

INTRODUCTION

by Victoria Coren Mitchell

Hello again. My, aren't you a glutton for punishment?

I assume you've watched *Only Connect* on television and feel ready to address its complexities in a different medium. Perhaps you have read our first quiz book and are relishing the idea of a second. Either way, you've kidded yourself that you enjoyed a previous gruelling exercise in masochism so you're reaching for another. I understand completely. I used to smoke.

I wonder who you are? I've met a fair few quizzers in my time. Do you have a healthy appetite for acquiring new facts and a good memory for retaining them? Do you have no general knowledge

INTRODUCTION

but a strong capacity for lateral thinking? Are you simply ready to gamble? Maybe it's none of the above but you enjoy failure, just as Dostoevsky got a thrill from losing at roulette.

Can you do all four rounds of *Only Connect*? Do you come alive for the music question, or block your ears and wait for the next one? Do you love the sequences? Or perhaps you can only do the missing vowels.

Are you dark or fair? Deep-voiced or squeaky? Ticklish? Long-sighted? Bald? If you appeared on the actual programme, would you wear a plain pastel shirt, a funny T-shirt or a ballgown? Odd socks, spangly shoes, lucky pants?

I wonder whether you're a light-hearted quizzer or a stern and sombre one. As part of a team, are you the type to insist you know the answer when you're only 60% sure – or, when quite certain, do you silently cuddle the truth to yourself because you hate overruling a colleague? Are you frightened of spiders? Buttons? Elbows? Quizzes? Cheese?

Most importantly, what are your best *key facts*?

When I introduce our teams at the start of each episode, I always give a fact or two about each player. Sometimes they're a bit unusual or surprising, even funny; sometimes perfectly ordinary. What amazes me is how often I am asked by viewers: "Are the 'team facts' true, or do you invent them?"

INTRODUCTION

Of course they're true! Why would we need to invent things about people when we can simply ask them about themselves? Truth is stranger than fiction, after all. The premise of any quiz is that we live in an intriguing world and our environment bears close examination. Every person on God's good earth is interesting. If you don't agree, you are not a true quizzier. (Either that or you've sat next to me at dinner after one gin too many.)

Everything I say on screen about our contestants has come out in conversation between them and our assistant producer, Hannah-Jane Davies. They have a wide-ranging, soul-searching chat. Hannah takes the resulting list of facts to our producer, Jenny Heap, for another chat.

(Yes, two women in those senior roles. Also, the director of *Only Connect*, the production manager and the owners of Parasol Media, the company that makes the show, are female. All female and all Welsh; trust me, it's a chatty production.)

So they chat, Jenny selects and writes up the final facts, Hannah brings them to me in the makeup chair, I say, "I can't possibly read that aloud with a straight face" and on we go.

Sometimes, the teams are grilled for extra facts. Sometimes, I re-word them. Jenny is a good sounding board because her brain works differently from mine. She's very clever, but 0% of her brain is scanning for accidental filth. It just doesn't occur to her.

INTRODUCTION

One time, reading through the proposed descriptions of upcoming teams, I shrieked: “I can’t say ‘*He enjoys tinkering with his collection*’! Where do you think the viewers will look when he stands up for the wall round?”

Another time, when I baulked at the line ‘*He spends most of his time tending his mother’s smallholding*’, Jenny literally couldn’t see what the problem was. And I certainly wasn’t going to spell it out, so we left it as was. (If you’re the quizzer I so described on BBC Two at 8.30pm, no disrespect intended by this story. It’s a lovely way to spend your time.)

The team facts can provide a fun, efficient shortcut into a newcomer’s personality. Collectively, they reflect our *Only Connect* world of eclectic interests and idiosyncratic lives. But many of our contestants, although appearing on TV for the show, are shy, private people; cleverly chosen, the facts can do just as good a job of *obscuring* them. It just depends what they elect to tell Hannah.

For example, if I were going on *Only Connect* as a contestant and I was happy for viewers to get to know me, I might allow a description such as:

“Victoria, an English graduate who’s unafraid of gambling or public speaking, but terrified of almost everything else.”

INTRODUCTION

or

“Victoria, a geriatric mother who sneezes for the first four hours of every day and speaks excellent French.”

or

“Victoria, a fussy eater and comedy fan who failed her first driving test because she crashed the car into some roadworks.”

or

“Victoria, a short-tempered ex-smoker who once spent twenty minutes trimming matted fur off the backside of someone else’s cat.”

Any of those options would lay my soul bare pretty quickly. However, it would be equally true but far less revealing to describe me as:

“Victoria, a Londoner who’s been to Timbuktu.”

or

“Victoria, who won the prize for Best Sponge Cake at the 2006 Clacton Arts Festival.”

INTRODUCTION

or

“Victoria, who once sat behind Peter Bowles on a flight to Edinburgh.”

Those latter facts obscure more than they reveal. I don’t know why. The last three Victorias could be spies. The first four couldn’t. But they’re all me.

In this book, straight after this introductory essay, you will find a selection of some of the facts we have used to describe contestants over the years. The listed names weren’t chosen because they’re particularly more interesting than the others.

Everyone is interesting. (And *Only Connect* contestants are more interesting than most.) But, to give a flavour of the wonderful people who have passed through our hallowed Welsh doors, I thought it would be nice to include a random selection of their introductory facts. I suggest you read it all in one go like a poem.

• • •

After “Let’s meet the teams”, you will find a series of complete *Only Connect* games to play. There are nine in total: the first three games are, roughly, “opening heat” level, the next three are “quarter and semi final” level and the last three are demoralizingly difficult. If you score well on those, come on the show! I’m serious.

All the questions in these games have been broadcast at some point in our 11-year life, but they

have never been grouped in this way. Near the end of the book, you will also find a chunky batch of connecting walls and missing vowel clues that have never been broadcast so will be entirely unfamiliar to you. (As will the questions in the first nine games, if your brain is anything like mine).

• • •

In between each game, like a delicious sorbet to cleanse the palate, you will find a memory from one of the special guest quizzers who have at some point come along to Cardiff to take part in one-off charity episodes for Children In Need, Comic Relief or Sport Relief.

Those episodes grew out of an earlier suggestion from somebody at the BBC to make “celebrity specials”, a phrase which caused me to shiver with trepidation. No disrespect to any of the excellent TV quizzes which offer very entertaining celebrity versions, but the concept seemed at odds with our *Only Connect* world. It smacked of a different cultural register, even a different value system.

We were, after all, on BBC Four, a channel which didn’t go in much for quizzes (or light entertainment at all.) We were meant to *be* the light entertainment, and we owe a large vote of thanks to some early visionaries at BBC Four for opening the door to that.

Many of our viewers had fled to the channel as a refuge from the makeover programmes, talent

INTRODUCTION

contests and “reality shows” of terrestrial television. These viewers rolled up at the BBC’s shy, cultish fourth channel in hope of finding a gripping documentary about bi-planes, an imported Danish drama or an experimental six-hour music recital.

When *Only Connect* began, they were patient and welcoming – perhaps recognising that we deferred to their frame of reference and intellectual curiosity. Or perhaps they just mistook our low-budget set and my cheap clothes for scholarliness.

I thought it might be testing their patience a little much to wheel out a load of *Heat* magazine regulars to play the connecting wall and call it a treat. I worried about the implication that it was more “special” to have WAGs or pop singers than science teachers, librarians or hospital registrars. *Only Connect* wasn’t a razzle-dazzle show; if we suddenly appeared to be shouting, “Never mind all those second-hand book dealers, finally someone off *Hollyoaks* is here!”, our viewers might feel betrayed.

Besides, I reasoned, those people just *wouldn’t be able to do it*. It would take more drinks than you can afford for me to tell you the list of names that were originally put forward as prospective “celebrity quizzers”, but let’s just say they did not strike me as people who’d be quick to put the noble gases in alphabetical order. (I did think it might make a hilarious *Comic Relief* episode to invite them all on and watch them score 0, but it would be a joke of

INTRODUCTION

which our guests would not have been in control. It wouldn't have been fair.)

I mean, almost nobody can do this quiz! If I watch it on television, I barely score a point and I was there when we recorded it!

So we agreed instead to make a few charity specials, rejecting the proposed list of contestants (who'd been mooted purely on grounds of fame) and head-hunting instead for those in the public eye that we thought were *likely to be good quizzers*. Or, perhaps more importantly, that our *loyal viewers* would think were likely to be good quizzers.

We weren't always right. Professor Steve Jones, for example, is one of the most brilliant men of his generation, an eminent and celebrated geneticist; a proper genius and, better still, Welsh. However, he was something of a novice quizzier.

BUZZ! "Are they all hats?"

"Well ... no, but also we need to know *what comes next in the sequence*."

"Oh right! My mistake! Let's start again!"

"We can't start again, Professor, it's a competitive quiz..."

Nevertheless, it was an honour to meet him (though I deeply regret learning that snails feel pain, which he told me gloomily over lunch); he was lovely to spend time with and his presence, along with that of Professor Susan Greenfield, Sir Andrew Motion, Julian Lloyd-Webber, Rosie Boycott,

INTRODUCTION

Michael Bywater, Simon Singh, Patrick Marber, Samira Ahmed, Clemency Burton-Hill, Matthew Parris, Ian Hislop and many other sparkling guest quizzers, managed to meet the brief of introducing a few recognised names without making our regular viewers feel we'd lost all sense of reason and priority.

A randomly-invited nine of those special guest players will crop up between the games here, sharing questions they remember from their charity episodes and revealing whether they got the answers right or wrong. I won't tell you who they are, but I will tell you (1) they include none of the above and (2) they do include

A writer and cartoonist who got married in Las Vegas and once had to actively stop himself from talking too much about pine cones

A horseracing expert who's directly descended from Henry VII and was suspended from school for shoplifting

And

A fossil collector and skilled portrait painter, who built a fully-equipped Victorian laboratory in his house.

INTRODUCTION

So those are the kind of people we like to have around. If you do too, then you're going to enjoy this book immensely!

Good luck.

Victoria Coren Mitchell

Let's Meet the Teams

- Joanna Murray, a Durham maths graduate who plays the ukulele, and has won a competition to design a pavement sweeper;
- Amy Godel, an expert macaroon baker who, despite many challenges and against all odds, successfully delivered a mobile dentist to the Channel Islands;
- Mark Oxley, a physiotherapist who works for the Toulouse rugby league team, though he has never visited Toulouse;
- Min Lacey, a civil servant who loves amateur dramatics, Snoopy and Dick Francis;
- Chris Pendleton, an artist and picture framer who is commissioned annually to paint a picture of a pig for Britain's leading sausage manufacturer;
- Andrew Burford, a Black Country ombudsman who once ate his own height in sandwiches;
- Sam Goodyear, a history graduate who now works as a futures trader and played trumpet at Pete Postlethwaite's stag night;
- Taissa Csáky, a classics graduate whose dog, Zephyr, bears a striking resemblance to Anubis, the Egyptian god of the afterlife;
- Tom Chisholm, a history graduate who was given a box of satsumas by Tom Stoppard;
- Paul Richardson, a retired fire officer who had

LET'S MEET THE TEAMS

a lengthy conversation with Princess Anne about the problems with the M6 motorway around Preston;

- George Corfield, a cryptic crossworder who has dated two women suffering from typhoid;
- Hannah Hogben, a chemistry graduate who's written an award-winning song about a squid;
- Chris White, a politics and economics student whose dream job would be driving steam trains;
- Kirsty Johnston, a deputy partnership accountant who loves Enid Blyton novels and knits jumpers for battery chickens;
- Paddy Duffy, an author and former youth worker who once invited an Irish cabinet minister to the cinema by accident;
- David Brewis, a schoolmaster who enjoys knitting and is studying to be a London cab driver;
- Andy Ross, a music guru, writer and band manager, and the man who discovered Blur;
- Richard Heald, a native Yorkshireman who has bottle fed a sheep in Britain's highest pub;
- Andrew Frazer, a Company Director and former civil servant who shook Margaret Thatcher's hand while dressed as a fifty pence piece;
- Tom Scott, a linguistics graduate who also runs the British 'Talk Like a Pirate' day;
- Liz Scott-Wilson, an information architect for a leading London law firm who won New Zealand's *University Challenge* in 1981;

- Frank Paul, an artist and pub quiz host who was surprised by an intimate prophecy while sketching a camel;
- Nick Atty, a civil servant with PhD in Genetics, who has written a software program for British canal routes;
- Jean Upton, a photographer and former yoga instructor who once shared a bottle of Southern Comfort with Janis Joplin;
- Shreeya Nanda, a bio-medical editor with a specialist knowledge of the testes of the fruit fly;
- Justin Floyd, a history graduate who hails from Georgia and boasts a significant collection of ceramic dog figurines;
- Fergus Butler-Gallie, an Oxford University student and former bishop's assistant who enjoys rugby, beer, gin and church;
- Owen Rees, a music teacher who can juggle and play the trombone at the same time and has carved a ham for Sir Antony Hopkins;
- Chris Grandison, a hospital administrator whose happiest memory is a 15-second glimpse of a kingfisher;
- Annette Fenner, a travel enthusiast who honeymooned in Syria and can only write upside down;
- Jamie Turner, a highway engineer who once sold a pair of trainers to the poet Simon Armitage;

LET'S MEET THE TEAMS

- Michael Jelley, a wine merchant who received the only yellow card in the history of Leicestershire's under-nine's football;
- Tony Moore, a foster carer who inadvertently became part of the entourage of King Albert II while holidaying in Belgium;
- Emily Watnick, a retired finance manager and history enthusiast who discovered a medieval anthrax pit during a routine archaeological dig;
- Mark Wallace, a political journalist who got into an altercation with global megastar Seal over an egg and cress sandwich;
- Mike Arrowsmith, a university computer officer who has been chased up the longest escalator in Europe by Czech riot police;
- Nick Lister, a fraud prevention specialist who knows the words to 'Around the World with Willy Fog' in five different languages;
- Charlotte Jackson, an epidemiologist who has appeared on Kuwaiti television;
- Vikki Nelson, a front of house manager and stationery fiend who came to her *Only Connect* audition with her favourite book of Norfolk facts;
- Frederic Heath-Renn, a cryptic crossword enthusiast who has played ping pong in a salt mine and once saw a spoon used by Lenin;
- Eric Kilby, a statistician and keen genealogist who believes he has an IKEA bookcase named after him;

- Andy Crane, a retired business analyst who was once the caber-tossing champion of Birmingham;
- Josh Spero, a classics graduate who inadvertently ate a floral decoration at a parliamentary dinner;
- Margaret Gabica, a primary school teacher and keen linguist who once served an elephant in a supermarket;
- Ian Fellows, a vicar whose set of nativity scarecrows won the 2016 Wythenshawe Community Scarecrow Award;
- Tom West, a solicitor who recently spent the entire day on a train in order to attend a meeting at which only he was present;

and

- Richard Aubrey, a secondary school teacher and keen musician who's allergic to lions.

GAME 1

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: 1



5 points

Oscar the Grouch's
trash can

3 points

Mary Poppins'
carpet bag

2 points

Snoopy's kennel

1 point

The TARDIS



ANSWERS

Oscar the Grouch's
trash can

Mary Poppins'
carpet bag

Snoopy's kennel

The TARDIS

Bigger on the inside than the outside

- Oscar the Grouch is a character in *Sesame Street*.
- In the 1964 Disney film, Mary Poppins produces a hat stand, mirror, plant and floor-standing lamp from her bag.
- Snoopy is in *Peanuts*.
- The TARDIS is in *Doctor Who*.

The Mountain Men got this on the last clue, for 1 point.



5 points



3 points



2 points



1 point





ANSWERS



____berry

These people's surnames can all be suffixed by 'berry' to give the name of a fruit

- Rabbi Lionel BLUE, who was a regular on Radio 4's *Thought for the Day*.
- Jack BLACK, actor and musician.
- Jack STRAW, former Home Secretary.
- Gabby LOGAN, former gymnast and presenter of sport on television.

No points for either the Orienteers (who went on to win series 10) or the Romantics.



5 points

Milan

3 points

Your party

2 points

My shirt

1 point

This song



ANSWERS

Milan

Your party

My shirt

This song

'I'm Too Sexy'

These are all things I'm too sexy for in the hit song by Right Said Fred, 'I'm Too Sexy'

- I'm too sexy for Milan, New York and Japan.
- I'm too sexy for your party, no way I'm disco dancing.
- I'm too sexy for my shirt, so sexy it hurts.
- I'm too sexy for this song (this is the last line of the song, naturally).

An impressive 3 points for the Scientists on this one.

It is sometimes baffling to the question editors when *Only Connect* is described as a 'highbrow' show ...



5 points

Seven consonants

3 points

Two vowels

2 points

Three syllables

1 point

Seven letters



ANSWERS

Seven consonants

Two vowels

Three syllables

Seven letters

Self-descriptive counting

- The word 'consonants' has 7 consonants.
- The word 'vowels' has 2 vowels.
- The word 'syllables' has 3 syllables.
- The word 'letters' has 7 letters in it.

Both the Road Trippers and the Builders drew a blank on this one.



5 points

**Eurovision
Song Contest**

3 points

Cow & Gate

2 points

Wall's

1 point

I Love New York



ANSWERS

Eurovision
Song Contest

Cow & Gate

Wall's

I Love New York

Hearts in logos

- The 'V' of the Eurovision Song Contest logo is a stylised heart.
- Cow & Gate is a company that produces formula milk for babies. Its logo is a red heart with the company's name in the middle.
- The ice cream company's logo is a swirling white heart on a red background.
- The slogan to promote tourism in New York has the word 'Love' replaced by a heart, and New York written as 'NY'.

The Cosmopolitans picked this up for 1 point as a bonus after the Taverners couldn't quite pin it down.



5 points

1/7 Iraq

3 points

2/7 Turkey

2 points

2/7 Egypt

1 point

2/7 Greece



ANSWERS

1/7 Iraq

2/7 Turkey

2/7 Egypt

2/7 Greece

Modern-day locations of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World

- The Hanging Gardens of Babylon, thought to be in modern-day Iraq.
- The Temple of Artemis at Ephesus and the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus, both in modern-day Turkey.
- The Pharos or Lighthouse of Alexandria and the Great Pyramid of Giza, both in Egypt.
- The Statue of Zeus at Olympia and the Colossus of Rhodes, both in modern-day Greece.

Only the Great Pyramid of Giza, by far the oldest of the seven, survives today.

This question was picked by the Taverners, but they failed to spot the connection. Their opponents, the Bardophiles, nabbed a bonus point.



5 points

That place

3 points

This place

2 points

Before

?



ANSWERS

That place

This place

Before

(e.g.) Ancient
Egyptian sun-god

There, Here, Ere, Re

ACCEPT: anything that means 'Re', such as religious education, second musical note, rhenium, Royal Engineers, again, regarding, etc.

Remove the first letter from the word defined in one clue and you get the word defined in the next

- That place = There
- This place = Here
- Before = Ere
- Ancient Egyptian sun-god = Re (also known as Ra)

The Maltsters drew a blank on this one, and the Policy Wonks picked up a bonus point.



5 points

Base 9

3 points

Korf 8

2 points

Net 7

?



ANSWERS

Base 9

Korf 8

Net 7

(e.g.) Volley 6

____ ball team sizes

ACCEPT: 6-a-side foot 6 (i.e. a football variant!)

- Baseball: 9-a-side.
- Korfball: 8-a-side. A sport invented in Holland (it means 'basket ball') with similarities to netball and basketball. Played internationally with mixed teams.
- Netball: 7-a-side, played throughout British Commonwealth countries.
- Volleyball: 6-a-side.

In this series 12 match, neither the Networkers nor the Cousins saw the sequence, so well done if you did at home.



5 points

Corrachadh Mòr

3 points

Dunnet Head

2 points

Lowestoft Ness

?



ANSWERS

Corrachadh Mòr

Dunnet Head

Lowestoft Ness

Lizard Point

Extreme points of British mainland

DON'T ACCEPT: Land's End or anything offshore, e.g. the Channel Islands

These are the four extreme points of the British mainland, going clockwise from westernmost to southernmost

- Corrachadh Mòr in Highland, Scotland, is the westernmost.
- Dunnet Head in Caithness, Scotland, is the northernmost.
- Lowestoft Ness in Suffolk, England, now known officially as Ness Point, is the easternmost.
- Lizard Point in Cornwall, England, is the southernmost.

The Bookworms spotted this early, and picked it up for 3 points in their series 11 match against the Wayfarers.



5 points

arMs

3 points

hEart

2 points

neVus

?



ANSWERS

arMs

hEart

neVus

(e.g.) curry Me

Anagrams of planets

ACCEPT: any anagram of Mercury

- arMs = Mars
- hEart = Earth
- neVus = Venus (nevus is the American spelling of naevus, a congenital pigmented area on the skin)
- curry Me = Mercury

The Linguists solved this on Clue 2 to score 3 points in their match against the Oxonians.



5 points

Elder daughter
improvises music

3 points

Mother and
younger daughter
visit supermarket

2 points

Father leaves
power plant

?