“Are Phones making us Zombies?”

Write the definitions for the following words:

rummage
deprivation
compulsion
havoc
vulnerable

Comprehension questions: (Write in complete sentences.)

1. Explain what cell phone addiction looks like.
2. What are the warning signs that you might be addicted to your phone?
3. Explain why it would be difficult for you to write an essay for school if you are have your phone with you?
4. How does cell phone addiction affect a teen’s sleep and why is that potentially dangerous?
5. What three things can you do to beat smart phone addiction, according to the article?

Short answer: (Please answer the following questions completely. Remember: each answer for each question should include a topic sentence, supporting details, and a concluding sentence. Reference the article to help support your assertion.)

1. After reading this article, do you think you are addicted to your cell phone?
2. Are cell phones more harmful to teens than helpful?
3. Should schools limit cell phone use during the school day to help students concentrate more?
Are Phones Making Us Zombies?

Experts say too much screen time is causing us harm. Here's what you can do about it.

By Mackenzie Carro
Your mom is driving you to your grandma’s house when suddenly your stomach drops. You frantically pat your pockets. It’s not there. You rummage through your backpack. It’s not there either. You search under the car seats and between the cushions.

And then—with horror—you realize what you did: You left your phone at home.

Panic sets in. All those unanswered texts, the unopened snaps, the unaccepted Fortnite invitations! You know it’s not the end of the world, but you can’t help getting a bit twitchy and restless. You actually feel your phone vibrating in your pocket, even though it isn’t there.

What is happening to you?

In fact, what you are experiencing are symptoms of a growing problem in America today: smartphone addiction.

Smartphone addiction is the compulsion to constantly check and interact with your phone. Although phone addiction isn’t officially recognized as a medical condition like drug or alcohol addiction, experts do believe it is a serious problem that wreaks havoc on our bodies and minds—making us distracted, tired, anxious, and unhappy.

And kids like you are most at risk. According to a 2016 Common Sense Media survey, 50 percent of kids and teens feel addicted to their mobile devices.

Can we fix this?

The Problem

Throughout human history, few inventions have transformed our lives as profoundly as the smartphone. Since the iPhone debuted in 2007, smartphones have found their way into every part of our lives. Our phones wake us up in the morning. They give us directions, keep us informed, and connect us with friends and family 24/7. They allow us to buy movie tickets, pay our bills, and listen to Ed Sheeran’s latest hit whenever we want—wherever we are.

But as amazing as smartphones are, they have a dark side. Addiction is a condition in which a person repeatedly engages in the use of a substance (such as alcohol) or in a behavior (such as gambling) despite the negative consequences of doing so. Someone who is addicted to something finds it incredibly hard to resist that thing, even if he or she wants to.

Phone addiction works like this: When you feel pleasure—like when you watch Steph Curry sink a winning dunk or when you take a bite of gooey chocolate cake, for example—your brain releases a chemical called dopamine. This same chemical is released when you interact with your phone and get something rewarding out of it, such as a like on Instagram or a text from a friend. Your brain likes this rush of dopamine and wants to re-create it again and again, so you check your phone again and again.

Over time, the association your brain makes between your smartphone and good feelings can become so strong that those buzzes and dings become impossible to resist. Even if you want to ignore your phone, your brain insists, “Come on—just take a peek!”

72% of teens feel pressured to respond immediately to notifications*
Warning Signs

For you, the risk of developing this kind of obsessive relationship with your phone is higher than it is for an adult because your brain is still developing. The parts of your brain that control pleasure and emotion are more developed than the parts that control logic and reasoning. This affects your decision-making and makes you more vulnerable to the addictive aspects of smartphones.

For example, you might understand that checking your phone while doing your math homework isn’t a good idea. But because your brain is hyper-focused on seeking out pleasurable experiences, the lure of your device can overpower everything else. So instead of putting your phone away while you’re studying, you continue to check it every few minutes. Suddenly, four hours have passed and you’ve worked through only two math problems out of 20.

When the need to constantly check your phone begins to interfere with your life in this way, it may mean the obsession has gone too far.

Warning signs of addiction include lying about how much time you’re spending on your devices, spending less time in-person with friends, and seeing your grades fall, says psychologist Edward Spector, who helps teens who obsessively use technology.

State of Concentration

Nearly half of teens report being online “almost constantly,” according to a Pew Research Center study. Indeed, when kids are studying, they tend to be interrupted by their phones every three to five minutes, says Larry Rosen, a psychologist who researches teens’ relationship with technology.

Why is that a bad thing? It takes your brain about 23 minutes to achieve the state of concentration you need to write an essay or read a novel. Each time you check your phone (or hear it buzz or spot an alert out of the corner of your eye), your brain is pulled out of its state of concentration.

When you go back to reading or writing, your brain has to start all over. So constantly checking your phone means not only that you may never reach the level of deep thought you’re capable of, but also that it will take you longer to get things done.

Distraction can happen even when your phone isn’t near you, like on that trip to Grandma’s house. All those anxious thoughts about everything you’re missing out on—the posts, the likes, the snaps—can be just as distracting as your phone itself.

So Sleepy

Your ability to concentrate isn’t the only thing that’s suffering, either. Your health may be too.

Teens need about nine hours of sleep each night to stay healthy. According to a study conducted by psychologist Jean Twenge, 43 percent of teens are getting fewer than seven hours. Many experts, including Twenge herself, are certain that smartphones are a big factor in this sleep deprivation.

How do phones affect sleep? The light your phone emits tells your brain that it’s daytime and you should be awake. Your brain stops producing the chemicals that help you get sleepy. That’s why you may have trouble falling asleep if you’re on your phone.

*Statistics: National Sleep Foundation (top), Common Sense Media (bottom)
right before bedtime. As a result of getting too little sleep, you may experience moodiness, anxiety, and depression. You may also find it hard to pay attention and remember what you learn at school.

**App Makers**

For some in the tech industry, smartphone addiction is not so much a problem as it is an opportunity. In fact, app makers want you to get hooked on their products.

**Why?**
The more time you spend on an app, the more money the company can get from advertisers that pay to display their ads.

**Setting Limits**

Parents, psychologists, and teachers have been voicing concerns about smartphones for some time. But now, even leaders in the tech industry admit that their products can be harmful when used excessively. In fact, many of these leaders restrict their own kids' screen time.

Roy Sehgal, chief operating officer of the image-sharing site Imgur, doesn't allow his children to use their devices at meals, in their bedrooms, or before their homework is done. Danielle Levitas, senior vice president of App Annie, allows screen time only on the weekends. Even the late Steve Jobs, the creator of the iPhone, set strict screen limits for his kids.

**Phone-Free Time**

What can you do?

First, says Rosen, stop using your phone at least an hour before you go to bed at night. Second, turn off your notifications to decrease the temptation to pick up your phone.

Rosen also recommends taking technology breaks. That could mean leaving your phone at home sometimes or turning it off for a certain amount of time each day. Use your phone-free time to pick up a new hobby, explore nature, meditate, listen to music, or simply have a conversation with someone. As a fun challenge, you and your friends can try taking breaks together. Next time you have a sleepover, implement a "no phones" rule.

As time goes on, you'll find that you can take longer breaks without fear of missing out.

Who knows? One day you may even choose to make that trip to Grandma's house without your phone.
“Should Your Parents Control Your Phone?”

Write the definitions for the following words:

enabling
neurology
counterintuitive
innovators
dopamine

One of the most important skills we practice in Grade 8 is finding textual evidence to support an assertion (opinion.) The following questions will require you to use textual evidence from the article to answer the questions.

1. Choose 2 pieces of text evidence from the article that best supports the statement below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement: The brain plays a role in smartphone addiction.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>o “All those anxious thoughts about everything you’re missing out on- the posts, the likes. The snaps, - can be just as distracting as your phone itself.” (p. 22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o “Your brain likes the rush of dopamine and wants to re-create it again and again, so you can check your phone again and again.” (p. 21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o “But now, even leaders in the tech industry admit that their products can be harmful when used excessively.” (p. 22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o “But because your brain is hyper-focused on seeking out pleasurable experiences,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o The lure of your device can overpower everything else.” (p. 22)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement: Teens are at greater risk than adults of developing smartphone addiction.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>o “In fact, app makers want you to get hooked on their products.” (p. 23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o “Teens need about nine hours of sleep each night to stay healthy. According to a study conducted by Psychologist Jean Twenge, 43 percent of teens are getting fewer than seven hours.” (p. 22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o “For you, the risk of developing this kind of obsessive relationship with your phone is higher than it is for an adult because your brain is still developing.” (p. 22)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now it is your turn: What is your opinion?
Write a paragraph that addresses the question, “Are you addicted to your phone?”

Remember that a strong opinion paragraph contains the following elements:

- Assertions that are well supported by textual evidence
- Assertions backed up by experts (from the article.)
- Assertions based on experience

Remember: An opinion is a statement of personal belief. To write a strong opinion paragraph, the writer should include strong support. Ask yourself, “Is my opinion supported by facts?”

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Should Your Parents Control Your Phone?

New tools from Apple will let your parents control how much time you spend on your phone. Could this be the best thing that ever happened to you? By Mackenzie Carro

Apple has been developing a new iPhone feature called Screen Time. Unlike most Apple products, Screen Time has nothing to do with enhancing your experience on your phone. Rather, Screen Time is meant to get you off your phone.

Each day, Screen Time tracks the number of notifications you get, how many times you pick up your phone, and how much time you spend on each app. (Four hours on YouTube? Oops.) Screen Time also lets you set app limits. For example, you can set an app limit of 15 minutes a day for Instagram. If you stay...
on Instagram longer than that, you’ll get a notification warning you that you’ve gone over your limit.

Screen Time also enables parents to set app limits for their kids—and these cannot be ignored. In other words, if you go over an Instagram limit set by your mom, you’ll be locked out of the app until the next day—or until your mom decides to let you back on.

Screen Time is certainly not the first app to enlist parents to help tackle the problem of excessive screen time. Last year, Google released a similar feature called Digital Wellbeing. Other screen-time tracking apps, like Moment, have been available for some time.

But can these kinds of apps really solve the problem of too much screen time?

A Huge Success

Supporters of Screen Time and similar apps say that by enabling parents to better help their kids manage their phone time, these apps can help kids be healthier and more productive.

This was the case for Joshua, 14, from Bromley, England. Earlier this year, Joshua started to worry that he was spending too much time on his phone. His mom suggested that he use an app that would allow her to block him from using his phone at certain times of the day, such as while doing homework and at bedtime.

Joshua agreed—and it’s been life-changing.

“I’m way more productive now,” says Joshua. “It’s training me to use my time more positively.”

But not everyone thinks apps like Screen Time are the right solution to smartphone addiction. Some people argue that learning to manage your time is an important part of growing up. If kids start to rely on their parents or an app to manage their screen time for them, what are they really learning?

What’s more, if your dad turns off Instagram for you from the next room without explaining why,

will that decrease your desire to go on Instagram? 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.

For any real change in behavior to take place, family members need to be on the same page, says Dr. Frances Jensen, chair of neurology at the University of Pennsylvania and author of The Teenage Brain. Instead of just having a parent set limits for you, have a conversation about what limits are appropriate.

For example, if your Screen Time data shows you are spending a lot of time on YouTube, talk with your parents about how you’re using the app. If you’re making your own videos and sharing them with your friends in the afternoon, your parents may decide that the amount of time you’re spending is OK; you’re doing something creative and learning valuable skills. But if you’re watching mindless videos in the middle of the night, you and your parents will probably agree that’s not healthy. If used in this way, Screen Time could be a helpful tool, Jensen believes.

The Wrong Problem?

On the other hand, should we really be turning to a piece of technology to help solve a problem that’s caused by... technology?

“I think that relying on an app to limit the time I spend on my phone is counterintuitive,” says Xavier, 16, from College Park, Georgia, who has never used an app for managing screen time. “The goal is to be less dependent on your phone.”

What’s more, some believe tools like Screen Time are focused on the wrong problem entirely. Perhaps instead of creating apps that help users who are already addicted, technology innovators should work on making their apps less addictive to begin with.

Until that happens though, Screen Time is a step in the right direction.
“This I Believe”

Write the definitions for the following words:

abstract
unattainable
dignity
prevailed
injustice

Short answer: Please read the following essay about injustice. CHOOSE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS TO ANSWER. Remember: Your answer to the question you choose should include a topic sentence, supporting details, and a concluding sentence. Reference the essay to help support your assertion.

1. In her essay, the author asserts that “as a child I wanted to believe that life was “fair” and that people, animals, and the planet should be treated with dignity and respect.” Do you think that most people feel the way the author feels about life? Do you feel the same way?
2. How do you feel about what happened to the author, as a teen? Do you think she was treated fairly by her employer? Explain.
3. Do you believe that a polygraph test should be used on a minor, as it was in the case of this author?
4. Have you ever been wrongly accused of something and then felt you were treated unjustly? If so, please elaborate on what happened and mention why you think you did not receive justice?
This I Believe...Justice

I believe justice should be more than an abstract and often unattainable legal concept. As a child I wanted to believe that life was “fair,” and that people, animals, and the planet should be treated with dignity and respect. I wanted to help the human victims, badly treated animals, and forests about to be bulldozed. I was too shy to do much, but would imagine the rescues I could perform if given the chance.

My favorite stories involved people or animals who prevailed over cruel treatment: Black Beauty, the abused horse adopted by a kind master; or Oliver Twist, the orphaned child who was rescued from Fagin’s gang of thieves.

When I was 16 and working at my first job at an ice cream shop, real injustice occurred in my world. I was accused of stealing $300 from the cash register. I was shy and quiet, and easily embarrassed. I had never stolen any money, but I was intimidated into taking a polygraph examination. My employer demanded it and, anxious to clear myself, I agreed to it. I did not know at the time that polygraph examinations are not admissible in court and the results could not have been used against me.

Polygraph results, at least at that time, were easily skewed by tremendous anxiety and my blood pressure shot up when the examiner asked if I had stolen the money. The machine went crazy. I clearly remember the examiner jumping up from the machine and yelling, “you took that money!” His certainty convinced even me, because after all, he was an authority figure. He must know the truth. I had “failed” the polygraph, unlike all of the other employees. So I must be guilty. The boss offered me a choice: quit or be fired. I quit, with the shadow of guilt hanging over me, and continued to feel the guilt until the next summer when, long after I was gone, more money disappeared from the cash register. It was only then that I realized it wasn’t my fault.

The memory was the most important reason I attended law school years later. I had wanted someone to defend me when I was 16, and as an adult I wanted to be that person for myself and others. Law school gave me the training, and law practice has given me the skills, to do that. Justice is not a linear path most of the time and sometimes it does not take the expected form. Often I don’t feel I’ve attained it. But sometimes I get a glimpse of what might be if everyone worked for the same end: fairness in all things. Treating others as one would like to be treated. And helping someone to catch even that glimpse is a gift. I continue to work for it and to believe I can achieve it.