



Yale-New Haven
Teachers Institute®

Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2019 Volume I: Digital Lives

Digital Lives and the Impact of Technology: Utopia or Dystopia?

Guide for Curriculum Unit 19.01.03
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This unit facilitates students in studying the positive and negative effects of society's current preoccupation with digital media, with specific focus on teenagers. Students will be introduced to the concept of Utopia via an excerpt from Thomas More and the song "Imagine" by John Lennon. The class will then proceed to research historical Utopian communities such as the Amish and the Shakers among others. Following this the class will be encouraged to engage in a self-reflection on digital use. Research will be conducted on the potential positive effects of digital media, such as for academic research and learning, safety and self-help, as well as negative consequences of excessive digital media use noted in the literature such as effects on attention span, psychosocial functioning, and behavioral addiction. Strategies used during the nonfiction portion of the unit will include a minimum of teacher presentation, with an emphasis on individual and group research, student-created multimedia presentations, note taking, class discussions, and reflective writing. Then the unit will delve into the prevalence and fascination with dystopian literature and study a classic science fiction story, "The Veldt" by Ray Bradbury, and discuss the role of technology in this dystopia. Finally, students will write their own stories imagining how digital technology will impact a future that may occur in their lifetimes.

(Developed for English Language Arts, grade 8; recommended for English, grades 7-10)

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