

Are Phones Making Us Zombies?

The problem of—and possible solutions to—phone addiction

About the Story

Lexile: 1110L (combined)

For qualitative complexity factors, go to Scope Online.

Learning Objective:

to identify the key ideas and details in two nonfiction articles and to create a PSA about how to have a healthy relationship with your phone

Key Skills:

author's craft, key ideas and details, inference, tone

Essential Questions:

- What is addiction?
- What does it mean to have a healthy relationship with technology?
- Whose responsibility is it to make sure kids have a healthy relationship with technology?

Standards:

The articles and lesson support these Common Core anchor standards:
R.1, R.2, R.4, R.5, R.6, R.9, W.2, SL.1, SL.2, L.4, L.5, L.6. For more standards information—including TEKS—go to Scope Online.



Your Teaching Support Package

Find your full suite of materials at
scope.scholastic.com.

Video: Beyond the Story:

Are Phones Making Us Zombies?

Audio:

- The articles
- Vocabulary

Literature Connections: ideas for connecting to curricular texts

Activities to print or project:

- Key Ideas and Details: PSA Prep
- Close Reading and Critical Thinking
- Video Discussion Questions
- **Core Skills Workout:** Text Structure, Text Evidence*
- Quiz*
- Contest Entry Form

* Available on two levels

Step-by-Step Lesson Plan

Close Reading, Critical Thinking, Skill Building

1 Preparing to Read

Do-Now: Free Write

(5 minutes)

Hang or project a photo of a smartphone at the front of your classroom. Post these instructions for students to follow as they arrive at the start of class: *You have two minutes to write about your relationship with this object.* When the two minutes are up, ask volunteers to share what they wrote.

Watch the Video.

(8 minutes, activity sheet online)

Project and preview the **Video Discussion Questions** as a class. Then watch the **Beyond the Story video** and answer the questions.

Preview vocabulary.

(5 minutes, activity sheet online)

Project our **Vocabulary Words and Definitions**. Review the words as a class. Highlighted words: *compulsion, deprivation, innovators, lure, rummage, vulnerable, wreaks havoc*

2 Reading and Discussing

“Are Phones Making Us Zombies?”

(30 minutes, activity sheet online)

Read the article as a class. Invite students to share any immediate reactions. Then discuss the following questions.

Close-Reading Questions

▶ In much of this article, author Mackenzie Carro uses the second-person point of view: the pronoun *you*. Why might Carro have chosen to do this? (author’s craft) *Carro may have used second person to help the reader feel involved in the article—to feel like “This situation that’s being discussed is about me.”*

▶ In your own words, explain what causes kids and teens to become addicted to their phones. (key ideas) *Kids and teens become addicted to their phones because phones give them rewards, such as likes on social media. These kinds of rewards cause the brain to release dopamine, creating an urge to check the phone repeatedly. Compared with adults, kids and teens are more vulnerable to phone addiction because the parts of their brains that control pleasure and emotion are more developed than the parts that control logic and reasoning. So it’s especially hard for a young person to ignore his or her phone.*

▶ According to the article, why is being addicted to your phone a problem? (key ideas) *If you’re addicted to your phone, you’re constantly distracted by it, which leads to an inability to concentrate and to trouble getting things done. Phone addiction can cause sleep deprivation, which can lead to moodiness, anxiety, and depression. Phone addiction can also lead to spending less time with friends in person.*

“Should Your Parents Control Your Phone?”

(20 minutes, activity sheet online)

• Read the article as a class and respond to the following questions. The critical-thinking questions refer to both articles.

Close-Reading Questions

▶ Carro writes, “Parent-operated controls could lead to frustration and arguments, and at the end of the day, they might not make you any less addicted to your phone.” Explain what she means. (inference) *Carro means that kids might get angry about their parents limiting access to their phones. She also means that while*

parents might be able to limit the time their kids spend on their phones, this won't necessarily decrease the kids' desire to be on their phones.

► **What attitude or opinion does Carro express about parents using Screen Time and similar tools to control their kids' phone usage? How do you know?** (tone) *Although Carro provides arguments for and against parents using tools like Screen Time to set limits for their kids, she seems to come down in favor of using such apps, particularly if they are used the way that Dr. Frances Jensen suggests: having family members decide together what limits are appropriate. Carro expresses her opinion in the last sentence: "Screen Time is a step in the right direction."*

Critical-Thinking Questions

► **Based on the warning signs of phone addiction listed in the article, do you think YOU are addicted to your phone? Explain.**
Answers will vary.

► **What is your reaction to the five ways to beat smartphone addiction sidebar on page 23? Do these strategies sound doable? Explain.**
Answers will vary.

► **Is it ethical for phone and app developers to create products that are addictive? Why or why not?** *Some students may say that an app*

developer's job is to create products that people will use and enjoy; if people spend too much time using those products, it is not the developer's fault. Other students may say it is unethical to develop technology knowing it will be addictive and could be harmful to children.

• If your students have read the play in this issue and the editorial with which it's paired, help students make cross-text connections by asking:

► **How does the problem of smartphone addiction connect to ideas in *Frankenstein* and in "This Robot Wants to Help You"?** *The play tells the story of a creation that becomes the master of its creator. The editorial asks whether artificial intelligence might similarly take control of us and end up doing us as much harm as good. Smartphones seem to be an example of this sort of situation: A technology that was created to make our lives better has, in a way, taken control of us.*

3 Skill Building

Featured Skill: Key Ideas and Details

(15 minutes, activity sheet online)

Have students work in groups to complete the **PSA Prep** activity. This will prepare students to respond to the prompt on page 25. *For alternate culminating tasks, see the box below.*

Differentiate and Customize

For Struggling Readers

In a well-organized paragraph, explain two dangers of smartphone addiction and two ways to help solve the problem.

For Advanced Readers

Write an essay about what we as a society should do about smartphone addiction. Draw on the articles to explain what the problem is and what solutions currently exist. Then explain what else, if anything, you think should be done.

For Future Psychologists

Conduct interviews and/or survey kids at your school about their phone habits and how their phones affect them. Then present your findings. Use video or other visuals in your presentation.

For Comic Fans

Create a comic about "smartphone zombies." It should be at least one page long and incorporate information about smartphone addiction from both articles.