

CGI animals

The following article is about the growth of CGI (computer-generated imagery) in film.

When CGI Rivals the Real Thing

Computer-generated animals have come a long way from the low-res petting zoos of early computer programs to the pixel-perfect renderings allowed by massive server farms. Upon seeing the computer-created tiger in *Life of Pi*, New York Times critic A. O. Scott purred at its vividness. “His eyes, his fur, the rippling of his muscles and the skeleton beneath his skin,” Scott wrote, “all of it is so perfectly rendered that you will swear that *Richard Parker is real.”

Although creating computer-generated imagery sounds like a highly automated process, some of the tiger shots in *Life of Pi* took up to six months to create, according to director Ang Lee. That was necessary because having a boy in a lifeboat with a live tiger – even a well-trained one – wasn’t an option.



* Richard Parker is the name of the tiger from *Life of Pi*

Despite the move toward CGI wildlife, few people in Hollywood expect live animals to be completely replaced by digital ones.

“Real animals have an emotional impact that absolutely cannot be replaced,” says the American Humane Association’s Karen Rosa. “We advocate the use of CGI because it’s very good at mitigating jeopardy to animals. But it’s costly, and filmmakers are still using it selectively. I don’t think it’s going to replace the Lassies or the Benjis of the world.”

Of course, as actors, some animals stink. “Highly trained animals tend to look a bit phony. They’re usually trained with buzzers and bells, and they’re always looking for the little goody,” says director Ballard, who fired the trained wolves he initially hired for the Disney adventure film *Never Cry Wolf*. “I ended up replacing all the trained wolves with wild wolves, which we found in animal shelters after they had been hit by cars. Their acting was so much more natural. If you wanted them to howl, you just started howling.”

That’s why Ballard doesn’t expect CGI to make wild animals extinct on movie sets anytime soon. “I think the new technology is great,” he says, “but I also think whenever you want to have personality in an animal, you’re going to want to have the real animal.”

Source

<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/03/140328-noah-animals-ark-movies-hollywood/>

[Accessed 26 March 2015]

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Reading

1. Which of the following best explains why CGI was used to replace a real tiger in *Life of Pi*?

- a. to make the film more realistic
- b. because a real tiger could be dangerous to the actor
- c. because it was cheaper
- d. to make the film less frightening for viewers

This question tests your understanding of the text and your ability to infer meaning.

2. What does 'advocate' mean, as used in the text?

- a. support
- b. supporter
- c. activist
- d. campaign

This is a context question. You can identify the correct meaning of a word by reading and understanding the surrounding text.

3. Is the following statement true or false?

	True	False
Ballard believes that CGI will soon replace real animals in film.		

This is a deduction question. Read the text carefully to retrieve the answer.

4. List three disadvantages of using CGI instead of real animals.

This question tests your ability to retrieve information from the text using deduction skills.

5. Why did Ballard opt to use wild wolves in *Never Cry Wolf*?

This question tests your ability to use deduction and inference skills and to summarise the information in your own words.
