

Explanation of assignment:

After reading the novel Fahrenheit 451, juniors were required to create a research report that tied the novel's message in with technology and psychology. Students were given a variety of technology/psychology topics to choose from to conduct research on the impact of this technology on the human mind. As per the requirements attached, students were to prepare a report that consisted of five different parts: introduction, product information, effects of the technology, discussion of the results, and recommendations. The final product included a word count of 950-1500 words. The report also had to include a Works Cited page. Students were given approximately one week for the assignment: three days for completing research analysis and three days for writing the paper.

The assignment parameters precede the student writing sample here.

English III Research Project

Comfortably Numb: New Technology and the Human Mind

Fahrenheit 451 tells of a future in which an abundance of technological stimuli has created a population that for the most part has forgotten how to feel, think, and interact with the natural world around them. The never-ending stream of entertainment and the social isolation depicted in the story combine to create characters who seemingly don't care when others die, when their nation is at war, or what the season is. While the characters' lack of empathy and awareness might seem extreme, there are many elements in our society that relate to Bradbury's vision of the future. Your assignment is to create a research report and do the following:

1. Choose a new technological product from the provided list and research what they are, how they are different from their predecessors, how they will "help" people, and what they promise to those who buy them.
2. Research the impact of technology on the human mind. Use the list of google search phrases to examine all relevant effects.

Technology and Psychology: Use the following phrases to research how technology impacts the brain. Choose the areas that seem most relevant for your products.

Technology and Empathy	Technological Cocooning
Technology and Apathy	Technology and Socialization
Social Media and Narcissism	Technology and Narcissism
Technology and Child Development	Technology and Declines in Critical Thinking
Technology Replacing Nature	Technology Replacing Relationships
Technology and Patience	Technology and Physical Activity
Nature Deficit Disorder	Technology and Losing Essential Skills
Technology Destroying Nature	Technology Designed to be Addictive

Remember:

- Get sources approved by Mrs. Williams, to insure their integrity and veracity.
- Do NOT under any circumstances plagiarize or copy other peoples' work or ideas, or use information from sources without citing it. You probably will be caught. If you have a question about when to cite a source, ask Mrs. Williams.
- Below is a list of some pre-approved internet sources to get you started:

time.com	newsweek.com	latimes.com
usinfo.state.gov	newyorktimes.com	Modesto Bee - modbee.com
The Atlantic	Nation	U.S. News & World Report
The Week	Economist	New Republic
USA Today	Washington Post	Wall Street Journal
BBC.com	CNN	NBC News
Wired	Business Insider	The Guardian
Psychology Today	Slate	Nature.com

3. Based on your research into technology and the brain, analyze the effects your new product might have on society and the individual's ability to think, feel, and interact with the world around them.

English III Research Project

The Structure of the Research Report

1. Cover Page
2. Table of Contents
3. Introduction: Begin the report by discussing the world of *Fahrenheit 451* and introducing your product in relation to that world. **(200-300+ words)**
4. Results—Product Information: Explain your product. What is it? How is it new and/or different? What does it promise, or why are they “better” than the status quo? How will it make our life better or easier? **(200-300+ words)**
5. Results—Effects of Technology: Connect your psychological research to your product. How might this product change how humans think, act, and relate with one another? **(200-300+ words)**
6. Discussion of Results: Explain the overall impact of technology on human psychology, relationships, and lifestyles. **(200-300+ words)**
7. Recommendations: Conclude the report by incorporating *Fahrenheit 451*, your product research, and your psychological research in order to suggest what actions individuals should take in response to these new products. **(150-250+ words)**

Other Elements of the Report

1. The report must follow MLA formatting.
2. The report must include correct headings and subheadings.
3. The report must include visual aids within the document, laid out with minimal white space.
4. The report must include correct parenthetical citations within the document and a complete works cited page at the end of the document.

Part I: Introduction

The world cannot stop technology, once new technology is introduced, humans are able to adapt to it easily. Although, humans often do not realize that they soon become dependent on the new technology. Recently, I gave up technology for a day and found that it was really difficult for me to let go of certain items. I never realized how dependent I was on my vehicle and music; I can live without my phone but probably not for more than a day. In the novel, *Fahrenheit 451*, by Ray Bradbury, the society is brainwashed by technology to the point where the people cannot live without technology. It is unfortunate to see the society lose touch with their emotions and senses because they are blinded by technology. For example, people are so lonely that they end up “jumped off the cap of a pillbox,” which means that people are overdosing on pills (Bradbury 19). In fact, people overdose on pills so frequently that 2 machines were made, one of which slides down into the stomach to pump out all the old and bad substances, while the other machine pumps all the blood from the body only to replace it with new blood. No matter what, people should not lose touch with their emotions so easily by brainwashing technology to the point where it makes them feel lonely. When people feel alone it may lead to overdosing on pills. It is truly unfortunate that people begin to forget significant and important memories due to technology. Technology can be overwhelming and in *Fahrenheit 451*, Guy Montag asks Mildred, “When did we meet? And *where*?” (Bradbury 46). Mildred could not remember and blew off the question as if it didn’t matter. Meeting a significant other is an unforgettable moment and seeing Mildred forget after only 10 years is sad. Towards the end of the novel, Guy Montag’s house is about to burst into flames; he sees his wife run out of the house and to a taxi. As husband and wife, they must support one another, although instead Mildred cries, “Poor family, poor family, oh everything gone, everything, everything gone now...” (Bradbury 116). Mildred is not talking about her true family; she is speaking of the family that she sees on the walls which is called the parlor.

Therefore, Mildred cares more about technology and the parlor than about her husband.

In the real world, people depend on technology although not as much as in the novel *Fahrenheit 451*. The only way technology can take over the human brain is if people let it. One piece of technology that society uses today is the virtual voice assistant called Alexa. This product is similar to the doorbell in Guy Montag's house because the door notifies Mr. and Mrs. Montag with voice assistance when there is a guest. When comparing *Fahrenheit 451* to the world today technology is nearly the same. The difference is people within today's society is not as consumed with technology as those in the novel.

Part II: Results- Product Information

One piece of technology that society uses today is the virtual voice assistant called Alexa. This product is usually located in the kitchen or family room in the homes of the consumers. Alexa is used to provide answers to any questions, play music, weather alerts, online shopping, and even tell stories to children. In order to activate the device, the word "Alexa" must be said before any statement or question. Many people are beginning to use Alexa in their daily lives while others just use Alexa every so often. To add to that, in the article "Here's How People Say Google Home and Alexa Impact Their Lives" Daniel Terdiman states "...people say they think having one lets them multitask more easily." With that being said, Amazon's goals for Alexa have been successful because the consumers' lives are becoming a little bit more uncomplicated due to this product. Not only that but, Alexa is not only a helping hand; it makes consumers feel less lonely. Another way Alexa is useful is by making online shopping super simple. Since Alexa is linked to the consumers Amazon account, all the

consumer has to do is tell Alexa whatever it is that they want to buy. In the article “You’ll Love And Hate Amazon Echo” by Stephen Cobb, he explains, “...Amazon Echo make it very easy to buy things even if you’re not shopping...by these words: do you want to order?” Amazon uses Alexa as a tool to make more money from consumers just by asking a simple question; this feature may not be the best for young children that want a new dollhouse. Instead of a little girl asking her parents for a new dollhouse, she tells Alexa to buy it for her. Therefore, Alexa is not for all families.

Amazon invented Alexa on April 1, 1996 hoping to make people's daily routine a little less complicated. In the article “Here’s How People Say Google Home and Alexa Impact Their Lives” written by Daniel Terdiman, he states, “72% of people...say the devices are often part of their daily routines.” This research is from people taking a survey on how much they use Alexa. So many people use Alexa daily although there is still quite a bit of people unsure about this product. For example, in the article “You’ll Love and Hate Amazon Echo,” Stephen Cobb explains the pros and cons that Alexa presents when in a home. Cobb states that overall “...Alexa is not a serious risk to the average family,” but even after his explanation people still wonder about the cons. All items have pros and cons just like everyone has their own opinions, therefore if the consumer of Alexa believes that the benefits outweigh the costs then they should be happy with their device. As of right now, the world is not dependent on Alexa although, technology is powerful and cannot be stopped.

Part III: Results- Effect of Technology

Alexa is affecting people in many different ways; some people have become dependent on Alexa while others unplug their devices from the wall to keep their privacy. In the article “7 Ways Alexa and Amazon Echo Pose a Privacy Risk” by Ben Stegner, he expresses how Alexa is always

listening and how some new Alexa's now have a camera. Stegner explains the intentions of those who invent technology are positive; for example, "Like most features of technology, this one adds convenience in exchange for less privacy/security." This product worries consumers because people do not want Alexa to drop in on important conversations that may take place in the family room. Although, some people could care less about their privacy because they believe there is nothing to hide. What the consumers do not realize is that "...hacking could let malicious folks take over your smart device and use it's microphone and camera for sirty purposes," states Stegner. When buying an Alexa those are serious factors that come into play. Nobody should ever feel like they're being watched or listened to whenever they look over at the innocent little device placed in the family room or kitchen. When people feel watched it affects them mentally and sometimes they may end up seeing things due to their brain playing tricks on them.

Technology affects children just as much as adults, if not more. Every parent struggles when teaching their child manners and Alexa does not seem to help during this process. Alice Truong wrote the article "Parents Are Worried the Amazon Echo Is Conditioning Their Kids to Be Rude" and she explains that parents believe Alexa is teaching children to have unacceptable manners. For example, Truong explains, "Alexa never says 'That was rude' or 'I'm tired of you asking me the same question over and over again.'" Children often push the wrong buttons when talking with their parents; Alexa is not human therefore it doesn't know when a child is out of line. Since Alexa cannot correct the children's behavior, it becomes difficult for parents to monitor their child's manners. Not only that but, Alexa is changing the way children grow up. Since Alexa can answer any question asked, this creates an easy way for children or anyone to obtain information. In the article "Experts Say Keep Amazon's Alexa Away From Your Kids" by Sam Briddle, he expresses his concerns about Alexa affecting the human brain. For example, Briddle states, "...Alexa will just instantly answer any questions they have, so they won't ever incubate their curiosity or learn how to navigate the world to obtain answers to their

questions.” Adults understand how to seek answers when the answers are not given to them, although if children grow up with Alexa at their beckon call; children will not know how to find answers when the answers are not given to them. It is extremely important for children to learn how to solve problems and critical thinking skills for adulthood. Based on the research, parents are concerned that Alexa is affecting their children in negative ways.

Part IV: Discussion of Results

Society may not believe that technology is affecting their daily lives although without realizing they have become dependent on it. Technology is changing the way people think, act, and speak. The generations that were not born into technology understand how to survive without it, while the generations that are born into technology rely on it without even noticing. It is sad to see that society is pushing aside those incredibly important life skills, for an easier lifestyle. In schools, we now have a computers class rather than a sewing class or even a cooking class. In the real world, people come and go, therefore the newer generations need to get up to speed when learning life skills because sooner or later they will not have their mom to cook for them. Those who use technology are becoming dependent, “...from the moment they wake up until the moment they go to bed at night...” explains Sam Briddle in his article “Experts Say Keep Amazon’s Alexa Away From Your Kids.” Therefore, people are not spending their time wisely, when they could be attempting to learn new life skills. It is disappointing to see what technology has done to society. Technology does not allow people to shut down their brains because they constantly have something in front of them. Parks have become empty because children would rather be inside playing video games. Some parents are afraid of their children “turning...into a raging asshole” expresses Alice Truong in her article “Parents Are Worried The

Amazon Echo is Conditioning Their Kids To Be Rude.” No parent would ever want their child to be disrespectful and it appears that technology is playing a role in the way children/people act. This is mainly due to technology changing the way people interact with each other.

Technology is changing society knows, it is creating easier daily routines yet making it more difficult for people to have conversations. Human interaction is extremely important and it is beneficial that people continue to interact with each other. The problem with technology is that it is beginning to serve as a “substitute for real relationships...which are important for socialization,” states Briddle. Unfortunately, society has become so consumed with technology that they cannot even talk with someone that is in the same room with them face to face because they would rather communicate over text. To add to that, people cannot even take a walk without a device in their hand or in their ears.

Part V: Recommendations

Technology is intended to make the lives of the consumers easier. Users of technology need to realize how important it is to continue to use their brains. Alexa can be useful in so many ways, although I do not recommend the use of this technology. There are more cons than there are benefits when using Alexa. In the article “7 Ways Alexa and Amazon Echo Pose a Privacy Risk,” Stegner explains, “Like most features of technology, this one adds convenience in exchange for less privacy/security.” I would not allow Alexa into my house because it is almost the same as letting a stranger in my home, therefore I would not recommend Alexa for anyone. My grandparents were recently given an Alexa, at first they thought it was great until they realized that Alexa could be listening to everything they say. Alexa is now unplugged from the wall and will never be plugged in

again. Not only that but it is extremely beneficial for future generations to understand the importance of privacy and obtaining answers. Thanks to technology, children can now have the answer to any question at their beckon call, so it is critical that children are taught to search for answers and not on the internet. Overall I do not recommend Alexa based off the research I have found, but if the consumer does not care about the risks then they can do whatever they want.

Works Cited

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Scoring rationale:

This essay received a 3 overall. While the writer produced a very thorough examination of Alexa and its effects on society, the content does not completely match what the prompt is asking for. The prompt asks to take an examination of the technology's effects on the human mind, yet most of the sources the writer uses examine more personal and consumer opinions of the product. A more thorough examination of quality research could have added to the student's analysis. According to the introductory information that students were provided for the assignment, several key internet sources are provided. None of these websites were used. Furthermore, the student utilizes many simple sentences and provides vague analysis. The report is solid in its scope of ideas and its ability to discuss sources, however. There is also a clear beginning, middle, and end and good control of conventions.

Common Core All-Subject Writing Rubric

Technology/psychology report
11th grade 2nd semester

Writing Type(circle one): Argumentative Informative/Explanatory Narrative (ELA only)

CONTENT X4	The writing has a sharp focus and clarity of purpose. The ideas are developed with examples and specific details including textual evidence and are thoroughly elaborated. All elements of the prompt are addressed.	The writing has a clear central idea and a clear focus. Ideas are developed with textual evidence, even though the development may be uneven. Information is relevant. Most elements of the prompt are addressed.	The writing has a vague central idea; there are shifts in focus or digressions. Ideas are listed, information may be incomplete or irrelevant, textual evidence may be lacking, and there is little development. Some elements of the prompt are not addressed.	The writing has unclear or confusing ideas. The ideas are missing relevant information, there is not enough information, or there is little or no development, and little textual evidence. Significant elements of the prompt are not addressed.	X4
ORGANIZATION	There is a beginning, middle, and end in the writing with strong transitions between ideas. Ideas are presented in a logical order and there is a sense of completion about the writing.	There is a beginning, middle, and end in the writing with simple transitions between ideas. Ideas are presented in a logical order and the writing may have a weak ending.	There is a weak beginning, middle, and end with gaps in ideas. Ideas are presented in random order, there may be significant repetition, and the writing may have no ending.	There is no beginning or end with severe gaps in ideas. Ideas are presented in a random or repetitive order. There may be too little information to demonstrate organization.	
SPELLING & GRAMMAR (Conventions)	The writing exhibits superior control over grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. If there are errors present, they do not appear to be part of a pattern of errors.	The writing exhibits proper control over grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. If there are errors present, they do not appear to be a part of a pattern of errors.	The writing exhibits weak control over grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. The errors minimally affect the meaning of the writing.	The writing exhibits little to no control over grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. The errors greatly affect the meaning of the writing.	
Teacher Feedback: {{Student Reflection on Back}}				Total Points Earned	
				Score	3