

Video Script 1

One Woman's Choice

Narrator: N
Flora: F
Flora's Mother: FM

N: Flora Salonik grew up in one of Tanzania's busiest cities, Arusha. She has a university education and speaks four languages. These days, she depends on the earth for her livelihood. Flora's life changed because she fell in love with a man from the Dorobo people.

F: About ten years ago, I met this man. We fell in love and got married. We met in Tana, got talking and started dating.

N: After they were married, her husband, Loshero, brought Flora to the tiny village of Kijungu on Tanzania's south Maasai Steppe. A four-day journey on foot from Arusha, it's one of the most remote places in Tanzania.

Flora's family knew that she was leaving the comforts of the city for a world without electricity, or almost any modern conveniences. A world where it takes a forty-minute walk just to get water. Unlike some Dorobo people, Flora and Loshero raise cattle and grow crops to feed their family. The Dorobo are one of the few hunter-gatherer societies left in East Africa. The Dorobo lifestyle means that Loshero often spends long periods away from home, while hunting. Flora is often left to care for their three children, their farm, and their home by herself. She gave up everything for Loshero, and now she hardly sees him. Flora sometimes dreams of returning to the city.

F: Sometimes I pack my stuff, ready to go back to Arusha, but I have children, so I can't go home.

N: Many years have gone by since Flora moved to the village. There's no telephone or postal delivery, so she hasn't been able to communicate with her family since she came. It's difficult to stop thinking about the past. Sometimes, she thinks about the way her life could have been. She also thinks about what she would have done in the city. But what can she do now? She can take her children to live in the city and leave Loshero in the village, or she can forget about her old life. Her husband knows nothing about the difficult choice that his wife must make.

Flora feels restless and decides to visit her hometown of Arusha. She begins the four-day walk early the next morning, but doesn't dare to look back at her children. It's painful for her to leave them, but her neighbours will take care of them while she figures out their future.

Arusha is the centre of Tanzania's tourist and safari business. This is where Flora was born, attended school, had her first job and met her first boyfriend. Since she's been away for so long, the busy streets are unfamiliar to Flora; they're so different from Kijungu. As she walks towards her childhood home, Flora isn't certain if her mother still lives in the same house, or even if she's still alive. As she nears the house where she once lived, a few of the neighbours stop and stare. It's an emotional reunion.

FM: It's about 11 years since we saw each other. We didn't fight, we didn't have any rows; she just left home. I am very happy to see her again. I don't want her to go back too soon. But if there is no choice, she will have to go, because she has children, and her husband is waiting for her there.

N: Flora tries to relate to the person that she used to be. As she sits in the school that she went to as a girl, she wonders, should she bring her children to Arusha, or return to her life in Kijungu? Whatever she decides, something will be lost.

Finally, Flora makes her decision, she goes back to Kijungu.

F: I really want to come back to Kijungu. I feel Dorobo. My sisters didn't understand how I can live here. There's no transport, no hospitals, but I am happy here because of the land. I want to live here, because this is my life. People say it is a hard place to live, but my home is here.

N: Choosing between a new family and the old is never easy. But, it seems that this woman has made her choice at last.

Video Script 2

Greek Olives

Narrator: N
Tourist: T
Christina Lefteris (Naxos School of Ecology): CL
Person: P
Katharina Bolesch (L'Olivie Halki): KB

- N:** Throughout much of the Mediterranean, olives are an important aspect of everyday life. Walk through any Greek market and you'll find evidence of how important they really are. Here, on the island of Naxos, you'll see them in different sizes and in different colours: green, black, brown.
- T:** I must admit, I was around olive trees most of my life, and it wasn't until several years back that I found out the green olive and the black olive came from the same tree.
- N:** Like this tourist, a lot of people assume that black and green olives come from different trees. In fact, most people probably wouldn't recognise an olive tree. This time of the year, on the hills of Naxos, the olive trees have flowers on them. Without the fruit, though, the tree isn't easy to identify.
- CL:** In this area, between Monitsia and the other village of Moni, which is up in the hills, there are some of the very old olive trees.
- N:** To make green olives, you need to collect them when they are still young.
- CL:** There are small ones and giant ones and people decide which one they prefer. Well, I like all of them. I think I would never say no to any olive.
- N:** Not everyone has the same liking for them.
- P1:** I don't like them. I hate them.
- P2:** Yesterday, I ordered this pizza which had olives on, I just, I couldn't take it.
- P3:** It tastes old, it tastes ugly.
- N:** It's true that olives are old. Some trees have been alive for thousands of years. In fact, olives have been an important part of life here since the early days of Greek civilisation. In Greek tradition, Eirene, the goddess of peace, is shown carrying an olive branch. Even today, olives are associated with peace. If people want to end a war, they are said to 'offer an olive branch'.
- KB:** From the olive tree, you can actually make, you can use everything. There is nothing you throw away.
- N:** Katharina Bolesch owns a remarkable shop in Naxos where everything is made from olives.
- KB:** You eat the olives, you make oil from it. You can make a kind of tea from the leaves.
- N:** Olive oil accounts for much of Greece's olive production. To produce the best liquid, olives are collected and processed once they have become black. The sooner they are pressed, the better the oil. Used for cooking, for light, and occasionally as medicine, the oil is believed to give good health and long life to those who use it.
- CL:** They're very valuable for vitamins, and their oils are very healthy.
- N:** And the olive trees themselves also help to give the land a feeling of peace.
- CL:** You can have a look around and hear around and understand that all these trees are not aggressive. They are..., their colour is a little soft, all their shape is quite mild. Something that lasts long, gives fruit. I think it's a good feeling of what peace means.

Video Script 3

Swimming with Sharks

Narrator: N

Kathy Sonnemann (Shark Tourist): KS

Bob Dimond (Marine Safety Group): BD

Trista Sonnemann (Shark Tourist): TS

N: Many people like to go diving when they are on vacation. This family is getting ready to dive off the coast of Florida. But this is no ordinary dive. It may be difficult to comprehend, but there are some people who will pay a lot of money for the opportunity to dive – with sharks. Shark tourism is big business in some places, and that’s raising questions about how close people should get to them.

KS: I actually had a chance to lay down at the bottom, and the sharks were right in front of me. And I could see their mouths and their eyes, and they actually brushed up against me, and it was just really cool.

N: Several times a week, diving instructor Jeff Torode takes customers to swim and even play with these harmless nurse sharks. But, he no longer feeds the sharks as he once did. In January 2002, Florida became the first US state to ban the feeding of marine wildlife. That followed a summer of shark attacks which caused a lot of negative publicity. The horror of shark attacks makes many people react against them. Some tourists, though, believe they should be able to get close to sharks, including dangerous varieties. Divers in the waters of Florida Keys, for example, often interact with bull, reed, and lemon sharks – all of which have occasionally attacked people. But despite such attacks, it would be inaccurate to say that sharks kill a lot of people. In fact, dogs bite more people than sharks do and you have a greater chance of getting killed by lightning, bees or snakes, than by a shark. In one recent year, there were just 60 shark attacks against humans and just three deaths worldwide. Still, some people think that it’s foolish to feed sharks and bring them close to busy beaches. Bob Dimond has been a diver for 30 years. He’s still diving today, although he’s worried that sharks may be losing their fear of humans.

BD: Feeding sharks, the reason or the purpose that people feed sharks, is to attract them to human beings. That’s why they do it. You may not be a shark’s prey, but when sharks learn to associate humans with food, they approach you, investigating to see if you have food.

N: For Dimond, that’s reason enough for banning the feeding of sharks. Bob has created the Marine Safety Group. Their goal is to ban all shark feeding.

BD: If you feed a wild animal, you are greatly increasing the chance that that animal will attack humans. That is why it is banned in every National Park in the United States and Canada.

N: Shark feeding has never been directly associated with an attack on a human. When a shark does strike, it is usually ‘hit and run’. It bites and then quickly releases the person and disappears. Researchers hypothesise that these sharks may have confused a human with a seal or another animal that they would normally kill.

For divers such as this 14-year-old girl, the opportunity to go diving with sharks is a chance to understand them better. Meeting them up close, she says, has made them a little less terrifying.

TS: I thought they’d be more scary, but they’re not. They were a lot more calmer than I thought they would be. I thought it was pretty cool. It was really cool. Once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Video Script 4

Man's Best Friend

Narrator: N

N: Dogs are often known as man's best friend. Many societies have them as pets or rely on them to perform a variety of tasks. The story of man and dog is a complex story that goes back thousands of years and will almost certainly go on for thousands more.

Dogs interact with humans in a variety of ways. Dogs such as border collies are trained to herd livestock such as sheep. Huskies pull us through some of the coldest and most dangerous places on Earth. Dogs have a sense of smell 1,000 times more powerful than our own. This means they can search for people who are lost under deep snow, or under the debris of a collapsed building, or deep in the forest. Beagles perform their duties at airports, where their sense of smell helps them to find drugs and other illegal items in people's luggage. They lead the blind and help to ease the lives of disabled people. For many, the dog is also an obedient companion and friend. When did this remarkable partnership start?

We know now that the wolf began working with people in the distant past – roughly 14,000 years ago. Over the years, the wolf became the talented domestic pet we know as the dog. There are plenty of theories, but the real reason why humans acquired dogs is still unknown. Was it because they needed to protect each other from harm? Was it a hunting partnership? Was it a need for companionship? A type of friendship? Or was it a combination of the three? For 14,000 years the dog has played an important role in human societies. It's a partnership that's likely to continue for many years to come.

Video Script 5

Living in Venice

Narrator: N

Gino Penzo (Venice Trader): GP

Giovanni dal Missier (Venice Resident): GDM

N: It is early morning in Venice. Before the light of the sun fills the famous Piazza San Marco, the traders of Venice are getting ready for the crowds of tourists. In a few hours, thousands of people will come to this square. But for now, the people of Venice have the city to themselves, market traders welcome the first visitors. Early morning is the best time for shopping in the outdoor markets.

GP: We have many, many kinds of fish.

N: This is the part of Venice that most visitors never see. This is the Venice that some people call home. Resident Fabrizio Copano says that he lives in the most beautiful city in the world. It's a city that's clean and easy to live in, with a high quality of life. But for some people, Venice has disadvantages too.

GP: My son, he doesn't love, live in Venice. I am very sorry.

N: The population of Venice is getting increasingly older. Why? Fabrizio says living in Venice is not cheap. Property is particularly expensive, and housing prices have increased a lot in recent years. It's especially difficult for young people looking for their own place to live. Many of them must move away, leaving Venice to the tourists.

It seems like the whole world has come here to the Piazza San Marco. The tourists come to experience a city that feels like it's still in the 15th century. And some local people say that's the problem.

GDM: Venice did change a lot since I was born.

N: Giovanni dal Missier is one of the younger people trying to stay in his home town. During the day, the huge crowds of visitors can make just getting home from work very difficult.

GDM: I get bored with the people, with the tourists because there are too much, too many.

N: Jobs are another problem. Do you want to be a gondolier or work with tourists? If not, it can be difficult to earn a living here. But some say that the young people leaving Venice will soon find that other cities are not so different.

GP: Florence is very expensive, Rome is very expensive, London, Paris, Vienna.

N: It has been said that anyone who comes to Venice will fall in love, even if it's only with Venice itself. Giovanni dal Missier knows the feeling. He says that despite all the challenges here, it's hard to think of living anywhere else.

GDM: I know that it's a very special gift that, for me, it's a gift to live in a city as Venice.

N: Only a few people get to enjoy living in Venice. These days even fewer people are ready to face the challenges of living here. But for those who stay, it can be a wonderful experience. Every day they can experience the joy of falling in love with Venice all over again.

Video Script 6

Water Sports Adventure

Narrator: N

Cory Roeseler (Kiteboarder): CR

Interviewer: I

Jeff Wheeler (Wakeboarder): JW

- N:** It's a cold winter day in the Columbia River Gorge.
- CR:** Can't believe what blue sky we've got today! It's beautiful.
- N:** It may not be warm, but for Cory Roeseler, the wind makes it a perfect day. To most people, the very cold wind would feel uncomfortable. However, it gives Roeseler a different feeling.
- CR:** Feels like power – feel some wind. It's going to be good today.
- N:** But good for what?
- CR:** Okay, let's go sailing.
- N:** Cory Roeseler doesn't just fly kites on windy winter days. Roeseler flies with them! Thirty-year-old Roeseler was one of the first people to really experience the sport of kiteboarding. He uses a kite to catch the power of the wind. But what is kiteboarding like? How does it feel?
- CR:** It's a sort of rolly, wavy, free feeling where you know at any moment you can just launch off the water for a few seconds and fly.
- N:** Roeseler says that the power of the wind in a kite can be like a bird moving its wings. The lifting power, or 'lift', of both things can overcome gravity and allows both to fly. Wind power is something that's easily found in the Columbia River Gorge, which divides the states of Washington and Oregon. It's one of the best places in the world to kiteboard. However, for inventor Cory Roeseler, the gorge is more than just a place to have fun, it's a place to try his new inventions. Roeseler has always loved water sports. When he was a teenager he was the first person to 'test pilot', or try out, the sport of water-skiing with a kite or 'kite-skiing'. Later, he became a mechanical engineer. In the 1990s, he invented and designed a lot of water sports equipment. Eventually, he became famous in the area of water sports. Now, Roeseler is ready to test pilot his newest invention for playing with the wind, and he's asked his friends for some help. It's a new kind of wakeboarding boat with a sail.
- CR:** The sail's going to stabilise us so we don't tip over.
- I:** Why are you nervous?
- JW:** I've never seen anything like that before. So, it's a little freaky.
- N:** But what makes Roeseler's boat so different? In recent years, more people have started using towers for wakeboarding. This allows them to place the rope higher. This gives more lift to the wakeboarder and makes it easier to jump in the air. It's also easier on the body. Roeseler's tower is 17 feet off the water. That's six feet higher than other wakeboarding boats. The higher rope allows the wakeboarder to jump even higher than before. Roeseler has also added a sail to stabilise the tower and the wakeboarder. The new invention works!
- JW:** Nice! It works though. It's nuts. I didn't think it would.
- N:** And Roeseler's opinion?
- CR:** I'm a little more confident... but, we'll see. It's got to go on a big wakeboard boat and get tested in the right environment.
- N:** For Cory Roeseler, the right environment seems to be the Columbia River Gorge. For him it's the right place to live, and the right place to find adventure with his new water sports. According to Roeseler, life sometimes seems almost too good to be true. Living in the area is so wonderful that it's like being in a dream. He also adds that he and his friends are happy that they're not going to wake up one day and find out that it's gone. It seems like they want every day to be a water sports adventure.

Video Script 7

Coast Guard School

Aaron Ferguson (Instructor): AF

Narrator: N

Life Guard: LG

Ralph Johnston (Student): RJ

AF: You aren't in control all the time out here. We never come out to beat Mother Nature, but if you can go home calling it a draw, then that's a good day.

N: In a place where nature can be at its worst, the United States Coast Guard tests its toughest people.

LG: It's kind of scary, tense, adrenaline rush all mixed up into one. It's like a rollercoaster ride sometimes.

N: Rescue boat drivers learn how to deal with the most violent of seas. In the Coast Guard's national motor lifeboat school, students are at the mercy of waves that can kill. So many ships sink in the rough waters where the Columbia River empties into the ocean. This area is known as the graveyard of the Pacific. Coast Guard boat drivers come from around the country to learn skills that will sustain them as they perform their tough life-saving missions.

AF: The motor lifeboat school gives the students and the upcoming boat drivers a base, a base to build on. The skills that we're teaching here apply everywhere to boat driving.

N: Aaron Ferguson has been an instructor here for over two years.

AF: Come to starboard a little, give this guy some room.

It's an exciting job every time we come out. I've never come out and had the same thing twice. It's always different no matter what day you're here.

N: The only thing that stays the same is the danger is always present in the rough surf.

AF: The last two weeks all pays in to right today. It's right now. If something happens and we get knocked down and we go in the water, you go in the water, pop up smoke, remember to breathe. If we come back up and I'm not here, Ty will take over and depart the surf zone. Okay, let's do it.

N: For student and instructor alike, heart rates rise as soon as the sea becomes more dangerous.

AF: There's a huge range of emotions. You're scared, you're nervous, it's anticipation. There's conditions that you just can't believe that the boats will make it through.

N: The two-week class ends with the students mobilised for the man overboard drill. Student Ralph Johnston must prove he can move the lifeboat through heavy surf while keeping it steady. He must position the boat so that his crew can recover the person in danger.

AF: He needs to learn to control his fear of the elements. He needs to understand the strength of the ocean, and we give them exposure to that and some experience with it.

RJ: It helps us to learn our limitations or to push our limitations to get us more comfortable in the weather. If we're more comfortable, then our crew's going to be comfortable, and we'll be more effective.

AF: On board, okay, good job, good job.

N: For the instructors, there is satisfaction in knowing that the skills students learn in the graveyard of the Pacific might one day prevent a terrible tragedy.

AF: On those nights when they're out on their own, it's rough, it's scary, it's nasty. If they fall back to the base, the very basics, they'll go home, they'll get home at night, and they'll take their crew safely home with them and the people that they're out there to help. I get the knowledge of knowing that on those nights they do go home.

Video Script 8

Young Adventurers

Narrator: N

Jessica Fagan (Girl Scout from Virginia): JeF

Joey Fagan (Trip Leader): JoF

- N:** These girl Scouts from Virginia are on an outing. But this is no ordinary camping trip. These girls are going caving. Jessica Fagan is 17 and has been caving since she was a little girl. Her father, Joey, is an experienced caver and the leader of this trip. It was Jessica's love for the sport that led to today's adventure. She says the challenge of getting through a difficult cave together creates a special bond.
- JeF:** To do something challenging and talk about, I guess, our lives. And... it's very special, I guess, how much you bond with people. There's girls that I've caved with years and years ago that I still keep in touch with.
- N:** Somewhere in these hills in the heart of Virginia lies the entrance to their destination. But it's not easy to enter. Using ropes to rappel into the cave is the only real option for going underground. Inside it's very dark, cold and damp. Lights and warm clothes are both necessities for the cavers. After only a few feet, they're at a very tight spot called the 'chimney'. It's a drop of nine metres.
- JoF:** You can use this as a handhold to lower yourself in.
- N:** Sometimes the only technique you can use in narrow sections of the cave is to carefully slide and squeeze, and slowly ease your way through. It's a lesson in confidence, a lesson that Jessica learned early on when she had to go on her hands and knees over a ledge. Although the potential fall was only just over a metre, it was still a frightening experience. But, she says, in the cave, everyone encourages each other, and no one gets too scared. Jessica explains that the main requirement is confidence, not strength.
- JeF:** A lot of the caving challenges are not about how tall or how strong or how big you are, but about how confident you are. You need to be optimistic and be like, I can do this, I can crawl through this, I can climb up that, and even though you had this thing in the back of your mind saying that you couldn't and you did, then you learn something about yourself and you grow as a person.
- N:** After descending more than 60 metres below the surface, they arrive at a special part of the cave. An underground room over 300 metres long and over 20 metres high.
- JoF:** This is actually one of the larger rooms in the state of Virginia.
- N:** It's a room as large as three football fields, created out of the surrounding rock by drops of water over millions of years.
- JeF:** It's taken millions and millions of years to form the caves, and sometimes when people go caving, I don't think they realise how special that is, and how important it is to conserve them, and how important it is not to take things off, or to write their names.
- N:** Just by listening, the group can tell they're getting closer to something else very special – a huge 18 metre waterfall, a thrilling and exhilarating sight at the end of their long journey.
- JeF:** There is so much more to us and to this world than humans. The nature is, I guess, bigger than we are and will be here, the caves will be here, even if we aren't.

Video Script 9

Mars Rovers

Narrator: N

N: Labelled the 'Red Planet' for its fiery colour, Mars has so far been too far away and dangerous for humans to explore. The alternative has been to build robots to aid scientists in their research. In 2004, two robot explorers, or 'rovers', called Spirit and Opportunity were sent to Mars. Their mission was to find signs of water.

Spirit landed first after a seven-month trip. It was to explore an area scientists believed was once a lake. Opportunity landed three weeks later in another place with different rocks. These rovers can drive over rough ground and operate cameras and scientific instruments. They set out to work.

Mars is important to scientists because it is close to Earth and similar in many ways. Mars has seasons with different kinds of weather. It also has a network of what looks like dried rivers and lakes. This has raised the question: Was there once life on Mars? Most scientists hold a firm belief that all life needs water. To look for water, the robots carried equipment to measure the chemicals in rocks.

As well as being equipped with solar power cells, the rovers also carried special cameras for scientists to record images of the planet's rocks. After only two months, scientists had found what they were looking for. Opportunity found chemicals and patterns in the rocks that showed the area was full of water a long time ago.

Scientists don't know when this happened or how much water there was, but the surprising discovery changed their ideas about Mars. Now they believe that the weather on Mars was once warmer; maybe warm enough to once have forms of life.

In the following months, Spirit moved on to an area that may once have been a volcano, whereas Opportunity went on to study rocks that may have formed underwater.

Today, scientists still aren't sure if life ever existed on Mars. They need more information to decide. The discoveries of the two Mars rovers answered some old questions, but they also brought up many new ones.

Video Script 10

Steel Drums

Narrator: N
Tony Poyer (Steelband Expert): TP
Beverly: B
Dove: D

N: The islands of the Caribbean region are famous for their relaxing beaches and lively music. But the music of the instrument known as 'steelband' or 'pan' is native to only one island nation: Trinidad and Tobago – home of the steelband. Steelband music is a popular part of life here. From the small fishing villages to the hilltops, the whole population knows and loves the national instrument.

TP: Pan is most important to Trinidad and Tobago. It's part of our culture. It was invented in Trinidad and Tobago. It is the only musical instrument that is invented in the 20th century.

N: The special sound brings happiness to children and adults alike, and to musicians from many different places and backgrounds. Through the islands' streets and markets, you can't escape the music.

Where does steelband music come from? Trinidad is an oil-producing nation. During World War II, the island's old oil drums became useful for something else – as musical instruments. The drums produced sounds that have heavily influenced the music of the region, and can now be heard in everything from island calypso to classical music. In fact, the music goes back several centuries to early Africans who were not allowed to use their own drums.

TP: They were banned from beating the Congo drums because people thought they were communicating.

N: At first, people played these African rhythms by hitting old tin cans. Later, people played on the tops of steel drums, and that's how the steelband sound was eventually formed. Steel drum musicians usually play by ear. Most players don't use music written on paper.

TP: In fact, in the early days they knew nothing about music. They play by sound, they even tuned the pan by sound, 'tonk, tonk, tonk', and they listened to the note until they got it right.

N: The steelband sound starts with the man who tunes the drums, the tuner. This tuner is known as Honey Boy. He's been tuning pans for many years. It takes a long time to tune the drums. But these instruments are used by some of the region's top performers. But the steelband is more than just music to Trinidad. It is a part of the local culture, showing the world the creativity of the island's people. Every night, places called 'pan yards' fill with musicians who come to learn the instrument. People like Beverly and Dove.

B: Well it's the music of my country so I should learn it, you know, I should know a little bit about it.

D: Pan is to Trinidad part of our main culture. This is ours. We made it, we created it.

N: Dove says that steelband belongs to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. But it is something which they are happy to share with audiences and musicians around the world.

Video Script 11

The Maasai Teacher

Narrator: N

Joseph Lekuton (Maasai Tribesman): JL

N: This is Joseph Lekuton. He's a teacher in Northern Virginia. He gives lectures to his students about the history of their country. But his country is very different. Lekuton is a Maasai Tribesman. He was born in a small village in Northern Kenya. Like all Maasai boys, he took care of his family's cattle. Even now, as an adult, he still goes back to Kenya every summer, to work with the cattle.

He says that his early life was very different from American children. By the time he was seven, he was out of the house and had to learn skills like how to survive in the wild. By the time he was ten, his job was to take care of the cattle all day.

But Lekuton was also different from other Maasai children. He went to school and he practised his English. Later, he went to college in the United States and got a job as a teacher. Now, he has written about his life in two countries in a book called *Facing the Lion*. The book's title refers to an event in his childhood, when he came face-to-face with a lion.

JL: The symbol of bravery in my country is the lion. Having faced that lion when I was 14 sort of changed everything for me. So, I think we all face challenges in life and we all have our own lions.

N: Lekuton shares stories from his Maasai childhood to help kids learn about a culture that's very different from their own, and also principles that they can apply in their own lives. This project is Lekuton's first book. His aim is to connect traditional Maasai life and modern American life, and to show children the importance of strength and hope, even if their lives are difficult.

JL: The information I would like them to get from my book is hope. It's determination. It's courage. It's facing your lions. All I'm trying to tell them is, I conquered, I tried to conquer some of my lions. So you can.

Video Script 12

The Memory Man

Narrator: N

Gianni Golfera ('The Memory Man'): GG

Dr Antonio Malgaroli (Neurobiologist): DR. AM

- N:** Gianni Golfera is blindfolded but he can still show these people something that's amazing. The young Italian man calls it 'the art of memory'. First, the people randomly choose sixty numbers. After that, a helper reads the numbers to Gianni. Then, Gianni repeats the numbers in the correct order from memory. First in the order he heard them. Then, he does it again – backwards!
- GG:** It's a kind of memory that is connected to what I see. It means that every idea I learn, everything I read, becomes a part of me. Normally, a person who doesn't have this gift and who hasn't studied memory tends to just forget things. Even an entire book. Not me.
- N:** Gianni has a very special kind of memory. He has memorised more than 250 books. He also says that he can remember every detail of every day of his life from the time when he was less than one year old! Memory is very difficult to understand, and scientists don't really know how it works. The Golfera family genes may hold important information about Gianni's memory. Neurobiologist Dr Antonio Malgaroli plans to compare the Golfera family's genes with the genes of more forgetful families.
- DR. AM:** The crucial question is to understand which is the contribution from hereditary and which is the contribution that comes from the environment.
- N:** When we process new information, such as reading a book or a newspaper, it goes into our brains through the hippocampus. There, it's coded as memory. But how is memory coded? Where is it stored? Why is it stored there? Nobody knows. Nobody knows why some people lose their memories either. Or why so few, like Gianni, never forget things. Researchers are now studying how memory and learning change the brain. They're also trying to match those changes to specific genes. Some research shows that a great memory may not depend on the right DNA.
- DR. AM:** If you really need to use your brain capacity to store some kind of information, you have this ability. It's just a matter of exercise.
- N:** The same idea is true for Gianni. His genes are only part of the story. Since the age of 11, he's been training his brain to remember. He practises continuously to improve the power of his memory. He has even memorised a whole series of historical books. For Gianni, improving his memory has become almost like a full-time job.
- DR. AM:** Golfera has an extraordinary ability. The question is how much it's really because of Golfera's genes, and how much comes from his sort of maniac type of activity.
- N:** Gianni's life is not all about science though, he has a relatively normal life. He has a dog and a girlfriend. He likes to take time away from work. In other words, he's just like other people, and that's part of what's so interesting. His genes may be partly responsible for his great memory. However, researchers think that it's mainly because of his very hard work. Gianni agrees. He even offers proof. He holds classes to teach people how to improve their memories. His system involves organisation and hard work. Basically, learning how to 'remember to remember'.
- GG:** I think the only problem with memory is getting the correct order. There's a lot of brain space, so I think there are no limits.
- N:** If there is a memory gene, Gianni Golfera probably has it. But the success of 'The Memory Man' may be more about determination than DNA. Gianni's practice and hard work are making his memory even better. He might just be showing scientists that a great memory can be made, and not just born.