

Of losers and moles: you think reality tv just writer itself essay

[Media](#), [Television](#)



Summary

Of Losers And Moles: You Think Reality TV Just Writer Itself?

I found myself living out a high school fantasy, a couple of summers ago, in Playadel Carmen as I was chasing stunning Playboy playmate Angie Everhart. As she disappeared, I quickly snapped back to reality. I was there as a writer for ABC's "Celebrity Mole: Yucatan," and was to investigate what Everhart was saying about the former MTV VJ Anada Lewis. Would they be dueling divas, headed for a catfight by day's end? I needed to find out. With the earpiece that picked up the two women's microphones, I began taking notes. A lawsuit filed by the Writers Guild of America included Reality TV writers. In the suit, the rise of reality TV was discussed. In the hearing, I imagined that I would be asked: "How exactly do you write reality? Isn't it already real?" Like a journalist and a paperback writer, I highlight characters and plot, and develop promising story lines. A reality TV show without writers makes no sense. As a writer, my voyage into reality TV began accidentally seven years ago at Hollywood. I was destined to direct the next film version of Superman. At the end of my internship with DreamWorks' Mark Gordon Productions, I did not meet Steven Spielberg and was badly in need of a paying job. Luckily, I was hired by the "World's Most Amazing Videos" for \$400 a week and got a promotion that drove me to a new company, Actual Reality Pictures. This is the company of R. J. Cutler whose documentary, The War Room, followed Bill Clinton's 1992 presidential campaign. As we worked with Cutler, he greatly admired the genius among us. "What's the story?!" he asked. I was to rummage through film footage for the answer of that

question. Our process worked: the project of the American High went on to win an Emmy. This is the time I left Actual reality. I had risen from logger, to story assistant, to story producer, overseeing other writers. I therefore up at reality TV shows, both Nielsen-topping not, including " The Bachelor," " The Mole," " The Surreal Life," " The Benefactor" and " The Biggest Loser." In both all of them, the main question was always the same: " What is the story?" Our terms are on location, assigned to different characters. The uniform: a good pen, steno notepads, an audio monitoring device, a digital watch, walkie-talkies and a comfortable pair of shoes- in case anyone takes off running. Like nonfiction writers, we ask the right questions to follow it up. In the scripting phase, the story producers pinpoint scenes, moments and interviews from a mountain of VHS tapes, then structure them to tell the strongest story. After it's approved by the executive producer, this script is given to an editor, who cuts it together. As story producer, the responsibility for reshaping falls to us. It is for better or for worst, an example is the " The Benefactor," which was quickly mired by second guessing on all our parts, and in the end, was floundered, suffering dismal ratings and was widely perceived otherwise... another " Apprentice." Despite the many logistics linked to unionizing, I believe the WGA's gesture to be quite complimentary: By their actions, they are recognizing us as legitimate creative contributors. Reality is evolving, and I look forward to its next chapter.