

What is a star? 1

From: 'Wishing on a Star' (*Observer Review*, 3/11/02).

- 'It's about selling tickets. That's what the word "star" means.'
- 'Only a tiny number of stars can 'open' a movie.'
- 'Once-magical names such as Pitt, Moore, Eastwood and Costner, in the past synonymous with successful star-driven movie-making, now represent speculative casting gambles.'
- '... the stars themselves are constantly in motion and the baton has to get passed for the system to survive.'
- '*Gangs of New York* must succeed because its failure could signal the demise of an already crippled star system: if DiCaprio can't open a movie, then no one can.'
- '... The rise of the franchise film phenomenon. Here, expensive effects-laden movies with inbuilt audience awareness and fertile ground for future sequels are dominating the high end of the market ... These films rely on brash, spectacular, screen-filling setpieces rather than the presence of movie stars ... *Harry Potter*, *Lord of the Rings*, *X-Men* ... Who needs DiCaprio when a giant, show-stopping computer-generated bauble will do the trick?'

- Which of these statements do you most agree with?
- Can you name any stars that, in your opinion, can definitely 'open' a movie?
- What kinds of films do they star in and who are their audiences?