 - a reading interviews with people who were there.
 - b learning more about history.
 - c talking to people who were there.
- 4 Leonardo DiCaprio suffered a lot because
 - a his director wanted the scenes to look realistic.
 - b he wanted to have a better understanding of his character.
 - c he thought it would make people see the movie.
- 5 Some people joked about DiCaprio's method acting because
 - a they thought that his acting still wasn't good enough to win an Oscar.
 - b they didn't believe that what he did was very difficult.
 - c they thought he was making it obvious that he wanted an Oscar.

2 Find the words in bold in the text. Look at the immediate context and choose the best options.

- 1 If two things are **entangled**, they are *joined together / damaging one another / difficult to understand*.
- 2 If something **evolves**, it *changes completely / changes suddenly / changes gradually*.
- 3 If you **immerse** yourself in something, you *spend a lot of time doing or experiencing it / try to copy it / strongly dislike it*.
- 4 **Authenticity** means being *impressive / real / painful*.
- 5 If something **eludes** you, you *want it very much / almost achieve it / do not manage to achieve it*.
- 6 A **spoof** is a *humorous version / a criticism / an illegal version of something*.