

Unit 7, Reading and critical thinking, exercise 4

Today there are a lot of celebrities, from YouTubers with millions of fans to world-famous singers with concerts that fill football stadiums. But is celebrity a new idea in the 21st century?

No, it isn't! Today we look at ... celebrities past and present.

Some of the most important celebrities today are sports stars like Usain Bolt, Simone Biles or Naomi Osaka. But were sporting heroes also celebrities in the past?

Yes, they were. In Roman times, gladiators were the sporting heroes of the day. Some gladiators were very popular, with lots of fans. There wasn't Instagram in Roman times, but there were paintings of the best gladiators.

People who do difficult or dangerous things, like climber Alex Honnold, often become celebrities. Ernest Shackleton was famous for his expeditions in Antarctica and he was a big celebrity at the start of the 20th century. He was a great communicator, and stories of his adventures were popular with readers all over the world.

Today's celebrities aren't all people. The internet is full of celebrity animals like Doug the Pug, a dog with millions of followers on Instagram. But there were also celebrity animals in the past. On 3rd November 1957, a dog, Laika, was the first animal astronaut. Laika was very famous, and in many countries there was a stamp with her picture. But Laika wasn't always a celebrity. Before she was a national hero, Laika was a street dog.