

NEWS BREAK

Article: THIS IS YOUR BRAIN OFF FACEBOOK

Section: BUSINESS, D1

Sunday's News Break selects an article from **Sunday, February 3, 2019**, of The Seattle Times print replica for an in-depth reading of the news. Read the selected article and answer the attached study questions.

You are encouraged to modify this lesson to fit the needs of your students. For example, some classrooms may be able to use this as a worksheet and others might need to ask and answer the questions in a small group or larger, class discussion.

**Please be sure to preview all NIE content before using it in your classroom to ensure it is appropriate for all of your students.*

Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.1

- Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.2

- Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.

Objectives:

Students will discuss what social media accounts they/their parents have and how often they use it on a daily basis. They'll discuss whether social media can be addictive and why. They'll discuss the research study on taking a break from Facebook, and discuss the end results. They'll debate whether people are wasting time on FB and whether it distracts people from important things or people around them. They will talk about the dynamics of social media and well-being between teens and those over 30.

Pre-Reading Discussion:



- What do you think the article will be about? Are there clues in the pictures?
- What can you infer from these 2 pictures?

Vocabulary Building:

Read this sentence, what do you think the highlighted words mean using *context clues*? A **context clue** is a word or words that are hints and refers to the sources of information outside of words that readers may use to predict the identities and meanings of unknown words.

“A **cadre** of psychologists has argued for years that the use of Facebook and other social media is linked to mental distress, especially in adolescents.”

Write your guess and then look up the definition and write it below your guess. How close did you come to the correct definition?

Cadre Guess:

Cadre Definition:

Comprehension Questions:

1. Although four in 10 Facebook users say they have taken long breaks from it, the digital platform keeps growing. A recent study found that the average user would have to be paid what to take a break for a year?
2. So what happens if you actually do quit? A new study, the most comprehensive to date, offers a preview. What happened to those who took a break?
3. The study, by researchers at Stanford University and New York University, helps clarify the ceaseless debate over Facebook's influence on the behavior, thinking and politics of its active monthly users, who number some _____ billion worldwide. The study was posted recently on the Social Science Research Network, an open access site.
4. A cadre of psychologists has argued for years that the use of Facebook and other social media is linked to _____, especially in adolescents.
5. Others have likened habitual Facebook use to a mental disorder, comparing it to _____ and even publishing magnetic-resonance images of what Facebook addiction "looks like in the brain."
6. How did the researchers advertise for the study? How did they gather the users?
7. Nearly _____ users agreed and filled out extensive questionnaires, which asked about their daily routines, political views and general state of mind.
8. Half the users were randomly assigned to deactivate their Facebook accounts for a month, in exchange for payment. The price point for that payment was itself of great interest to the researchers: How much is a month's access to photos, commentary, Facebook groups, friends and newsfeeds worth? What did the researchers find and what did they pay?
9. During the month, the research team regularly checked the Facebook accounts of the study's subjects to make sure those who had agreed to stay away had not reactivated them. What percent reactivated their accounts?
10. The subjects also regularly received text messages to assess their moods. This kind of real-time monitoring is thought to provide what?
11. What was the most striking result from the study?

Discussion Questions (small/large groups), Journal Prompts or Essay Questions:

- Do you have a FB account? How often do you use it/check it daily?
- Are your parents on FB? How often do they use it?
- Do you think social media apps like FB can be addictive? Why?
- Have you/your parents taken a break from social media? What was the end result?

“For me, Facebook is one of those compulsive things,” said Aaron Kelly, 23, a college student in Madison, Wisconsin. “It’s really useful, but I always felt like I was wasting time on it, distracting myself from study, using it whenever I got bored.”

- Are people wasting time on FB? Why or why not?
- Is it distracting to other important things and people? If so, how?

Some participants said that they had not appreciated the benefits of the platform until they had shut it down. “What I missed was my connections to people, of course, but also streaming events on Facebook Live, politics especially, when you know you’re watching with people interested in the same thing,” said Connie Graves, 56, a professional home health aide in Texas, and a study subject. “And I realized I also like having one place where I could get all the information I wanted, boom-boom-boom, right there.”

- What would you miss most about social media if you called it quits?

“The political-knowledge findings suggest that Facebook is an important source of news that people pay attention to,” said David Lazer, a professor of political science and computer and information science at Northeastern University. “This is not a trivial finding. It could have gone either way. You could imagine that the other chatter and information on Facebook was crowding out news consumption.”

- Did you find this finding surprising? Why or why not?

Thus far, the debate over the effects of social media on mental health has focused mostly on children and adolescents, not on the older population that were the focus of the new study.

“In terms of age groups, they’re comparing apples and oranges,” said Jean Twenge, a psychologist and author of “iGen: Why Today’s Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy.”

“It is entirely possible, and likely, that the dynamics of social media and well-being are different for teens versus those ages 30 and over.”

- Do you agree/disagree with Twenge’s conclusion that the dynamics of social media and well-being are different for teens versus those 30 and over?
- What would the main difference be, between the two different age groups?

News Break is posted to the Web on Monday. Please share this NIE News Break program with other teachers. To sign-up for the print replica for your class, please [register on-line](#) or call 206/652-6290 or toll-free 1-888/775-2655.
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Newsbreak Answer Key: February 3, 2019

Pre-Reading Discussion:

Answers will vary

Vocabulary Building:

Cadre: a small group of people specially trained for a particular purpose or profession. "A small cadre of scientists"

Comprehension Answers:

1. \$1,000 to \$2,000 to be pruned away for a year.
2. Expect the consequences to be fairly immediate: More in-person time with friends and family. Less political knowledge, but also less partisan fever. A small bump in one's daily moods and life satisfaction. And, for the average Facebook user, an extra hour a day of downtime.
3. 2.3 billion users
4. Mental distress
5. Drug addiction
6. The researchers — led by Hunt Allcott, an associate professor of economics at NYU, and Matthew Gentzkow, a Stanford economist — used Facebook ads to recruit participants over age 18 who spent at least 15 minutes on the platform each day; the daily average was an hour, with heavy users logging two to three hours, or more.
7. 3,000 users
8. On average, about \$100, the study found, which is in line with previous analyses.
9. 1%
10. A more accurate psychological assessment than, say, a questionnaire given hours or days later.
11. It may be that deactivating Facebook had a positive but small effect on people's moods and life satisfaction. The finding tempers the widely held presumption that habitual social-media use causes real psychological distress.

Discussion Questions (small/large groups), Journal Prompts or Essay

Questions: Answers will vary