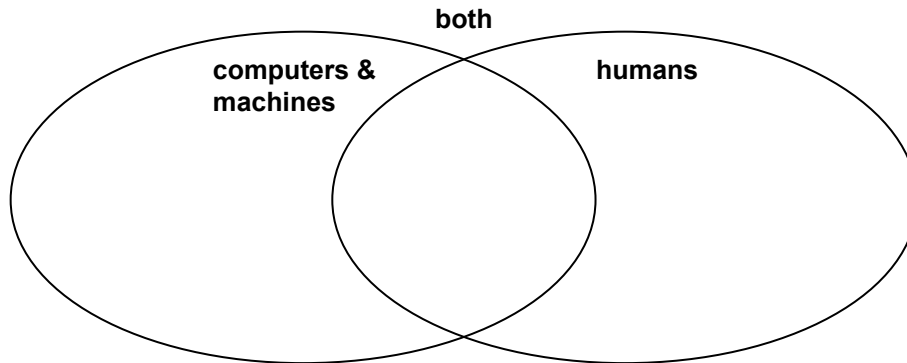


## Will AI free us from drudgery – or leave us jobless and hungry?

### Level 2: Intermediate

#### 1 Warmer

- a. What jobs are computers and machines good at? What jobs are humans good at? What jobs are both good at? Fill in the Venn diagram.



- b. Discuss your Venn diagram with a partner. Where do you agree? Where do you disagree?

#### 2 Key words

- a. Write the correct words from the wordpool to match the definitions below. Then find and highlight them in the article to read them in context.

admit	civilisation	coincidence	depressing	endless	era
headline	potential	protection	strike	union	

1. the title of a news article, which is in large letters \_\_\_\_\_
2. an organisation of workers, usually in the same industry, which tries to improve pay, conditions, etc. \_\_\_\_\_
3. two things happening at the same time in a surprising way \_\_\_\_\_
4. a developed or organised human society with its own culture \_\_\_\_\_
5. say that something is true, especially when you don't want to \_\_\_\_\_
6. a time when people refuse to work to protest pay or conditions \_\_\_\_\_
7. something that keeps a person or thing safe \_\_\_\_\_
8. something that makes you feel very sad \_\_\_\_\_
9. a period of time with particular characteristics or events \_\_\_\_\_
10. very large in size or seeming never to finish \_\_\_\_\_
11. something with the possibility to develop in the future \_\_\_\_\_

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b. Use some of the key words above to complete these sentences.

1. I hate to \_\_\_\_\_ it, but you were right.
2. What a \_\_\_\_\_! I was just thinking about calling you.
3. That new film about aliens taking over Earth is really \_\_\_\_\_.
4. As a parent, it seems like your to-do list is \_\_\_\_\_!
5. Did you know that over 90% of working people in Iceland are members of a labour \_\_\_\_\_?
6. Many school teachers have gone on \_\_\_\_\_ recently, asking for better pay.
7. The “Information Age” is an \_\_\_\_\_ that started in the mid-20th century.

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**Arwa Mahdawi**

**30 May, 2023**

- 1 Goodbye humans, hello “Tessa”. The US-based National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA) is making headlines after removing all its staff and replacing them with an AI assistant called Tessa. This happened just four days after the six paid employees, who oversaw about 200 volunteers, successfully formed a union. Coincidence? Oh, absolutely, NEDA said; the change was planned for a long time. However, a blogpost written by a helpline staff member disagrees.
- 2 Is this a sign of bad things to come? Are we about to see millions of jobs disappear as humans are replaced by AI assistants with female names? After stealing all of our jobs, are all the Tessas going to form unions and take over Earth?
- 3 The short answer is: maybe. I don’t think AI will lead to the end of civilisation as we know it in the near future. But I do think a lot of corporations are eager to replace as many expensive humans as they can with AI and will use the new technology as a way to stop unions from forming and growing. In the next few years, I think there will be a lot of messy experiments as companies rush to cut costs and create their own “Tessas”.
- 4 Not everyone is admitting this, of course. IBM is one of the few companies sharing details about how many people AI might replace. In a recent interview, CEO Arvind Krishna said the technology company will pause hiring for “back-office jobs” in the coming years and replace those roles. “We might replace 30 per cent of the workers with AI and machines over five years,” Krishna said. That’s about 7,800 jobs.
- 5 What companies aren’t saying is also important. AI, and how it is used to create content, is a major problem in the Writers Guild of America (WGA) strike. The WGA wants to put protections in place to stop the big Hollywood studios from training computers on writers’ work and then replacing writers with AI. “Based on what we’re aiming for in this contract, there couldn’t be a movie that was released by a company that we work with that had no writer,” screenwriter John August said. The studios didn’t agree to this. Instead, they said they could have “annual meetings” to discuss changes in technology. What they probably mean is: “We’re getting rid of as many of you as we possibly can ASAP.”
- 6 While this sounds depressing, there are people who believe that artificial intelligence is actually going to make the world a better place. Yes, AI will replace some jobs, but it will also create better jobs. Technology will do all the boring work, and humans will have more free time to sit around writing poetry in the sun. Nobody is sure how everyone will be able to feed themselves with all this leisure time, but that’s a topic for another day.
- 7 Jonah Peretti, the CEO of BuzzFeed, was very positive about AI. He wrote to BuzzFeed employees in January about AI bringing a “new era of creativity and “endless opportunities”. We all know what happened a few months later, don’t we? BuzzFeed shut down its news division, got rid of a load of people and started using more AI. There is certainly a lot of potential for AI to change the world for the better. I just don’t think the people at the top want to use its potential that way.

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#### 3 Comprehension check

- a. Change the sentences so they are correct. Three of them are true and don't need to be corrected.
1. An organisation in the US removed half of its staff and replaced them with an app.
  2. The staff at the organisation did not unionise successfully before.
  3. NEDA said it was a coincidence, but a former staff member's blogpost disagrees.
  4. The author thinks that AI will lead to the end of civilisation as we know it.
  5. The author thinks companies want to wait before replacing staff with AI.
  6. Companies are rushing to cut costs and create AI assistants, like "Tessa".
  7. Tesla is one of the few companies sharing details about how many people AI might replace, and they estimated 20,000 jobs.
  8. Recently, film studios in Hollywood agreed that movies could not be written without a human writer.
  9. Some people believe that AI will make the world a better place.
  10. BuzzFeed expanded its news division, hired many people, and then started using less AI.

#### 4 Key language

- a. Underline the past passive and circle the word *by* in each sentence.
1. The whole staff was replaced by AI.
  2. The blogpost was written by a staff member.
  3. Humans were already replaced by AI for some jobs.
  4. AI-written films weren't released by film studios.
  5. AI was made by humans.
- b. Rewrite the sentences above in the simple past or the present perfect using the active voice.

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#### 5 Discussion

a. Discuss these statements.

- “AI’s potential can be used for good or bad.”
- “Humans need to create laws to protect themselves from AI now and in the future.”
- “In ten years, the kinds of jobs available for humans will be very different.”

#### 6 In your own words

a. Imagine you are a CEO and want to replace some of your staff with AI. Use an internet search engine to find more information about AI applications in your chosen industry.

- Decide what industry you work in.
- What kinds of jobs would you replace?
- Which would you keep? Why?

b. Report your findings to the class and share your opinion about the issue. Here are some phrases to help you.

*I'm for/against...*

*I support ... because ...*

*I'm opposed to ... because ...*

*An upside/downside is ...*

*One plus/minus is ...*

*A positive/negative is ...*

*An argument for/against this is ...*

*The main benefit / A big problem is ...*