

Are We Hooked?

 NAME

Part 1: See-Think-Reflect

Directions: [Click here](#) to see the photo collection *Removed* by artist Eric Pickersgill. Review the photos and then complete the questions below.

1. **See.** What do you see in this collection of photographs? Focus on what is actually there; challenge yourself not to interpret it yet.

Answers will vary. The photos show images of people using their phones in different environments but with the actual device taken out of the photo.

2. **Think.** What is your impression or interpretation of the collection of photographs? What do you think the artist was hoping to show?

Answers will vary. The artist was trying to show how we have become so hooked to our devices that we are not actually experiencing the real world around us. We are "removed" from our surroundings.

3. **Reflect.** How does the collection of photos make you feel? Do you agree with what the artist is trying to show? Why, or why not?

Answers will vary.



YEAR 12 (AGE 16-17): CAN MEDIA BE ADDICTIVE?

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Part 2: Different Perspectives

Directions: Complete the first row of the table using the article you read in class. You will complete the remaining rows when you move on to Part 3 of this handout.

Notes Tracker:

Resource	Yes, we are addicted to our devices.	No, we are not addicted to our devices.
Article: Can you be addicted to technology? (BBC Bitesize)	<p>Technology can trigger the release and suppression of chemicals in the brain and mirror substance misuse. According to psychologists, tech addiction is similar to substance abuse in that it can disrupt daily life, people can suffer when they do not use technology and it creates the need for people to use tech more to get the same effect.</p> <p>Tech companies make money from advertising on their platforms, so they design their products to maximise the amount of time you spend using them.</p>	<p>Tech is engaging and it can negatively impact some people's lives, but experts are wary of labelling it as an "addiction".</p> <p>It isn't clear whether the media can cause changes in your brain and create a true physical dependency as technologies don't have chemicals of their own.</p> <p>It is more accurate to see media overuse as a symptom of something else, such as wanting to escape from other problems.</p>
# <u>1</u>	<p>our devices are designed to keep us engaged (0:24).</p> <p>Everything (online) is coordinated to entertain you without you knowing (0:51).</p> <p>Today's apps send you push notifications, which are unpredictable in terms of what they're telling you, which gives them an addictive quality, like slot machines (2:13).</p> <p>Apps use warm colors (like bright red) for design and for notifications because your brain is more likely to pay attention or be distracted by them (2:50).</p> <p>Some apps use infinite scrolling or video autoplay so there aren't natural stopping points, and you're more likely to use them continuously for long periods of time (4:02).</p>	<p>There are simple tricks you can do to not feel as addicted to your device, like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turning off notifications that are not caused by a real person trying to contact you. • Using grayscale on your phone. • Restricting your home screen to only apps that are functional for your daily life (taxi, maps, etc.).



MEDIA BALANCE & WELL-BEING

We find balance
in our digital lives.

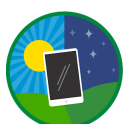
commonsense.org/education/uk/digital-citizenship/resources
Shareable with attribution for noncommercial use. Remixing is permitted.



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<p># <u>2</u></p>	<p>one in four children and young people could have a dysfunctional relationship with their smartphone.</p> <p>Problematic smartphone use appears to be linked to similar patterns of behaviour and emotion as addiction. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feeling anxious when a device is not available. • neglecting offline activities. <p>Smartphones deliver addictive content but the devices may also be inherently addictive.</p>	<p>Experts say there is still little evidence as to whether spending time on screens is harmful in itself.</p> <p>Screen time only has a detrimental impact on other activities like school, relationships or other interests in a minority of children and young people.</p>
<p># <u>3</u></p>	<p>People are using technology despite some serious repercussions related to overuse:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in anxiety • Decrease in ability to focus • Boredom • Feeling unable to talk to someone face-to-face 	<p>People are more "obsessed" with technology than "addicted." Obsession is due to a buildup of anxiety-related chemicals in the brain that make you feel like you need to check your device constantly to reduce those chemicals. Addiction is more related to your brain wanting pleasure.</p> <p>People can't really judge for themselves whether they are addicted or not; only other people in their lives can tell them whether they are distracted or less social because of their device use.</p>
<p># <u>4</u></p>	<p>A study has found that 23% of teens are using their phones in a problematic way.</p>	<p>The most common survey used on these studies does not include questions that can accurately link phone use to a pathological medical condition.</p> <p>The latest study is not representative of all teens in the UK so it can't provide specific statistics for the number of people that experience issues as a result of their phone use.</p>



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Part 3: Explore

Directions: In your group, choose two resources from the list below to review. As you review them, consider what they say about whether or not we are addicted to our devices. Add your arguments to the **Notes Tracker** in Part 2. Choose additional resources if time allows.

Resource 1



Watch: **It's Not You. Phones Are Designed to Be Addicting.**

VOX, YOUTUBE.COM, 23/02/2018 (6 MINS.)

Resource Notes

- Video identifies specific ways devices and apps are designed to be addictive, and provides tips for lessening the effect.
- This video is on YouTube, which some schools and local authorities may block.

Resource 2



Read: **One in Four Children 'Have Problematic Smartphone Use'**

GUARDIAN.COM, 2019 (5 MINS.)

- Article which provides information on studies linked to smartphones and examines whether problematic use can cause poorer mental health.

Resource 3



Watch: **'Technology Addiction' Isn't Real, But You Can Have an Obsession**

HUFFINGTON POST, 2017 (2 MINS.)

- A short video explaining how the word "addiction" may be misleading when it comes to our everyday use of technology.
- This video shows an ad before playing.

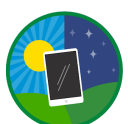
Resource 4



Read: **Teens Aren't Addicted to Their Phones - But We Like to Think They Are**

BBC BIG IDEAS, 2019 (3 MINS.)

- An article presenting the view that "addiction" is not the best word to describe the time that teenagers spend on their phones. The author challenges the design of the studies that are often used to generate captivating headlines.



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Part 4: Take a Stand

Think about the different articles and videos you reviewed and choose one of the two assignments to complete based on your opinions.

Option A:

Write a letter to the executives of one of your favorite apps (e.g., Snapchat, Instagram) or digital media companies (e.g., Netflix, YouTube), providing recommendations for how they can use humane design when developing their products. Identify specific features you would change or add to the product, and be sure to justify your reasoning.

Option B:

Is "tech addiction" real? Write a two-paragraph opinion piece in response to this question. Be sure to justify your answer, referencing specific resources from Part 2 (or new ones you come across in your research). Consider some of the following questions when developing your response:

- What is "addiction"? How do you define "addiction"?
- Is there a difference between addiction and being "hooked"?
- Is there a criteria you would use to determine whether or not someone is addicted to technology?

In your response, identify one thing you plan to do to create more media balance in your life.

I chose option _____



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Handwriting lines for student response.



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