

## The big idea: should we embrace boredom?

### Level 3: Advanced

**Article summary:** This article examines the effect that smartphones have had on how we react to, and deal with, feelings of boredom.

**Time:** 60 minutes

**Skills:** Reading, Speaking, Writing

**Language focus:** Word forms

**Materials needed:** One copy of the worksheet per student

#### 1. Warmer

- a. This activity aims to get students thinking about their own experiences of boredom and what they do when they feel bored.

#### 2. Key words

- a. Ask students to work individually or in pairs to find the words in the wordpool in the article and then match the words to the definitions. Allow a few minutes for students to check answers in pairs or groups before checking answers with the whole class.

**Key:**

1. Absorb
2. Assuage
3. Coincided with
4. Creep in
5. Efficacy
6. Exacerbates
7. left to their own devices
8. manipulated by
9. Mass adoption
10. Paradoxically
11. pastime
12. pointless
13. resist the urge
14. Rumination
15. Socials

16. Solitude
17. swiftly
18. Technophiles
19. unstimulating
20. Untamed

- b. Ask students to work individually or in pairs to complete the sentences using words from the previous activity in the correct form. To extend the activity, ask students to tell you what types of pastimes are popular in your country or region and why these are good for relieving feelings of boredom.

**Key:**

1. mass adoption
2. assuage
3. untamed
4. pointless
5. coincided with
6. exacerbating
7. left to my own devices
8. manipulated by
9. absorb
10. efficacy
11. pastime
12. creep in
13. swiftly
14. Rumination
15. socials
16. technophiles
17. resist the urge
18. Paradoxically
19. unstimulating
20. solitude

#### 3. Comprehension check

- a. Students can work individually or in pairs to do this activity. Encourage students to read out the section of the article where they found the answers to the questions and to correct any of the false statements.

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#### Key:

1. *True – One man pressed the button 190 times – even though he, like everyone else in the study, had earlier indicated that he found the shock unpleasant ...*
2. *False – The author acknowledges smartphones aren't 'always a bad thing' and that 'too much rumination is unhealthy.'*
3. *False – Most psychologists studying boredom would agree that, while it can feel unpleasant, it's useful.*
4. *True – ... people who were bored at work were more likely to use their smartphones – and subsequently feel even more bored.*
5. *True – That adds up to spending 17 years of your adult life browsing the internet.*
6. *Not Mentioned – The text only mentions students in China and the US.*
7. *True – ... associated with a range of problems, including depression, anxiety, poor life satisfaction, lower academic achievement, substance abuse and excessive risk-taking.*
8. *True – Digital devices are very good at attracting your attention, but much of what we do online doesn't feel meaningful.*

#### 4. Key language

- a. Students work individually to complete the table with forms of the words in bold. You may want to ask students to work in pairs to do the activity and to use an online or printed dictionary to find any of the forms they are unsure of.

#### Key:

- |                         |                           |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. <b>divert</b>        | 13. <b>dominantly</b>     |
| 2. <b>diverse</b>       | 14. <b>exceed</b>         |
| 3. <b>diversely</b>     | 15. <b>excess</b>         |
| 4. <b>mean</b>          | 16. <b>excessively</b>    |
| 5. <b>meaning</b>       | 17. <b>neutralisation</b> |
| 6. <b>meaninglessly</b> | 18. <b>neutral</b>        |
| 7. <b>meaningfully</b>  | 19. <b>neutrally</b>      |
| 8. <b>optimisation</b>  | 20. <b>bore</b>           |
| 9. <b>optimal</b>       | 21. <b>bored / boring</b> |
| 10. <b>optimally</b>    | 22. <b>boring / bored</b> |
| 11. <b>dominate</b>     | 23. <b>boringly</b>       |
| 12. <b>dominant</b>     |                           |

- b. Ask students to work individually or in pairs to complete the sentences with the words in brackets in the correct form. To extend the activity, ask students to work in pairs to write example sentences of their own using the words in brackets or other forms of the words from the table in task a.

#### Key:

1. *optimise*
2. *diverts*
3. *dominance*
4. *excessively*
5. *neutralise*
6. *meaning*
7. *bored*

#### 5. Discussion

- a. Students discuss the questions in pairs or groups. Ask them to justify their opinions, referring to their own experiences whenever possible.

#### 6. In your own words

- a. The aim of this task is to get students to work together to complete a class survey to find out how they cope with feelings of boredom. Ask students to write 6-8 survey questions of their own or, if they prefer, to use the questions that are provided. Then give them time to interview at least one or two other groups and to make notes of the answers. Students should then have time to analyse the data that they have found and to try and identify any patterns or findings. Finally, give each group time to present their findings to the rest of the class.