

## Everything I hate is on Twitter – how can the alternatives compete?

### Level 2: Intermediate / Upper-Intermediate

#### 1 Warmer

a. Discuss the questions.

1. Do you have an X account (formerly Twitter)? How often do you use the app?
2. Why do you think X became so popular?

b. Match the following social media terms with their definitions.

DM

hashtag

feed

repost

post

1. \_\_\_\_\_: the # symbol followed by a keyword which helps people find specific topics more easily
2. \_\_\_\_\_: a text, photo, or video shared on X or social
3. \_\_\_\_\_: a private message
4. \_\_\_\_\_: when you share someone else's post on your profile
5. \_\_\_\_\_: the list of all the posts from the accounts you follow

#### 2 Key words

a. Fill the gaps in the sentences using these key words from the text.

curate

delusion

disgruntled

enquiry

governance

hooliganism

monetise

spite

startling

target

1. To \_\_\_\_\_ is to make money from something.
2. An \_\_\_\_\_ is the process of asking a question.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ means *surprising* or *worrying*.
4. To \_\_\_\_\_ is to select content to be included in a collection or website.
5. To \_\_\_\_\_ is to direct a product or advertising at someone.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ is a feeling of anger towards someone that makes you want to upset or hurt them.
7. If someone is \_\_\_\_\_, they are annoyed, unhappy, or disappointed about something.

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8. A \_\_\_\_\_ is a belief that is not true.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ is the way that organisations are managed at the highest level.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ is the actions of a violent person who causes damage in public spaces.

**b. Now, use words from task a to complete each sentence. You might need to change the form of the word.**

1. There have been many campaigns to try and reduce \_\_\_\_\_ at football matches.
2. I really like her profile. It feels like every post has been carefully \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Many apps get you to join for free and then try to \_\_\_\_\_ everything after a trial period.
4. Parents are worried about websites \_\_\_\_\_ children with any form of advertising.
5. Peter wasn't the only \_\_\_\_\_ employee after the restructuring.
6. One bizarre side-effect of the new medication was the common \_\_\_\_\_ of being invisible.
7. The factory was closed after a journalist made \_\_\_\_\_ about its environmental impact.
8. We all found it \_\_\_\_\_ how little teenagers reported sleeping on average.

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**Zoe Williams**

**12 July, 2023**

- 1 “And he couldn’t do it. He could not die. How could he leave? How could he go? Everything he hated was here.” The end of Philip Roth’s *Sabbath’s Theater* is how many of us felt about Twitter when Elon Musk bought it last October. But I didn’t know that from reading it, even though I have; I knew that because someone faster, smarter, and probably younger (@hayleycampbell) put it on Twitter.
- 2 So even though everything I hate is there, so is a lot of what I love. My father never owned a TV because he said every time you thought you were good at something – cooking, being alive – on the TV, there’d be someone who was better at it than you. I thought that was just a consequence of a 40s childhood: the whole point of cooking and being alive is that the more people who can do it, the better. Also, I really wanted a TV.
- 3 Soon after Musk purchased Twitter, more of what I hated was there. Donald Trump was readmitted, and blue ticks were monetised, destroying trust in verification while not generating much revenue. Some staff quit, some were fired, and the pranks of the new owner – walking into HQ with a sink, an auto-response turd emoji to journalist enquiries – were startling. A rich enough man can erode workplace rights yet talk about the work ethic of his staff; he can engage the whole world in having the wrong conversation.
- 4 And for users, Twitter was rubbish. Long conversations I wasn’t interested in flooded my timeline. How could this have been curated “for me” when I blocked it years ago? Was it just an algorithm for the middle-aged or a more precisely targeted harassment?
- 5 My direct messages were full of pretty avatars promoting a new scam. A young woman who wants to sell you some crypto but has just split up with her boyfriend and is drunk.
- 6 As alternatives to Twitter appeared, the question moved on: Mastodon ticked the right boxes politically. It can never be bought, is democratically moderated and is also nothing like horrible enough. There are more mature faults to find – it is more sparsely populated and the timelines are repetitive – but the main void is of cheerful spite.
- 7 Threads, Mark Zuckerberg’s rival network tied to Instagram, overcame many of those early hurdles by having more money and being part of an existing platform: almost overnight, it had 100 million users. The new platform worked well, having scooped up many of Twitter’s disgruntled employees.
- 8 These platforms, the competition and differences between them, and the mental investments we make to build them make me want to ask: what makes Wikipedia Wikipedia – an astonishing display of human cooperation and expertise – and Facebook Facebook – a place where people gather to drive each other into spasms of envy, delusion, and extremism? What is it about the funding models, the governance and the vision that creates such very different experiences from the same raw material: people participating? Is it as simple as the profit motive, and if so, why aren’t all non-profit platforms better?
- 9 In one way, Musk did everyone a favour, teaching us how vulnerable Twitter was to the hooliganism of one ego, but we must figure out some solution better than “delete the app and find a hobby”; we don’t need Zuckerberg to teach us that lesson twice.

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First published in *The Guardian*, 12/07/2023

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### 3 Comprehension check

a. Are these statements True (T) or False (F) according to the article. Fix any that are false.

1. The writer both loves and hates Twitter.
2. After Musk bought Twitter, the verification process improved.
3. The writer thinks Musk could create a more meaningful conversation with the world.
4. Suddenly, there was less irrelevant and more annoying content.
5. The writer was very happy about all the new messages from avatars.
6. The writer thinks how Mastodon is moderated is a good thing.
7. Threads had the advantage of being tied to Instagram and had millions of users overnight.
8. The writer believes that money is what makes these platforms very different.
9. The writer wants everyone to get off Twitter and find other things to do.

### 4 Key language

a. Complete the table with the adjective forms of the words below.

appeal   cooperate   delude   democracy   extreme   interest   politics   repeat

-ing	-ed	-al	-ic / -ical	-ive	-ist
<i>appealing</i>					

b. Complete each sentence with one of the adjectives from the previous task.

1. We should use a \_\_\_\_\_ process to choose a new leader; let's put it to the vote!
2. If you like electronic music and \_\_\_\_\_ beats, you will love this new album.
3. If he thinks that he will get away with it, he is \_\_\_\_\_.
4. I don't want to make any \_\_\_\_\_ statements – I prefer to keep my politics private.
5. Isn't it \_\_\_\_\_ that three out of four tweeted emojis are positive?

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- 6. Thank you so much for being so \_\_\_\_\_. We appreciate your continued support.
- 7. Does 'free speech' mean that people should be allowed to express \_\_\_\_\_ views?

**5 Discussion**

- a. Discuss these questions.**
- Which of the points in the article do you agree/disagree with? Why?
  - What would make platforms like X, Facebook, or Instagram better?
  - What do you know about the alternative platforms mentioned in the article (Mastodon and Threads)?
  - What solution can you imagine that would be better than just getting off social media?

**6 In your own words**

**a. Research two alternatives to X (Twitter). Complete the table below. Choose the aspects to evaluate below or add your own in the left column.**

content                  user experience                  advertising                  discourse/topics

Category/Aspect	X	Option A	Option B

**b. Write a short comment in reply to this article with your opinion and some of the information you have found in your research.**

