# Nicholas County Middle School: NTI Days

## 8th Grade Packet

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*Each day's work is due within 3 days of the NTI day.*

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<td>How “Minecraft” is Helping Kids Fall in Love with Books Real world article to read with questions.</td>
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Jell-O to kids: It's official. Now you can play with your food

By Zlati Meyer, USA Today, adapted by Newsela staff on 07.19.18
Word Count 314
Level MAX

Image 1. A new Jell-O mold kit encourages kids to play with their food before eating it. Photo courtesy of Kraft Heinz

In a move sure to bring howls from some parents, Jell-O is making it easier for kids to play with their food. In fact, it's encouraging them.

The 121-year-old company said it is launching a new line of molds and cookie cutters. They turn the gelatin dessert into recognizable shapes. Together with edible stickers, the new products let youngsters transform Jell-O into a toy.

Called Jell-O Play, the new products were designed for kids ages 4 to 12. They feature molds for creating Lego-like blocks that could prove to be perfect for constructing a jiggly Jell-O fortress. There are also cutters -- like cookie cutters -- to make wiggly animals and sky-related shapes.

"We're stimulating kids to unleash their creativity," spokesman Sergio Eleuterio said. "Eating becomes part of the play."

This article is available at 5 reading levels at https://newsela.com.
For example, he envisions children making two animals using the cutters and then pretending that one beast is devouring the other. For added realism, all a kid has to do is take a bite out of one of the animals to simulate its slow-motion demise.

To allay germaphobic parents, the packages include instructions on how to properly wash hands and the molds. Plus the company suggests consuming the toy parts, er, Jell-O within an hour.

The kits come with the gelatin packs, but the recipe is slightly different than normal Jell-O. Only half as much water is necessary in order to make the gelatin firmer and therefore more play-friendly.

Two packages are for pudding. The chocolate flavored one is called "edible mud." The vanilla version is now "edible sand." Those recipes are made the traditional way.

The kits are available for preorder on Amazon and at select U.S. retailers, including Target and HEB. All are under $5.

Jell-O is owned by packaged-food giant Kraft Heinz.
Quiz

1 Which sentence from the article shows how the instructions for making Jell-O Play are not the same as the instructions for making regular Jello-O?

(A) In a move sure to bring howls from some parents, Jell-O is making it easier for kids to play with their food.

(B) There are also cutters – like cookie cutters – to make wriggly animals and sky-related shapes.

(C) Only half as much water is necessary in order to make the gelatin firmer and therefore more play-friendly.

(D) The chocolate flavored one is called "edible mud."

2 Which sentence from the article BEST supports the conclusion that the creators of Jell-O Play are hoping to encourage creativity?

(A) They turn the gelatin dessert into recognizable shapes.

(B) The 121-year-old company said it is launching a new line of molds and cookie cutters.

(C) For example, he envisions children making two animals using the cutters and then pretending that one beast is devouring the other.

(D) The kits are available for preorder on Amazon and at select U.S. retailers, including Target and HEB.

3 Read the selection below.

They feature molds for creating Lego-like blocks that could prove to be perfect for constructing a jiggly Jell-O fortress. There are also cutters – like cookie cutters – to make wriggly animals and sky-related shapes.

Why did the author include this selection?

(A) to describe in detail how different Jell-O products are made

(B) to explain how Jell-O and Lego worked together on Jell-O Play

(C) to highlight how Jell-O came up with the idea for Jell-O Play

(D) to give examples of how Jell-O Play can be used
4 What is the MOST likely reason the author included the information about how to properly clean the Jell-O Play molds?

(A) to compare and contrast how to clean different types of molds
(B) to explain how Jell-O Play differs from traditional Jell-O
(C) to ease the worry of people concerned about germs
(D) to persuade parents to buy Jell-O Play for their kids
Texas mother-daughter duo makes a profit selling homemade slime

By Dallas Morning News, adapted by Newsela staff on 08.06.18

Word Count 862
Level 1130L

Samantha Zumwalt, 15, works with slime at her home in Garland, Texas, July 12, 2018. Samantha and her mom, Jessica Burks, run Samantha’s Slime Shop, a business selling hundreds of containers of slime per week to people all over the country. Photo by: Smiley N. Pool/The Dallas Morning News/TNS

GARLAND, Texas — It may look like a normal house from the outside, but inside it’s the "slime house."

Slime is that playful, gooey substance that has set off an Internet craze. Jessica Burks' home here in Garland is oozing with opportunities to get your hands on — and into — it.

Packaged slime in an array of colors and scents lines one wall of the living room. In the designated "slime room" workspace in the back, bottles of fragrance oil are arranged in rows, next to glue by the gallon and an industrial-size kitchen mixer.

It's not the amount of slime in Burks' house that shocks people, though, she said. It's the fact that her 15-year-old daughter, Samantha Zumwalt, is heading up their slimy enterprise.
The mother-daughter team run Samantha's Slime Shop out of their home — and the demand for this squishy stuff has them pulling in over $100,000 a year, they said.

**Slime Is In High Demand**

Samantha's slime, offered in a rainbow of colors and a range of textures, is in high demand. Since she launched her business in February 2017, she has racked up more than 24,000 sales on Etsy and 10,000 on Amazon.

Most customers are between the ages of 9 and 12, Burks said, though some adults and teens buy slime, too. Parents, she said, particularly love Cranberry Cider Crunch, a deep red slime made with glitter and fishbowl beads that smells just like autumn.

Burks said they try hard to keep slime affordable. A 2-ounce container of slime is $3, 4 ounces is $6, 8 ounces is $9, and the biggest size, 16 ounces, is $17.

Some customers buy Samantha's slimes, most of which contain charms and trinkets, because they say playing with it is calming. Others want it because it gives them something to do with their hands, Samantha said.

If you've been on the Internet in recent years, you've probably seen — or at least heard about — slime.

Last year, Nichole Jacklyne, a YouTuber who reviews slime and provides do-it-yourself tutorials for hundreds of thousands of subscribers, reviewed Samantha's product in a video.

After Jacklyne's video, orders quickly began pouring into Samantha's online shop, Burks said.

**Samantha Saw A Future In Slime**

At first, Samantha's mom was resistant to the girl's slime ambitions. It took months for Samantha to convince her to buy a key ingredient — a box of borax, a powder detergent that is mixed with water and glue to make slime.

"I told her no for months," Burks said, because she was afraid slime-making would waste her daughter's time and make the house a mess.

"I was like, 'Mom, I promise, I'm going to make a business out of this,'" Samantha said.

Finally, Burks gave in, in part because she had been laid off from her job as an accountant and needed to find a new source of income. The two dove into the slime business and now, it's their livelihood — and quite a profitable one too.

Samantha initially expected a few orders a week. Today, they receive anywhere from 20 to 50 a day — and during the holidays, it's closer to 100 a day, the women said.
The Business Takes Off

Burks and her daughter spend their days making slime. Samantha wakes up late, but stays up late too, getting orders ready into the night.

They take turns mixing up the ingredients. Last week, their home was filled with the candy-sweet scent of Poison Apple slime, thanks to the batch of bright red, super stretchy goo Burks whipped up.

That day, they had 14 orders on Etsy and another 10 on Amazon, and all 24 had to go out that day, Burks said.

They've had to hire help since their slime business took off, Burks said. After the holiday rush took a toll on Samantha and Burks' sleep, they hired four employees.

All the time they spend together has changed the women's relationship, Samantha said. These days they're more than just mother and daughter, they're also business partners.

"It made me and my mom closer," she said.

Samantha is home-schooled, and her mom considers the slime business part of her hands-on learning and a great way to gain practical experience.

Every month, they spend about $11,000 on slime supplies, shopping at mom-and-pop shops and online retailers, Burks said.

Samantha Likes Having Control

People have encouraged Samantha to try to find an investor who can help her take her business to the next level, but she says she's happy where she is.

"I get to control what happens," she said. "I get to make sure there's no hair in the slime — there's nothing that isn't supposed to be there. I get to make sure I know what the product looks like before it goes out."

Burks is proud of what Samantha has accomplished, and she says she'll be happy with whatever direction her daughter wants to take the business.

"I want to see her be able to meet all of her business goals — whether that's still running the slime enterprise, or buying another business out or starting a new business or franchising," she said. "Whatever her dreams are is where I want her to be."
Quiz

1. Which statement would be MOST important to include in an objective summary of the article?
   (A) Customers will spend money to buy Samantha Zumwalt's slimes because they do not want the mess of making slime themselves at home.
   (B) Samantha Zumwalt makes fairly priced and deliciously scented slimes in many varieties that customers will be sure to love and buy again.
   (C) Because Samantha Zumwalt is home-schooled, hands-on business learning is an essential part of her education and preparation for life.
   (D) For Samantha Zumwalt, selling slime online has become a profitable livelihood and a way to develop a closer relationship with her mother.

2. How does the author develop the CENTRAL idea of the article?
   (A) by exploring the process of making slime and why Samantha thought she could be a success
   (B) by highlighting humorous anecdotes about Samantha and her mother learning to make slime
   (C) by describing Samantha's slime-making business and how she works to make it a success
   (D) by outlining the growth in the popularity of slime and how Samantha's compares with others

3. Which answer choice BEST describes Jessica Burks' reaction to Samantha's desire to make slime?
   (A) Burks hurried to develop the business once Samantha showed her how to make slime because she believed it could sell well for the holidays.
   (B) Burks enthusiastically accepted the idea of making and selling slime because she had just watched several tutorials about it on YouTube.
   (C) Burks hesitated on the idea because she believed it would be a messy waste of time, and she gave in only when she needed a new way to make money.
   (D) Burks attempted to interest Samantha in other kinds of business ideas, and she changed her mind only when she saw slime selling well online.
Why does the author conclude the article by quoting Samantha's and Jessica's thoughts about their business?

(A) to illustrate the role of the business in establishing Samantha's plans for the future
(B) to contrast the viewpoints the two women have about how to run the business
(C) to emphasize the close relationship the two women are likely to have into the future
(D) to highlight the importance of investors if Samantha wants to expand her business
YouTube is the new way to get famous

By Abby Ohlheiser, Washington Post on 07.30.18
Word Count 1,472
Level MAX

Richard Lamar Hawk (left), also known as the rapper Silentó, meets fans at VidCon. Photo by: The Washington Post/Jessica Pons

ANAHEIM, California — The fans who approached Conan Gray wanted to give their whole selves to him in a moment. He handled the crying, shaking ones with warmth and patience, the skills required to defuse this particular bomb.

"Oh no! Don’t start crying." The teenager took a deep breath, and then another one, and he waited with a hand on her shoulder until the moment felt almost normal. "How are you?" He signed her badge, they took a photo and he brought her in "one last time" for a hug.

For two hours, Gray stood in place, in front of a blue-and-green backdrop adorned with the VidCon logo. The conference has become the biggest event of the year for people who are famous on the Internet — or for those who want to be, and those seeking their attention.
At 19, the YouTube musician was now famous enough to earn an official meet-and-greet at the conference, his movements controlled by security protocol to prevent a mob. His fans lined up in five rows, waiting their turn to stand on the white X and receive their 30 to 45 seconds with Gray.

"I've seen this!" he says to another fan, who handed him a piece of art. "Did you put it on Instagram?" She had. The photographer cued Gray to move faster through each fan encounter. "How about a photo?" the photographer asked. He snapped the photo and cheerily said, "We got it, we got it."

Nowhere makes you realize that being a creator is competitive more than VidCon, a convention that mixes famous online personalities, their fans and the brands who want a slice of it all. About 30,000 people show up to the annual convention these days, and not a small number of them are or want to be creators themselves. When a travel company asked 1,000 kids between the ages of 6 and 17 what they wanted to be when they grew up, 75 percent of them said they wanted to be a YouTuber or a vlogger.

Alexis Cox is a poet, has written a children's book and started her first YouTube channel in 2016. She came to VidCon to learn and to see the creators she's been watching since she was 7, such as vlogger Alex Wassabi. She also loves the extremely popular YouTuber Ricegum, she said, "but he's not here."

Alexis has noticed that the people who are succeeding as online content creators are getting savvier and younger. "It's intimidating when you see younger people doing better than you," Alexis said. "You feel like you should be doing better than them."

Alexis is 12.

She might want to do YouTube as her day job, if she can get good enough, but she deleted her first channel in 2017 after running it for a year. "I didn't like what I was putting out there," she said. She'll come back to the platform when she has learned more and can make content she is proud of.

The VidCon expo floor is swarming with kids like Alexis, who wear purple "Creator" badges around their necks. The famous ones — the featured creators and guests — wear yellow. Purple badges go to VidCon and sit in on panels to hear the yellow badges talk about how they made it.

Some of the purple badges already have a following: Alan and Alex Stokes, walking the floor in matching pink T-shirts and ripped white jeans, were followed by a small crowd of young girls hoping for a selfie. The 21-year-old twins are Instagram famous: combined, they have more than 2 million followers. Their Jake Paul-inspired comedy videos put them in the spotlight just a few months before the convention, and now, brands are courting the duo to stop by their VidCon booths for publicity.
Conan Gray's first YouTube videos only showed his torso, or the art he was making — the Internet is a dangerous place for little kids, and he was 9. At around age 11, his mom gave him permission to show his face.

"I've been saving up for this camera for a really long time," he says in one early video, two weeks after buying one high-quality enough for vlogging. The video ends with Gray making funny faces as he struggles to reach the button to turn the camera off.

"When I first started making videos, it was just kind of my attempt to connect with someone, to connect with anyone, and I just kind of wanted to do something with my time," Gray said in an interview at VidCon.

In eighth grade, his school found out he made videos on the side. A teacher projected them onto the board for the whole class to see. He only had a small following of fans — YouTube was a weekend project that brought him about $100 a month in ad revenue. It was mortifying: He was not ready to expose this part of himself to his real world.

At 18, Conan Gray became famous for "Idle Town," a song that paid tribute to his senior year of high school in his small Texas town. The song was an ironic turning point for Gray — the soon-to-be viral video was the result of a decision to step back from the Internet a bit and make something for himself instead of trying to make content that he thought people would like.

"Idle Town" now has more than 8 million views on YouTube and 8 million streams on Spotify. "It blew up in our faces and kind of swept us off our feet," he said.

Then he started college.

As Gray was preparing to go to UCLA, he was also gaining lawyers and managers. As you might imagine, combining brand-new stardom with freshman year of college was not something that really worked well.

"It's really tough. My first quarter of college I was barely surviving," he said. "I was working from the second I woke up, had my 9 a.m. classes, worked all the way until like 4 in the morning. It was way too much, and it definitely, definitely had a really bad impact on my mental health."

His managers told him he needed to do something for his own sake, so there were some adjustments: Now he takes classes some days and does viral fame on the others.

There are generations of YouTube creators, which turn over every few years. There are the originals, the older ones who became famous on YouTube when the only sort of Internet fame that existed was random viral stardom: Phil DeFranco, Jenna Marbles and Hannah Hart, for instance. There are the ex-Vine stars, such as Jake Paul and Liza Koshy, who took over the platform's algorithms in 2017. Gray is slightly behind them, but he already speaks of the generation behind him — the tweens and younger — with the wariness of a veteran.
"When people my age started, it wasn't a career to be on the Internet or to be an influencer. So no one was trying to exploit us," he said. "No one cared.

"These days I really fear for these young kids who are becoming so big. Because there are so many people in this industry that are so exploitative and know that they can make a ton of money off these kids."

Gray has a long-term plan, and it does not involve being a famous YouTube personality. "I don't expect to be here forever, and I don't expect people to care forever. I love what I'm doing and this is an amazing experience and I feel so, so, so lucky," he said. "But once it's done I'm going to be really happy having a quiet, normal life.

"I can't imagine, it'd be exhausting to be here forever," he said, gesturing generally to, just, everything going on around him. "I'd be so tired."

At the end of hour one, Gray took a sip of bottled water from his manager and adjusted his shirt. He does not appear to be tired, and he looks excited to meet you. The next girl waiting to see him stands at the designated spot, hands pressed together in an excited prayer.

There are rules to a meet-and-greet that keep the line moving, and Gray bends most of them. He signs things, he asks his fans questions about their lives. A family greeted him with the news that they were from right near his hometown. The photo shoot devolved into a discussion of local coffee shops.

A girl with blue hair is already crying as she waits. She put her feelings in a note, which she gives to him. "I'm so excited to read this," he tells her. "I read one last night, and it made me cry." He signs her shoe.

The line continues:

You helped me so much.
You mean the world to me.
You inspire me.
Quiz

1. Read the list of sentences from the article.

   1. He handled the crying, shaking ones with warmth and patience, the skills required to defuse this particular bomb.
   2. Conan Gray’s first YouTube videos only showed his torso, or the art he was making — the Internet is a dangerous place for little kids, and he was 9.
   3. It was mortifying: He was not ready to expose this part of himself to his real world.
   4. "Because there are so many people in this industry that are so exploitative and know that they can make a ton of money off these kids."

Which two sentences taken together provide the BEST evidence to support the idea that YouTube creators face certain risks?

(A) 1 and 2
(B) 1 and 3
(C) 2 and 4
(D) 3 and 4

2. The following sentence from the article helps prove the claim that many YouTube creators are eager to learn from experts in the field in order to improve their content.

   She'll come back to the platform when she has learned more and can make content she is proud of.

Which sentence from the article provides further support for this claim?

(A) Alexis has noticed that the people who are succeeding as online content creators are getting savvier and younger.
(B) "It's intimidating when you see younger people doing better than you," Alexis said.
(C) The VidCon expo floor is swarming with kids like Alexis, who wear purple "Creator" badges around their necks.
(D) Purple badges go to VidCon and sit in on panels to hear the yellow badges talk about how they made it.
3  Read the last three sentences of the article.

"You helped me so much."

"You mean the world to me."

"You inspire me."

How effective are these sentences in concluding the article?

(A) Very effective; they reflect how influential YouTube creators are.

(B) Very effective; they help explain why YouTube creators enjoy VidCon.

(C) Not at all effective; they fail to capture the responses of YouTube creators.

(D) Not at all effective; they fail to sum up the importance of VidCon.

4  Why does the author include the information about Gray's experience during his first quarter of college?

(A) to show that he needed to make a choice between YouTube and college

(B) to show that he was unprepared to handle his fame on YouTube

(C) to show that working as a YouTube creator was harder than college

(D) to show that being a YouTube creator takes hard work and dedication
How "Minecraft" is helping kids fall in love with books

By Alison Flood and Sian Cain, The Guardian, adapted by Newsela staff on 07.27.18
Word Count 830
Level MAX


Robert Louis Stevenson's 1881 classic "Treasure Island" tells of Jim Hawkins's adventures on board the Hispaniola. He and his crew — along with double-crossing pirate Long John Silver — set out to find Captain Flint's missing treasure on Skeleton Island. Now, more than a century later, children can try and find it themselves. Stevenson's fictional island was given a blocky remodeling in "Minecraft." It is part of a new project aimed at bringing reluctant readers to literary classics.

From Spyglass Hill to Ben Gunn's cave, children can explore every nook and cranny of Skeleton Island. It is part of Litcraft. That is the name of the new partnership between Lancaster University and Microsoft. Microsoft bought the game "Minecraft" for $2.5 billion in 2015. Now, it is played by 74 million people each month. The Litcraft platform uses "Minecraft" to create accurate scale models of fictional islands; "Treasure Island" is the first. Michael Morpurgo's "Kensuke's Kingdom" was just completed and many others are planned.
Regular "Minecraft" is rife with literary creations — the whole of George RR Martin's sprawling setting for "Game of Thrones," Westeros, has been created in its entirety. Several different Hogwarts have been created, too. Litcraft is not all fun and games, but is also peppered with educational tasks that aim to re-engage reluctant readers with the book it is based on. Lead researcher and head of Lancaster University's English and creative writing department, Professor Sally Bushell, calls it "an educational model that connects the imaginative spatial experience of reading the text to an immersive experience in the game world."

"We hope it will motivate reluctant readers — we can say, 'We're going to read the book and then at one point, we'll go play on the ship.' I would have loved it as a kid. It is an empathetic task — you do what the characters did yourself, so you understand why they act the way they did in the book," she says of the Litcraft "Treasure Island."

The "Treasure Island" level has been extensively road-tested by children such as Dylan, whose school is set to adopt Litcraft in 2019. "It's really fun," he says. "I enjoyed it because I've read the book, but you have to follow rules in that. In games, you can explore. Now I know exactly what the book looked like."

What did he like the most? "I like that you get to see the pictures. You don't have to make them in your head. And I liked the ship, Ben Gunn's cave, and the parrots. And there was that weird pig that kept jumping off that cliff. That wasn't in the book!" ("That was a game glitch," says Bushell).
The project is currently being presented to schoolteachers and librarians across the United Kingdom. There has been "an enthusiastic response" to the trials underway in local schools. They plan to roll Litcraft out to libraries in Lancashire and Leeds in October 2018.

Dylan, like many 9-year-olds, enjoys books but is more enthusiastic when talking about "Minecraft," which he does with the casual expertise that many children have with their favorite games. He's already made his own "Hunger Games" world in "Minecraft" at home, but couldn't get some of his traps to work.

This know-how seems to both frighten and impress less tech-savvy adults — which Bushell hopes will not deter schools from adopting it. "The kids know how to do it more than the teachers do," she says. "It inverts the relationship: you've got kids who know more than the adults. You need quite confident teachers. They're more worried about it. I want to say, 'Don't be worried, because all your 8-year-olds will know how to do this.'"

Libraries are particularly interested in the possibilities of multiplayer, Bushell says, adding that one of the future projects will be "Lord of the Flies": "In that case, you want all the kids in there playing out a scenario and asking philosophical questions. We hope they do some reading, then play the game, then do some empathetic writing based on what they did in there."

The "Kensuke's Kingdom" map, based on Morpurgo's story of a boy washed up alone, is particularly aimed at engaging reluctant readers and has just been completed. "The library resources we are putting together include audio and in-game reading and writing as well as graphic novels as a step to the full text," said Bushell. "The resources are designed to encourage them to either return to or connect with the book through the immersive experience."

Bushell said more literary "Minecraft" islands will follow. "'Treasure Island' is the first world for Minecraft.edu but they anticipate a series — most likely, the next will be 'The Swiss Family Robinson,' 'The Tempest' and 'Robinson Crusoe,'" Bushell says. A recreation of "Dante's Inferno," with a map for each level of hell, is also in development.

Quiz

1. Which sentence from the article would be MOST important to include in a summary of the article?
   
   (A) Robert Louis Stevenson's 1881 classic "Treasure Island" tells of Jim Hawkins's adventures on board the Hispaniola.
   
   (B) From Spyglass Hill to Ben Gunn's cave, children can explore every nook and cranny of Skeleton Island.
   
   (C) The Litcraft platform uses "Minecraft" to create accurate scale models of fictional islands: "Treasure Island" is the first.
   
   (D) He's already made his own "Hunger Games" world in "Minecraft" at home, but couldn't get some of his traps to work.

2. Which statement is a central idea of the article?

   (A) The Litcraft project was created as the result of a partnership between Lancaster University and Microsoft.
   
   (B) The Litcraft project is being tested by children in the United Kingdom and will soon be used in schools.
   
   (C) The Litcraft project will be adding multiplayer options to help teach kids to do more empathetic writing.
   
   (D) The Litcraft project is designed to encourage students to read more and connect with literary classics.
3 Read the paragraph from the article.

This know-how seems to both frighten and impress less tech-savvy adults — which Bushell hopes will not deter schools from adopting it. "The kids know how to do it more than the teachers do," she says. "It inverts the relationship: you've got kids who know more than the adults. You need quite confident teachers. They're more worried about it. I want to say, 'Don't be worried, because all your 8-year-olds will know how to do this.'"

What is one way the placement of this paragraph develops the idea of Litcraft being used in schools?

(A) It introduces a possible problem that might arise when teachers try to use Litcraft in their classrooms.

(B) It elaborates on some of the effects that having Litcraft in the classroom could have on teachers.

(C) It highlights a few of the ways that teachers have successfully used Litcraft in their classrooms.

(D) It adds details about the main goals that teachers have for students who use Litcraft in their classrooms.

4 Read the selection from the article.

Litcraft is not all fun and games, but is also peppered with educational tasks that aim to re-engage reluctant readers with the book it is based on. Lead researcher and head of Lancaster University's English and creative writing department, Professor Sally Bushell, calls it "an educational model that connects the imaginative spatial experience of reading the text to an immersive experience in the game world."

How does this selection contribute to the development of the MAIN ideas of the article?

(A) by explaining how the "Minecraft" islands work and what their main purpose is

(B) by focusing on the negative effects of using "Minecraft" islands in the classroom

(C) by highlighting what some students think about using the "Minecraft" islands

(D) by arguing that the "Minecraft" islands are very popular with students
Young adults need to be more interactive to overcome loneliness

By USA Today, adapted by Newsela staff on 06.19.18
Word Count 822
Level 1090L

Loneliness is impacting more people than ever -- especially young people, according to a new survey.

"Nearly half of Americans report sometimes or always feeling alone or left out," according to the study by the health company Cigna. One out of five Americans has no person they can talk to.

Who's the loneliest generation? That would be Generation Z, defined in this survey as those between 18 to 22. Their average loneliness score is nearly 10 points higher than the least lonely generation — the Greatest Generation, those 72 and older.

It's tempting to blame Gen Z's reliance on smartphones and social media. Still, the survey didn't find a significant difference in loneliness levels between those who used social media often or infrequently.
Given the worrying consequences, the loneliness of Gen Z — and other generations — should be taken seriously. In fact, Cigna, citing a 2010 Brigham Young University study, says loneliness has the same health impact "as smoking 15 cigarettes a day, making it even more dangerous than obesity."

**Reaching Out To Others**

One movement that pushed against this trend is #WalkUpNotOut. This idea came about after the tragic high school shooting in Parkland, Florida. The movement urged high school students to reach out to students perceived as socially isolated. Regardless of your position on gun control, it can only help to have students focus on being kind and welcoming to each other. It's particularly important when the popularity of social media has made it increasingly easy to bully both on and off campuses.

Plus, this encourages face-to-face interaction. The Cigna survey found a huge difference in average loneliness scores between those who had daily meaningful in-person encounters and those who didn’t. Astonishingly, one of five Americans surveyed reported having such encounters less frequently than once a week.

It's also important for Gen Z — and other Americans — to take social engagement seriously. As neighborhood communities have eroded, families have fractured, and church attendance has declined, there are fewer and fewer opportunities for finding new friends or developing meaningful relationships. That puts even more pressure on students. Imagine being unhappy at school and having no other community to turn to.

**Interaction With Others On The Decline**

A 2017 report was prepared for Senator Mike Lee, a Utah Republican. It said several factors show the decline in our interaction with each other:

- Monthly church attendance fell from the early 1970s to the present. About 50 percent to 57 percent attended in the past, compared with 42 percent to 44 percent now.

- In 1974, one-third of Americans spent time socially with their neighbors several times a week. Now, only about one-fifth do.

- We’re also spending less time chatting with our co-workers, going from an average of 2.5 hours a week in the mid-1970s to just under an hour in 2012.

- Families are also becoming smaller, and the percentage of children raised by a single parent or no parent has doubled, from 15 percent to 31 percent.

Given these declining numbers, it makes sense that more Americans are falling through the cracks and losing ways to get to know other people.
Less Interest In Socializing

And if Gen Z is using phones instead of in-person interactions, that could be contributing to these young adults' loneliness. Psychology professor Jean Twenge touched on this idea in an article in the Atlantic last year. She highlighted how teens were less interested in driving and getting out of the house than past generations.

Describing one unnamed 13-year-old, Twenge wrote: "She spent much of her summer keeping up with friends, but nearly all of it was over text or Snapchat. 'I've been on my phone more than I've been with actual people,' she said. 'My bed has, like, an imprint of my body.'"

That's not healthy. If these are the habits Gen Z is developing in these crucial years, it doesn't look good for this generation becoming less lonely in the future.

The American writer Flannery O'Connor was fond of a Christian prayer. It included these lines, "Raphael, lead us toward those we are waiting for, those who are waiting for us: Raphael, Angel of happy meeting, lead us by the hand toward those we are looking for."

You don't need to be religious to realize that we both need — and are needed by — others. Our own lives grow in meaning through many of our interactions with others.

It's easy to share our opinions on Facebook or on bumper stickers. Still, at the end of the day, one of the most powerful things many of us may do to change the world could be our "hello" to someone. It could be our reaching out to that person who seems in danger of being on the edge, making eye contact and sharing a smile with a homeless person even if we don't have change. Let's look up from our phones a little more often — and start acknowledging the people right in front of us.
Quiz

1. Which two of the following sentences from the article BEST express central ideas of the article?

   1. *Who's the loneliest generation? That would be Generation Z, defined in this survey as those between 18 to 22.*
   2. *It's tempting to blame Gen Z's reliance on smartphones and social media.*
   3. *The Cigna survey found a huge difference in average loneliness scores between those who had daily meaningful in-person encounters and those who didn't.*
   4. *It included these lines, "Raphael, lead us toward those we are waiting for, those who are waiting for us: Raphael, Angel of happy meeting, lead us by the hand toward those we are looking for."

   (A) 1 and 2
   (B) 1 and 3
   (C) 2 and 4
   (D) 3 and 4

2. Which statement would be MOST important and appropriate to include in an objective summary of the article?

   (A) *Based on the Cigna study, Generation Z includes people who are between the ages of 18 and 22 and are incredibly unhealthy.*
   (B) *Many people find it pleasurable to talk to others or share opinions on social media sites like Facebook.*
   (C) *According to a 2017 report, people are spending less time talking in person to people in their communities.*
   (D) *The #WalkUpNotOut was a great campaign that really helped many students feel less lonely at their schools.*
3. According to the article, which of the following MOST influenced the increased feelings of loneliness among young Americans?

(A) fewer social activities and face-to-face interactions
(B) participation with smartphones and social media
(C) bullying on school campuses and online
(D) poor health habits such as smoking cigarettes

4. Read the paragraph from the section "Less Interest In Socializing."

*Describing one unnamed 13-year-old, Twenge wrote: "She spent much of her summer keeping up with friends, but nearly all of it was over text or Snapchat. 'I've been on my phone more than I've been with actual people,' she said. 'My bed has, like, an imprint of my body.'"

Why did the author include this paragraph in the article?

(A) to explain why teens prefer to keep in contact with their friends over Snapchat instead of hanging out
(B) to emphasize the health problems that too much social media use can lead to
(C) to illustrate how some teens are spending more time socializing online than in real life
(D) to demonstrate that summer is a lonely time for many teens who do not have smartphones