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Fake: Cameraman Hamza Yassin says programmers make up stories to tug at the heartstrings.

Are we too addicted to “stories”? Wildlife shows have brought us closer to nature than ever before. But some say they do not show the real truth about the wild.

What’s happening?

In 1979, a man who worked for the BBC called **David Attenborough** made a **documentary** about wildlife. *Life on Earth* made Attenborough famous.

It has been more than 40 years and Attenborough is now 97 years old. He is still making shows about animals. They are watched by millions of people worldwide.

Now, Hamza Yassin, a BBC wildlife cameraman, says nature shows often make changes to their shows to make up more interesting stories for viewers.

Find out more

The popularity of wildlife documentaries is no surprise. They often have exciting music and amazing videos — they are more like cinema films than TV.

But some, like Hamza Yassin, think we have gone too far to make them perfect.

He wants future documentaries to show a more **accurate** image of the natural world.

Critics think that if viewers go out into the wilderness, they may find it does not look like nature shows.

Moreover, by presenting nature as beautiful and untouched by humans, these documentaries make us think the world is still full of healthy wildlife.

But others say we are overthinking it. People know they are not seeing the whole truth, but this does not put them off. And that, some say, is because we need the stories if we are to love the natural world.

Yes! Nature documentaries have invented a picture of nature that does not really exist. We should not need exciting stories to make us care for wildlife.

Are we too addicted to “stories”?

Some say

Others think

No! Humans think in stories. So the stories of the clever fox, brave lion and helpful woodland animals help us to appreciate the natural world. We should not fight this.

Some people say

“There is pleasure in the pathless woods, there is rapture in the lonely shore, there is society where none intrudes.”

Lord Byron (1788 – 1824), English poet

What do you think?

Six steps to discovery

1. Connect

How do you feel about this story? - Do you enjoy nature documentaries?

2. Wonder

What questions do you have? - For example: Why do all human beings like telling stories?

3. Investigate

What are the facts? - Pick out one thing we know for certain and one thing we cannot say for sure from this story.

4. Construct

What is your point of view? - You are a wildlife cameraman. You arrive on set to find people clearing up plastic around the animals. What do you say?

5. Express

What do others believe? - How would you make your school day sound more exciting? Discuss as a class.

6. Reflect

What might happen next? - Make a profile of your favourite animal. If you were going to film a show about this animal, what would you need to find out?

Glossary

David Attenborough - An English broadcaster and natural historian known for his wildlife documentaries.

Documentary - A film with a factual narrative. One of the most famous documentaries of modern times is An Inconvenient Truth, about climate change.

Accurate - Correct and precise.