Give us digital curfew say teenagers

Pioneer: Tim Berners-Lee gave away the source code for the Web for free, but online life is now dominated by companies such as Amazon, Meta and Alphabet Inc.

Was the world better off before the internet? A new survey has found that half of teenagers would like access to it blocked at night — and nearly as many wish that it did not exist.

What's happening?

Catriona reaches for her phone to check her **Instagram** feed. But when she turns it on, the Instagram icon is not there. The internet is gone — completely! Suddenly, she feels a wave of relief.

The British Standards Institution recently asked 1,293 people aged 16 to 21 for their views on the internet.

Of those, 50% said they would welcome a digital **curfew** that stopped them from using some sites and apps after 10pm. And 46% said they would prefer to be young in a world with no internet.

Find out more

In 1974 a way of allowing computers to speak the same language was invented, connecting networks across the world. The internet was born.

In 1989, British scientist **Tim Berners-Lee** created a way of making information quick and easy to find, using links and web addresses. This became the World Wide Web.

It was released to the public in 1993. Over the next three years the number of websites grew from 130 to more than 100,000.

The Web has made it much easier to find information. You can use it to talk to and see people in other countries, share photos on social media and watch TV anywhere.

The downsides include social-media **addiction** and a loss of **privacy**. Then there is online bullying, the spread of fake news and computer hacking.

Was the world better off before the internet?

Some say

Yes! People spent more time talking to each other face-to-face instead of staring at phones. Nobody took work or school home with them through emails. And nobody could steal your photos online.

Others think

No! Everything, from buying a plane ticket to looking up recipes, was much more difficult. The internet has allowed us to live in a truly connected world.

Some people say

"The internet is as big as the introduction of fire to the human race, or the introduction of electricity into our lives."

Werner Herzog (1942 –), German film director

What do you think?

Six steps to discovery

1. **Connect**
How do you feel about this story? - Do you spend time on the internet? Do you feel worse afterwards?

2. **Wonder**
What questions do you have? - For example: How many people use the internet? How many websites are there?

3. **Investigate**
What are the facts? - Pick out one thing we know for certain about this story and one thing we cannot say for sure.

4. **Construct**
What is your point of view? - You are told that you cannot use the internet ever again. Think about what you would say.

5. **Express**
What do others believe? - Hold a class debate on whether or not to turn off the internet.

6. **Reflect**
What might happen next? - Try not to use the internet for a day. Is it possible? Write a paragraph about your experience.

Glossary

Instagram - A social-networking service that allows users to share photographs and videos.

Curfew - A rule stopping you from going out after a certain time.

Tim Berners-Lee - In 1990, the English computer scientist designed the first website and web browser. There are now over 1.8 billion websites.

Addiction - A health problem in which someone does not have control over what they are doing or substances they are taking, to the point that it is harmful.

Privacy - Being able to keep details about your life to yourself without everyone else knowing.