

Learning Guides 10 & 11: Non-Fiction and Media

You will need to hand in the following:

- Questions on “Influence of Social Media on Teenagers”
- Your own persuasive essay
- Challenging Hate On-Line group questionnaire or makeup assignment
- Developing an Anti-Hate campaign

Terms to know:

Essay Terms

audience	expository essay	persuasion; persuasive
bias	evidence	propaganda
chronological order	explicit	reliability
compare	implicit	satire
contrast	jargon	statistical evidence
descriptive essay	objective point of view	

Activity 1: Read and respond to an essay

There is a difference between an essay and a report. A report gives facts and summarizes conclusions. It does not attempt to persuade the reader of anything, but leaves the reader to draw usually obvious conclusions. An essay has two parts: a **thesis**, which is a little like a theme and is a statement that sums up the main point of the essay; and an **argument** which supports that theme, providing evidence and explanations. Almost every essay is actually a persuasive essay, since most writers will try to convince you that they are right about something.

The essay you are to read is from *The Huffington Post* which has been a print magazine for many years, and is now re-inventing itself as an on-line magazine. This article was not intended for a school assignment. Think about that: if readers aren't forced to read an article, the article needs to attract readers by being interesting, relevant, and well-written. *The Huffington Post* is a well-respected journal, and its reputation is only as good as its content. The facts need to be true, and they need to state where they get their information from.

Read the article “Influence of Social Media on Teenagers” and answer the following questions **in complete sentences**. When you are asked “How do you know?”, try and work your opinion into your sentences as though they were established facts rather than opinions. Avoid saying, “I know because . . .” Where you are asked for examples, you may, if you prefer highlight these examples in different colours on a copy of the essay and provide a key. (For example, “green is statistical evidence, pink is a reference to a source”.)

1. What kind of essay is this?
2. Who is the intended audience for this essay? How do you know?
3. Is the tone of the essay biased or objective? How do you know?
4. Find and highlight a place where the author lists evidence. What are the benefits of listing? Why might they not be a good idea?

5. In an article, as opposed to a scholarly essay, the references to where information comes from is listed as part of the article itself, rather than as a citation and a list of works cited. Highlight two examples where the author indicates where the information comes from.
6. Find an example of statistical evidence.
7. Find an example of a definition given in the essay.
8. Denotation means the actual meaning of a word, while connotation means the emotional weight a word carries. Find at least two words with a strong negative denotation in the article.
9. Find a word you don't know and look up the meaning. When you first read the article, what did you do when you came to the word? Did it change your understanding of what the author was saying when you looked it up, or were you already able to understand the general idea without knowing the word?
10. Find two examples of jargon. Jargon refers to terms known only to a particular group of people, in this case, people who know about social media. Sometimes, when we know a subject well, we are not even aware that it is jargon!
11. What is the thesis of this essay? Is it explicit or implicit?

Activity 2: Write a response

Now it is your turn. In an essay that is more than one paragraph, persuade your reader that you have the right point of view. Make sure you make your main point (your thesis) clear near the opening of your essay, and provide at least three points in your argument. Although the prompt is expressed as a question, your answer should rework it into a statement – your thesis statement!

Do the disadvantages of social networking outweigh the advantages?

You may do some research if you really must, but remember that you need to give credit for every idea that you include in your essay that you found somewhere else in your reading, even if you had (or would have had!) the same idea yourself.

Activity 3: Thinking about digital media

In your group if you are in class, or on your own, answer the following questions:

1. Think of at online cause campaigns that have resonated with you or people in your group. What were they? Pick one for your group to think about in a bit more depth.
2. What kind of campaign is this? (For example, did it promote an event? Raise awareness of an issue? Try to raise funds to help people in trouble? Let people know about services that are provided? Do more than one of these things?)
3. How were these campaigns promoted online?
4. What was it that caught your attention and made the cause resonate with you?
5. Was it solely an online campaign, or was other media used? If other media was used, which was better at getting your attention?

As a group, fill in the "Online presence for campaigns" worksheet.

Activity 4: Challenging Hate On-Line

If you are in class, you will be assigned to a group, and you will look at one of the following websites:

- Tolerance.Org (<https://www.tolerance.org>)
- Someone (<http://projectsomeone.ca/>)
- No Hate Speech (<http://www.nohatespeechmovement.org>)
- I Gets Better Project (<https://itgetsbetter.org>)
- Canadian Race Relations Foundation (<http://www.crrf-fcrr.ca/en>)

With your group, research how the website assigned to you is being used to address hate by answering the questions on the “Challenging Online Hate Questionnaire”. Every student must record his or her answers.

When told to do so, you will then form five new groups that are made up of at least one member from each of the original groups. In the new group, each group representative will report to other members about the website his or her original group visited.

Once this is done, you will rejoin your original group for a class discussion.

If you are not at this seminar, you will need to look at at least three sites, and complete the questionnaire for at least two of the sites.

Activity 5: Developing an Anti-Hate Campaign

You may choose your own groups for this activity. Your group can be no fewer than one person, and no more than four people. As a group you will apply what you have learned about Web-based and offline anti-hate initiatives by developing a youth-oriented anti-hate campaign.

Your campaign package should consist of:

1. An outline of the specific issue you intend to address and how you would create awareness (for example, through a contest, a forum, an Anti-Hate Day at your school).
2. The goals of your campaign.
3. The approach your campaign will take in confronting hate.
4. At least one promotional material (for example, posters, pamphlets, a mock-up of a webpage for a supporting website, etc.).
5. An outline of how you will use digital technology to amplify your message and promote your campaign.

Once completed, your group will present your campaign to the rest of the class. Groups will be assessed according to the following criteria:

Outline

- Clearly identified issues
- Comprehensive, practical implementation plan
- Clearly defined goals
- Effectively communicated campaign message
- Effective use of digital media

Promotional Materials

- Creativity
- Appeal
- Effectiveness
- Informative
- Good use of design elements

Influence of Social Media on Teenagers

By Suren Ramasubbu

The influence of social media on adolescents and teenagers is of particular importance, not only because this particular group of children is developmentally vulnerable but also because they are among the heaviest users of social networking. According to a report by *Common Sense Media*, 75 percent of teenagers in America currently have profiles on social networking sites, of which 68 percent use Facebook as their main social networking tool.

While social networking undoubtedly plays a vital role in broadening social connections and learning technical skills, its risks cannot be overlooked. The lack or difficulty in self-regulation and susceptibility to peer pressure makes adolescents vulnerable to such evils as Facebook depression, sexting, and cyberbullying, which are realistic threats. Other problems such as social network-induced obesity, Internet addiction and sleep deprivation are issues that continue to be under intense scrutiny for the contradictory results that have been obtained in various studies.

The American Psychological Association defines bullying as aggressive behavior by an individual that causes discomfort to another. Cyberbullying ranges from direct threatening and unpleasant emails to anonymous activities such as trolling. 32 percent of online teens admit to having experienced a range of menacing online advances from others. While direct unpleasant emails or messages are the most straightforward form of cyberbullying, they are probably the least prevalent in that only 13 percent of surveyed youngsters admitted to receiving threatening or aggressive messages. Even forwarding a private note to a group without permission from the sender is often perceived as cyberbullying; Pew research found that 15 percent of teens were disturbed and uncomfortable about having had their private message forwarded or posted in a public forum. Pew also found that nearly 39 percent of teens on social network have been cyberbullied in some way, compared with 22 percent of online teens who do not use social networks. Trolling, the act of deliberately inflicting hatred, bigotry, racism, misogyny, or just simple bickering between people, often anonymously, is also pervasive in social network. If you thought Trolls lived under bridge, 28 percent of America lives there, it seems.

A very important cause for cyberbullying is the anonymity possible on the Internet. According to Stopbullying.gov, two kinds of people are likely to be cyberbullies — the popular ones and those on the fringes of society; the former resort to such activities to stay popular or to feel powerful, while the latter troll to fit into a society or to get back at a society that excludes them. The National Council on Crime Prevention found from a survey that about three out of four victims of cyberbullying eventually trace the identity of the cyberbully, and so the anonymity may not be as safe a net as the bully believes. The cyberbully is often a friend (if they can be called that without insulting the word or sentiment), or someone they know from school or outside. Only 23 percent of the victims reported to have been bullied by someone they don't know.

Cyberbullying appears easy to the bully because they do not see their victims' reactions in person, and thus the impact of the consequences is small. In reality, however, the consequences can be life altering to the extent that the victims could go as far as taking their lives or become psychologically distressed enough to require medical intervention. The ironically individualistic nature of social networking activities makes it difficult to recognize a victim of cyberbullying, but tell-tale signs include avoiding or being anxious around the computer or cell phone and sudden change in behavior patterns.

Sexting, the action of sending sexually revealing pictures of themselves or sexually explicit messages to another individual or group, is another common activity among the teen community in social media. A nationwide survey by the National Campaign to Support Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy found a shocking 20 percent of teens participating in sexting. While teenage boys resort to sending sexually explicit or suggestive messages, teenage girls are more likely to send inappropriate photos of themselves, mostly to their boyfriends. However, the permanence and pervasiveness of the internet makes it a fertile ground for spreading such information to the extent of getting viral — 17 percent of sexters admittedly share the messages they receive with others, and 55 percent of those share them with more than one person. Beyond the personal trauma and humiliation sexting may cause, there are judicial ramifications as well; some states consider such activities as misdemeanors while many group sexting under felony.

"Facebook depression," defined as emotional disturbance that develops when preteens and teens spend a great deal of time on social media sites, is now a very real malady. Recent studies have shown that comparisons are the main cause of Facebook depression; the study showed that down-comparison (comparing with inferiors) was just as likely to cause depression as up-comparison (comparing with people better than oneself). However, there are contradictory reports as well. Another study showed that Facebook makes us happier and increased social trust and engagement among users. Given that our brains are wired to connect, it seems logical to expect that social networks, by enabling sharing, could cause a self-reinforcing sense of psychological satisfaction. These studies show that the effect of social network on well-being hinges on how social networks are used — whether to connect or to compare.

Other risks of extensive social networking among youth are loss of privacy, sharing too much information, and disconnect from reality. The digital footprint is a permanent trail that users of social media, indeed of the Internet itself, leave the moment they sign into any service. The digital footprint, by its permanence, can have serious repercussions in future, in both professional and personal areas of life. It is important to know that every activity online — posts on social media accounts, comments left on various sites, tweets, retweets and +1s through years can contribute to the digital footprint. Another serious risk is the amount of information shared on social network sites. LexisNexis and Lawyers.com surveyed 1,000 Americans and found that half of them divulged too much personal data online. What is more worrying is the fact that 44 percent of them believed that the information they posted on sites like Facebook, LinkedIn or MySpace were being used against them.

Adolescence is the time to spread wings and take the tentative first flight out into the world, and parents and caregivers must be part of the process. In the domain of social networking, this entails parents becoming educated about the advantages and disadvantages of social networking and themselves joining social network sites, not to hover, but to be aware of the activities of their teenage wards. It is essential that parents are aware of and monitor privacy settings and online profiles of their wards. Open discussions about social network protocols and etiquettes would go a long way in establishing global digital citizenship and healthy behavior.

Writing credit: Co-authored by Lakshmi, a Mobicip blogger who is just as passionately opinionated about the juxtaposition of technology, parenting, and education.

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Benefits of an Online presence

For each word below explain why an online presence would be a benefit to campaigns hoping to make a change in the world.

Cost	
Reach	
Cooperation	
Engaging Youth	
Multimedia	
Branding / Marketing	
Publicity	
Wealth of Information	
Hyperlinking and embedding	
Social Organizing	
Outreach	
Evading legal censure	
Anonymity	

The same elements that can benefit social justice groups can also be used by those who are promoting hatred or intolerance. All of the things we have listed above are also good reasons why hate groups have turned to digital technology to spread their messages.

6. What approaches, techniques or initiatives does this organization use to address hatred? (For example, protests and rallies, helping victims, education, etc.) Does any specific approach stand out as being the best, or are a combination of approaches preferable?

7. Think back to the advantages that were discussed in class of using the Web for anti-hate campaigns. What Web capabilities does this organization use to promote its messages?

8. Which, if any, elements or initiatives do you think would resonate with youth?

9. Identify approaches, techniques, or strategies from the website that you might like to integrate into your own educational or anti-racism campaign or anti-racism site.

10. Question 1 of this exercise is "Who is behind this website?" Why do you think this would be an important question when you encounter a site like this?