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# 1 UNIT

# The Modern Masters?



Over the years, technology has revolutionized our world, and great changes have happened to the way we work, play, and live. Today's office would be unrecognizable to workers of the past, and our private lives are becoming ever more tech-enabled. So integrated is technology with our lives that it not only brings tangible changes to our workplace and home, but also shapes our values and behavior patterns and impacts our personal relationships.

In this unit, Text A explores the possible reasons for and consequences of our frequent replacement of electronic gadgets, and Text B reveals how mobile connection is killing conversation. Instead of jumping to the conclusion that technology is at fault, the two texts serve to throw light on the far-reaching influence technology has on our lives and how we should react to it.



# Exploring the Topic

- 1** Complete the following questionnaire about the impact of technology on your life.

## The Impact of Technology on Your Life

Technology has changed our lives in numerous ways. To what extent are you influenced by technology? What role does technology play in your life? Complete this questionnaire to find out the answers!

A=agree B=undecided C=disagree      A    B    C

- |  |                          |                          |                          |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. I like to stay informed about new technological innovations.                        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. I may replace my laptop with a new one even though it still works.                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. My gadgets' minor malfunctions always provide a good excuse for me to replace them. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. I keep in touch with my friends mainly via instant messaging.                       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. I can't get through a day without my cell phone.                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- 2** Share with your partner the extent to which your life is impacted by technology based on the questionnaire, and discuss whether you like these changes or not.

## Text A



# Why Our Gadgets Can't Wear Out Fast Enough

○ Rob Walker

- 1 An inexplicable line has appeared on the screen of my iPod, and I can't get rid of it. The battery life has been flagging lately, too. Plus, the thing won't sync properly with Last.fm anymore. Yet none of these problems—and the device mortality they portend—bother me. On the contrary, I'm practically cheering them on, because my iPod is a “classic” model from 2007, and for years I've coveted an iPod touch. Spending money to replace something that works would make me feel wasteful and guilty. So I poke at my iPod with the perverse hope that it won't respond. I have a gadget death wish.



- 2 Possibly you know the feeling. When I've confessed to others my enthusiasm for the breakdown of an expensive, enjoyable product, I've encountered surprising reinforcement. One friend said the debut of the white iPhone had her wishing a cruel fate upon her current smart phone. Another acquaintance, who blogs actively about cool new tech toys, confessed his constant yearning for one or another of his electronic possessions to require untimely replacement. A third described himself as "delighted" when his wife accidentally dunked his old iPhone in the Atlantic, "giving me the excuse I needed to get a 3G."
- 3 We're all familiar with the sinister idea of "planned obsolescence," a corporate strategy of supplying the market with products specifically built not to last. Consumer-culture critic Annie Leonard describes such items as "designed for the dump"; she recounts reading industrial-design journals from the 1950s in which designers "actually discuss how fast they can make stuff break" and still leave consumers with "enough faith in the product to go out and buy another one." When that doesn't work, she says, the market suckers us with aesthetic tweaks that have no impact on functionality: the taller tail fins and shorter skirts of "perceived obsolescence."
- 4 But the emerging prevalence—anecdotally, at least—of the gadget death wish suggests an intriguing possibility: Where electronic gizmos are concerned, product obsolescence is becoming a demand-side phenomenon.
- 5 Consider that most ubiquitous gadget, the mobile phone. According to J.D. Power and Associates, the typical American gets a new one every 18 months. This is not because of some time bomb in the design that renders a phone useless over that span. ReCellular, a big recycler and reseller of mobiles, collects millions of unwanted phones every year. Joe McKeown, the company's vice president of marketing and communications, told me that many are several years old—not because they've been in use all that time, but because, after being replaced, they were dumped in desk drawers and forgotten. But despite this, only 18 percent of the phones the company collects are "beyond economic repair," and thus broken down to recyclable parts. The rest either work fine or can easily be refurbished and put right back into the marketplace. The problem, if that's the right word for it, is that new devices perform more functions, faster—and people, as a result, want them.
- 6 This demand-side obsolescence does not extend to all products, of course. I have no death wish, for example, for the three-year-old dishwasher now in terminal condition in my kitchen. But the light-speed innovations in consumer electronics have turned many of us into serial replacers. A dealer in vintage home-entertainment equipment recently



convinced me that it used to be possible to buy a top-notch stereo system that really would function admirably for decades. Imagine, by contrast, that tomorrow some company unveiled a cell phone guaranteed to last for 20 years. Who would genuinely want it? It's not our devices that wear thin; it's our patience with them.

- 7 The very real problem of electronic waste makes people like me hesitate to replace good-working-order possessions. Yet at the same time, we like to stay current with new technological innovations. So rather than provide evidence of some cynical corporate strategy, our gadgets' minor malfunctions or disappointing features or unacceptably slow speeds largely provide an excuse to replace them—with a lighter laptop, a slimmer tablet, a clearer e-book reader. Obsolescence isn't something companies are forcing on us. It's progress, and it's something we pretty much demand. As usual, the market gives us exactly what we want.

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(706 words)

## Notes

1. An iPod is a small piece of electronic equipment for playing music designed and marketed by Apple Inc. It can also store videos and games. The iPod touch belongs to the line of iPod.
2. Last.fm is a music website. Users can create their own profiles, get their own music charts and new music recommendations, and join a big online community of music lovers.
3. Planned obsolescence or built-in obsolescence in industrial design and economics is a policy of planning or designing a product with an artificially-limited useful life, which means the product will become obsolete after a certain period of time. The rationale behind the strategy is to generate long-term sales volume by reducing the time between repeat purchases.
4. Consumer electronics, or home electronics, are electronic equipment intended for everyday use, typically in private homes. They include devices used for entertainment (flatscreen TVs, iPods, etc.), communications (telephones, cell phones, etc.), and home-office activities (desktop computers, printers, etc.).

## Words and Expressions

**gadget** /'gædʒɪt/ *n.*

a small, useful, and cleverly-designed machine or tool

**inexplicable** /,ɪnɪk'splɪkəbəl/ *adj.*

too unusual or strange to be explained or understood

**flag** /flæg/ *v.*

to become tired or weak

**sync** /sɪŋk/ *v.*

to arrange for two or more things to happen at exactly the same time, or to happen at the same time or in the same way as something else

**portend** /pɔ:'tend/ *v.*

to be a sign that something is going to happen, especially something bad

**covet** /'kʌvɪt/ *v.*

to have a very strong desire to have something that someone else has

**perverse** /pə'vɜ:s/ *adj.*

behaving in an unreasonable way, especially by deliberately doing the opposite of what people want you to do

**breakdown** /'breɪkdaʊn/ *n.*

an occasion when a car or a piece of machinery breaks and stops working

**reinforcement** /,ri:ɪn'fɔ:smənt/ *n.*

the act of making something stronger, especially a feeling or an idea

**debut** /'deɪbjʊ:/ *n.*

the first public appearance of an entertainer, sports player, etc. or of something new and important

**yearning** /'jɜ:nɪŋ/ *n.*

a strong desire for something

**untimely** /ʌn'taɪmli/ *adj.*

happening too soon or sooner than you expected

**dunk** /dʌŋk/ *v.*

to put something into water

**sinister** /'sɪnɪstə/ *adj.*

seeming evil or dangerous

**obsolescence** /,ɒbsə'lesəns/ *n.*

the state of becoming old-fashioned and no longer useful

**dump** /dʌmp/

*n.* a place where unwanted waste is taken and left

*v.* to get rid of something that you do not want

**sucker** /'sʌkə/ *v.*

to trick someone into doing something

**aesthetic** /i:s'θetɪk/ *adj.*

connected with beauty and the study of beauty

**tweak** /twi:k/ *n.*

a slight change that you make to a machine, system, etc. to improve it

**functionality** /,fʌŋkʃə'næləti/ *n.*

one or all of the operations that a computer, software program, or piece of equipment is able to perform

**anecdotally** /,ænɪk'dəʊtəli/ *adv.*

according to a personal account of an event that is possibly not true or accurate

**intriguing** /ɪn'tri:ɡɪŋ/ *adj.*

very interesting because of being unusual or not having an obvious answer

**gizmo** /'ɡɪzməʊ/ *n.*

a small piece of equipment, especially one whose name you do not know

**ubiquitous** /ju:'bɪkwɪtəs/ *adj.*

seeming to be everywhere—sometimes used humorously

**recycler** /ri:'saɪklə/ *n.*

a person or company that collects and sorts rubbish and treats it in order to produce useful materials that can be used again

**reseller** /ri:'selə/ *n.*

a company that sells goods made by another company, especially in the computer industry



**recyclable** /,ri:'saɪkləbəl/ *adj.*

able to be recycled

**refurbish** /,ri:'fɜ:bɪʃ/ *v.*

to decorate and repair something such as a building or office in order to improve its appearance

**terminal** /'tɜ:mɪnəl/ *adj.*

certain to get worse and come to an end

**serial** /'sɪəriəl/ *adj.*

doing the same thing in the same way several times; done in the same way several times

**dealer** /'di:lə/ *n.*

someone who buys and sells a particular product, especially an expensive one

**vintage** /'vɪntɪdʒ/ *adj.*

representative of or dating from a period long past

**top-notch** /,tɒp 'nɒtʃ/ *adj.*

of the highest quality

**stereo** /'steriəʊ/ *n.*

(also stereo system) a machine for playing records, CDs, etc. that produces sound from two speakers

**unveil** /ʌn'veɪl/ *v.*

to show or tell people about a new product or plan for the first time

**wear thin**

to begin to become weaker or less acceptable

**cynical** /'sɪnɪkəl/ *adj.*

not caring that something might not be morally right, might hurt someone, etc. when you are trying to get something for yourself

**malfunction** /mæl'fʌŋkʃən/ *n.*

a fault in the way a machine or part of someone's body works

## Analytical Reading

- 1** The following outline presents an overview of the text. Fill in the blanks to complete the outline.

Part	Para(s).	Main idea
I	1-2	<p>Examples of the gadget death wish</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My example: _____.</li> <li>• My friends' examples:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. One friend wished a cruel fate upon her current smart phone;</li> <li>b. _____;</li> <li>c. _____.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
II	3-6	<p>Product obsolescence is more of a _____ than a _____ where _____ are concerned. The reasons include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• _____;</li> <li>• _____.</li> </ul>
III	7	

- 2** Paraphrase the following sentences.

1. We're all familiar with the sinister idea of "planned obsolescence," a corporate strategy of supplying the market with products specifically built not to last. (Para. 3)
2. But the emerging prevalence—anecdotally, at least—of the gadget death wish suggests an intriguing possibility: Where electronic gizmos are concerned, product obsolescence is becoming a demand-side phenomenon. (Para. 4)
3. But the light-speed innovations in consumer electronics have turned many of us into serial replacers. (Para. 6)
4. It's not our devices that wear thin; it's our patience with them. (Para. 6)
5. So rather than provide evidence of some cynical corporate strategy, our gadgets' minor malfunctions or disappointing features or unacceptably slow speeds largely provide an excuse to replace them—with a lighter laptop, a slimmer tablet, a clearer e-book reader. (Para. 7)

**3** Answer the following questions.

1. Why does Rob Walker use the title “Why Our Gadgets Can’t Wear Out Fast Enough”?
2. What does the phrase “these problems” in Para. 1 refer to? Why does Walker say that he is not bothered by these problems?
3. What “surprising reinforcement” did Walker get from his friends when confessing his enthusiasm for the breakdown of his gadget? What does that imply?
4. What does Annie Leonard mean by “aesthetic tweaks” in Para. 3? Can you give more examples besides “the taller tail fins and shorter skirts”?
5. What do “planned obsolescence,” “perceived obsolescence,” and “demand-side obsolescence” refer to respectively? Give more examples to illustrate these concepts.
6. What is the function of Para. 4 in Walker’s line of reasoning?
7. Why does Walker use the statistics from J.D. Power and Associates and ReCellular in Para. 5?
8. According to Para. 6, why does Walker have no death wish for products like dishwashers?
9. Besides the problem of electronic waste mentioned in Para. 7, are there any other factors people should consider when replacing electronic devices which still work?
10. Technology leads to fast innovations and updates, yet some people tend to blame technology for their frequent change of electronic devices. Is that reasonable? What kind of consumption attitude should we adopt?

## Language Focus

### Vocabulary



- 1** Complete the following sentences with words or expressions given in the box below. Change the form where necessary.

perceive	cynical	perverse	innovation
wear out	breakdown	aesthetic	prevalence
corporate	possession	sync	by contrast

1. Through reading poems, I came to appreciate the \_\_\_\_\_ qualities of language.
2. At that time, most people thought the situation was not that bad. He was surprised by this \_\_\_\_\_ of optimism.
3. More and more \_\_\_\_\_ clients are seeking to outsource the management of their facilities.
4. I like to remember the distinguished Swedish oceanographer, Otto Pettersson, who died a few years ago at the age of 93, in full \_\_\_\_\_ of his keen mental powers.
5. Psychologists say that our behavior is influenced by many factors too subtle for us to consciously \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Technological \_\_\_\_\_ barely pauses for breath, which will sometimes lead to big social changes.
7. It was a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ business plan which exploited the insecurity of their teenage customer base.
8. She used to seek \_\_\_\_\_ satisfaction from making other people embarrassed.
9. Genius is something that is difficult to measure quantitatively since it is a unique quality. \_\_\_\_\_, intelligence is possibly easier to quantify.
10. Always carry a phone with you in case you have a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ on the highway.
11. Although many factors are involved, the average car's tires will \_\_\_\_\_ at about 40,000 miles.
12. The action on the screen \_\_\_\_\_ perfectly with the music.

**2 Read the sentences, explain the meaning of the words in bold in different contexts, and translate the sentences into Chinese.**

**flag**

1. After walking about two blocks, we were too exhausted to keep walking, so we **flagged** a taxi down and climbed aboard.
2. Public enthusiasm for domestic traveling begins to **flag** when traveling costs keep rising and disputes keep occurring.
3. A lot of people from different parts of the country travel all the way to Tian'anmen Square to watch the **flag**-raising ceremony early in the morning.

**render**

4. It's a concept that is difficult to **render** into English.
5. Various social problems arise from mass unemployment of people, who are **rendered** obsolete by the introduction of automation.
6. His knowledge and talents enabled him to **render** important services to his country as the prime minister.
7. The jury **rendered** the former officer a guilty verdict, which triggered mass protests organized by the citizens who believed he was innocent.

**perform**

8. A major Hollywood star will be **performing** on stage tonight.
9. Computers can **perform** a variety of complicated tasks.

**3 Choose an appropriate word or expression from the brackets to complete each sentence.**

1. He had no desire to amass wealth or become socially prominent. (**On the contrary/On the other hand**), he worked only as much as was necessary to make ends meet.
2. How many smart phones are currently (**for use/in use**) is one way to measure the smart phone market penetration.
3. I immediately embarked on an experiment, but my patience soon wore (**out/on**) and I was depressed for a few days afterward.
4. They prefer to die fighting (**instead of/rather than**) live in enslavement.
5. Health and safety regulations (**demand/require**) all staff to wear protective clothing.
6. In this community, everyday activities are done in a (**planning/planned**), orderly manner.
7. We can warm up the room quite quickly with the (**electric/electronic**) fire.
8. As the results of the new research unfold, parallels between birdsong and our own speech behavior become more and more (**intrigued/intriguing**).
9. (**Despite/Though**) their repeated assurances that the product is safe, many people still stop buying it.
10. The performance has been canceled due to circumstances (**beyond/above**) our control.

### NP Constituents

NP (noun phrase) constituents refer to the linguistic elements centering on the head noun in a noun phrase, which can be divided into premodifiers and postmodifiers. They can add information to the head noun and make clearer the nature of it. The use of NP constituents is one of the characteristics of formal English language.

- Premodifiers appear before the head noun.
  - Adjectives or adjective phrases: a **cruel** fate, **new technological** innovations
  - Nouns or noun phrases: the **device** mortality, a **gadget death** wish
  - The -ing or -ed forms: the **emerging** prevalence, **unwanted** phones
- Postmodifiers appear after the head noun.
  - Prepositional phrases: some time bomb **in the design**, people **of all ages**
  - Relative clauses: a top-notch stereo system **that really would function admirably for decades**
  - Non-finite phrases:
    - a. I couldn't think of anyone **wanting to be rude to him**.
    - b. Researchers around the world are busy inventing sociable robots, **designed to be companions to the elderly, to children, to all of us**.
  - Appositives:
    - a. So I poke at my iPod with the perverse hope **that it won't respond**.
    - b. ReCellular, **a big recycler and reseller of mobiles**, collects millions of unwanted phones every year.

#### **1** Analyze the structure of the following sentences, identify the NP constituents, and then translate the sentences into Chinese.

1. Another acquaintance, who blogs actively about cool new tech toys, confessed his constant yearning for one or another of his electronic possessions to require untimely replacement.
2. We're all familiar with the sinister idea of "planned obsolescence," a corporate strategy of supplying the market with products specifically built not to last.
3. She recounts reading industrial-design journals from the 1950s in which designers "actually discuss how fast they can make stuff break" and still leave consumers with "enough faith in the product to go out and buy another one."
4. The very real problem of electronic waste makes people like me hesitate to replace good-working-order possessions.
5. Obsolescence isn't something companies are forcing on us.



## Sentence Structure

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### 2 Translate the following sentences from Text A, paying attention to the words or expressions in bold.

1. **Plus**, the thing won't sync properly with Last.fm anymore. (Para. 1)
2. One friend said the debut of the white iPhone **had** her **wishing** a cruel fate upon her current smart phone. (Para. 2)
3. A third **described** himself **as** "delighted" when his wife accidentally dunked his old iPhone in the Atlantic... (Para. 2)
4. **Where** electronic gizmos **are concerned**, product obsolescence is becoming a demand-side phenomenon. (Para. 4)
5. **It's** not our devices **that** wear thin; it's our patience with them. (Para. 6)
6. So **rather than** provide evidence of some cynical corporate strategy, our gadgets' minor malfunctions or disappointing features or unacceptably slow speeds largely provide an excuse to replace them... (Para. 7)

### 3 Translate the following sentences, referring to the sentences in Task 2.

1. **另外**, 听说他们还获得了全国比赛的邀请函。
2. 这位退休的运动员非常幽默, **让**我们一路上笑个不停。
3. 我们**让**孩子们在公园里玩耍, 放松一下。
4. 他把昨晚发生在他身上的事情**讲成**了一个格外错综复杂的故事。
5. 在殖民地档案的记录中, 她被**描述成**一个缺乏道德感和责任感的寡妇。
6. 这件外衣**就颜色来说**还不错, 但质量不太好。
7. **在涉及**原则问题时, 我们是坚定不移的。
8. 这个国家**在移民政策方面**相对比较宽松。
9. **正是**这位著名作家以及他的作品引起了学生的极大兴趣。
10. 九年前我们**就是**在这个火车站第一次相遇。
11. 我们应该做的是提供建议, **而不是**发号施令。
12. 威廉**并不是**简单地更换坏了的元件, **而是**依靠供货方重新设计这些元件。

## Practice Your Translation

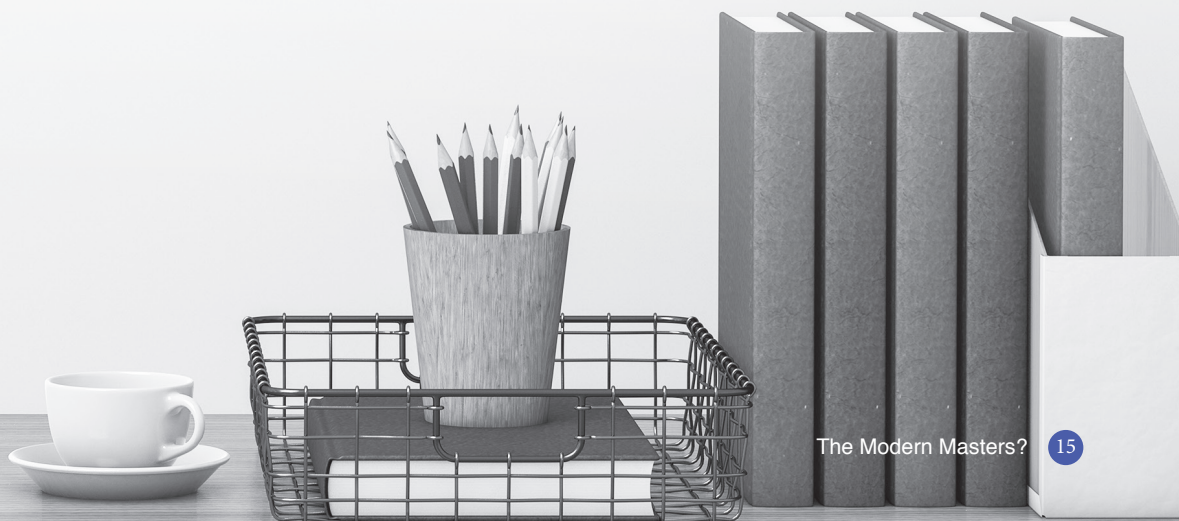
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### 4 Translate the following paragraph into Chinese.

The very real problem of electronic waste makes people like me hesitate to replace good-working-order possessions. Yet at the same time, we like to stay current with new technological innovations. So rather than provide evidence of some cynical corporate strategy, our gadgets' minor malfunctions or disappointing features or unacceptably slow speeds largely provide an excuse to replace them—with a lighter laptop, a slimmer tablet, a clearer e-book reader. Obsolescence isn't something companies are forcing on us. It's progress, and it's something we pretty much demand. As usual, the market gives us exactly what we want.

### 5 Translate the following passage, using the words and expressions in brackets.

市场给我们提供了很多小型电子产品，如手机、笔记本电脑、电子书阅读器等。我们往往倾向于频繁更换这类产品，究其原因，我们会发现，尽管公司常常采取“计划报废”（planned obsolescence）的恶意策略，通过缩短产品使用寿命（device mortality）迫使消费者替换产品，或通过只改变产品外观、不提升实际性能（functionality）的方式诱骗（sucker）消费者购买新产品，但实际上，这一现象的产生很可能源于消费者的需求。随着技术的发展，电子产品更新速度极快，人们总是希望购买功能更齐全、运行速度更快的新设备，以跟上（stay current with）技术创新的步伐。因此，产品报废不是公司强加于（force on）我们的，而是我们自己想要的。



## Cloze

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### 6 Fill in the blanks with the appropriate form of the words in brackets, or words that would best fit the context if no prompt is given.

Computers today exceed human intelligence in a broad (1) \_\_\_\_\_ (various) of intelligent yet narrow domains such as playing chess, diagnosing certain medical conditions, buying and selling stocks, and guiding cruise missiles. Yet human intelligence overall remains far more supple and flexible.

One reason for this disparity in capabilities is that our most (2) \_\_\_\_\_ (advance) computers are still simpler—currently about a million times (3) \_\_\_\_\_—than the human brain. But this disparity will not always remain the case (4) \_\_\_\_\_ we go through the early part of the 21st century.

Computers doubled in speed every two years in the 1950s and 1960s, and (5) \_\_\_\_\_ (be) now doubling in speed every 12 months. This trend will continue, (6) \_\_\_\_\_ computers achieving the memory capacity and computing speed of the human brain in the near future.

Achieving the basic complexity and capacity of the human brain will not automatically result in computers (7) \_\_\_\_\_ (match) the flexibility of human intelligence. The software of intelligence, that is, the organization and content of these resources, is equally important. One approach to (8) \_\_\_\_\_ (emulate) the brain's software is through reverse engineering—scanning a human brain and essentially (9) \_\_\_\_\_ (copy) its neural circuitry in a neural computer, a computer (10) \_\_\_\_\_ (design) to simulate a massive number of human neurons, of sufficient capacity.

# Critical Thinking



## Depth

Many issues in the world contain complexities and multiple interrelationships. To comprehend the issues thoroughly and form a clear understanding of the world, we need to think deeply, that is, to get below the surface of the issues, identify the complexities inherent in them, and deal with those complexities.

Take Text A as an example. In the text, Rob Walker raises the issue of the gadget death wish toward electronic gadgets. Instead of simply attributing the phenomenon to the cynical corporate strategy of “planned obsolescence,” he makes an in-depth analysis based on relevant information and statistics, and finds out that factors like the light-speed new technological innovations in the industry, people’s lack of patience and their constant yearning for better devices, along with the problem of electronic waste are all involved in the issue. In this way, the issue is analyzed and understood deeply.

We can consider the following questions in order to achieve depth:

- What factors make this a difficult issue?
- What are some of the complexities of this issue?
- What are some of the difficulties we need to deal with?

## Apply Your Skill

1. In Para. 6 of Text A, why does Walker mention other products such as dishwashers and stereo systems, rather than focus only on electronic gadgets?

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2. It seems that people can benefit greatly through online connection. However, in Text B, Sherry Turkle argues that online connection cannot substitute for conversation. Why does she hold such an opinion? Provide an in-depth analysis based on the text.

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## Text B



# The Flight from Conversation

○ Sherry Turkle

- 1 We live in a technological universe in which we are always communicating. And yet we have sacrificed conversation for mere connection.
- 2 At home, families sit together, texting and reading e-mail. At work, executives text during board meetings. We text (and shop and go on Facebook) during classes and when we're on dates. My students tell me about an important new skill: It involves maintaining eye contact with someone while you text someone else; it's hard, but it can be done.
- 3 Over the past 15 years, I've studied technologies of mobile connection and talked to hundreds of people of all ages and circumstances about their plugged-in lives. I've learned that the little devices most of us carry around are so powerful that they change not only what we do, but also who we are.
- 4 We've become accustomed to a new way of being "alone together." Technology-enabled, we are able to be with one another, and also elsewhere, connected to wherever we want to be. We want to customize our lives. We want to move in and out of where we are because the thing we value most is control over where we focus our attention. We have gotten used to the idea of being in a tribe of one, loyal to our own party.
- 5 Our colleagues want to go to that board meeting but pay attention only to what interests them. To some this seems like a good idea, but we can end up hiding from one another, even as we are constantly connected to one another.
- 6 In today's workplace, young people who have grown up fearing conversation show up on the job wearing earphones. Walking through a college library or the campus of a high-tech start-up, one sees the same thing: We are together, but each of us is in our own bubble, furiously connected to keyboards and tiny touch screens. A senior partner at a Boston law firm describes a scene in his office. Young associates lay out their suite of technologies: laptops, iPods and multiple phones. And then they put their earphones on. "Big ones. Like pilots. They turn their desks into cockpits." With the young lawyers in their cockpits, the office is quiet, a quiet that does not ask to be broken.



- 7 In the silence of connection, people are comforted by being in touch with a lot of people—carefully kept at bay. We can't get enough of one another if we can use technology to keep one another at distances we can control: not too close, not too far, just right. I think of it as a Goldilocks effect.
- 8 Texting and e-mail and posting let us present the self we want to be. This means we can edit. And if we wish to, we can delete. Or retouch: the voice, the flesh, the face, the body. Not too much, not too little—just right.
- 9 Human relationships are rich; they're messy and demanding. We have learned the habit of cleaning them up with technology. And the move from conversation to connection is part of this. But it's a process in which we shortchange ourselves. Worse, it seems that over time we stop caring; we forget that there is a difference.
- 10 We are tempted to think that our little "sips" of online connection add up to a big gulp of real conversation. But they don't. E-mail, Twitter, Facebook, all of these have their places—in politics, commerce, romance and friendship. But no matter how valuable, they do not substitute for conversation.
- 11 Connecting in sips may work for gathering discrete bits of information or for saying, "I am thinking about you." Or even for saying, "I love you." But connecting in sips doesn't



work as well when it comes to understanding and knowing one another. In conversation we tend to one another. (The word itself is kinetic; it's derived from words that mean "to move, together.") We can attend to tone and nuance. In conversation, we are called upon to see things from another's point of view.

- 12 Face-to-face conversation unfolds slowly. It teaches patience. When we communicate on our digital devices, we learn different habits. As we ramp up the volume and velocity of online connections, we start to expect faster answers. To get these, we ask one another simpler questions; we dumb down our communications, even on the most important matters. It is as though we have all put ourselves on cable news. Shakespeare might have said, "We are consum'd with that which we were nourish'd by."
- 13 And we use conversation with others to learn to converse with ourselves. So our flight from conversation can mean diminished chances to learn skills of self-reflection. These days, social media continually asks us what's "on our mind," but we have little motivation to say something truly self-reflective. Self-reflection in conversation requires trust. It's hard to do anything with 3,000 Facebook friends except connect.
- 14 During the years I have spent researching people and their relationships with technology, I have often heard the sentiment "No one is listening to me." I believe this feeling helps explain why it is so appealing to have a Facebook page or a Twitter feed—each provides so many automatic listeners. And it helps explain why—against all reason—so many of us are willing to talk to machines that seem to care about us. Researchers around the world are busy inventing sociable robots, designed to be companions to the elderly, to children, to all of us.
- 15 One of the most haunting experiences during my research came when I brought one of these robots, designed in the shape of a baby seal, to an elder care facility, and an older woman began to talk to it about the loss of her child. The robot seemed to be looking into her eyes. It seemed to be following the conversation. The woman was comforted.
- 16 And so many people found this amazing. Like those who look forward to computer psychiatry, this enthusiasm speaks to how much we have confused conversation with connection and collectively seem to have embraced a new kind of delusion that accepts the simulation of compassion as sufficient unto the day. And why would we want to talk about love and loss with a machine that has no experience of the arc of human life? Have we so lost confidence that we will be there for one another?
- 17 We expect more from technology and less from one another and seem increasingly drawn to technologies that provide the illusion of companionship without the demands of relationship. Always-on/always-on-you devices provide three powerful fantasies: that

we will always be heard; that we can put our attention wherever we want it to be; and that we never have to be alone. Indeed our new devices have turned being alone into a problem that can be solved.

- 18 When people are alone, even for a few moments, they fidget and reach for a device. Here connection works like a symptom, not a cure, and our constant, reflexive impulse to connect shapes a new way of being.
- 19 Think of it as “I share, therefore I am.” We use technology to define ourselves by sharing our thoughts and feelings as we’re having them. We used to think, “I have a feeling; I want to make a call.” Now our impulse is, “I want to have a feeling; I need to send a text.”
- 20 So, in order to feel more, and to feel more like ourselves, we connect. But in our rush to connect, we flee from solitude, our ability to be separate and gather ourselves. Lacking the capacity for solitude, we turn to other people but don’t experience them as they are. It is as though we use them, need them as spare parts to support our increasingly fragile selves.
- 21 We think constant connection will make us feel less lonely. The opposite is true. If we are unable to be alone, we are far more likely to be lonely. If we don’t teach our children to be alone, they will know only how to be lonely.
- 22 I am a partisan for conversation. To make room for it, I see some first, deliberate steps. At home, we can create sacred spaces: the kitchen, the dining room. We can make our cars “device-free zones.” We can demonstrate the value of conversation to our children. And we can do the same thing at work. There we are so busy communicating that we often don’t have time to talk to one another about what really matters. Employees asked for casual Fridays; perhaps managers should introduce conversational Thursdays. Most of all, we need to remember—in between texts and e-mails and Facebook posts—to listen to one another, even to the boring bits, because it is often in unedited moments, moments in which we hesitate and stutter and go silent, that we reveal ourselves to one another.

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(1,480 words)

## Words and Expressions

**sacrifice** /'sækrəfaɪs/ *v.*

to willingly stop having something you want or doing something you like in order to get something more important

**customize** /'kʌstəmaɪz/ *v.*

to change something to make it more suitable for you, or to make it look special or different from things of a similar type

**tribe** /traɪb/ *n.*

a social group consisting of people of the same race who have the same beliefs, customs, language, etc., and usually live in one particular area ruled by their leader

**start-up** /'stɑ:t ʌp/ *n.*

a new small company or business, especially one whose work involves computers or the Internet

**cockpit** /'kɒk,pɪt/ *n.*

the area in a plane, small boat, or racing car where the pilot or driver sits

**keep sth. at bay**

to prevent something dangerous or unpleasant from happening or from coming too close

**retouch** /,ri:'tʌtʃ/ *v.*

to make small changes to a picture or photograph so that it looks better

**shortchange** /,ʃɔ:t'tʃeɪndʒ/ *v.*

to treat someone unfairly or dishonestly by giving them less of something than they want or need

**sip** /sɪp/ *n.*

a very small amount of a drink

**gulp** /gʌlp/ *n.*

a large amount of something that you swallow quickly, or the action of swallowing

**commerce** /'kɒmɜ:s/ *n.*

the buying and selling of goods and services

**discrete** /dɪ'skri:t/ *adj.*

clearly separate

**kinetic** /kɪ'netɪk/ *adj.*

relating to movement

**derive** /dɪ'raɪv/ *v.*

to develop or come from something else

**nuance** /'nju:ɑ:ns/ *n.*

a very slight, hardly noticeable difference in manner, color, meaning, etc.

**unfold** /ʌn'fəʊld/ *v.*

to happen or develop

**ramp sth. up**

to make something increase in amount

**velocity** /və'lɒsəti/ *n.*

the speed of something that is moving in a particular direction

**dumb sth. down**

to present news or information in a simple and attractive way without many details so that everyone can understand it—used to show disapproval

**cable** /'keɪbəl/ *n.*

a system of broadcasting television by using cables, paid for by the person watching it

**nourish** /'nʌrɪʃ/ *v.*

to keep a person, an animal, or a plant alive and healthy with food, etc.

**converse** /kən'vɜ:s/ *v.*

to have a conversation with someone

**diminished** /dɪ'mɪnɪʃt/ *adj.*

reduced or lessened; made smaller

**feed** /fi:d/ *n.*

a web page, screen, etc. that updates often to show the latest information

**social** /'səʊʃəbəl/ *adj.*

(of people) enjoying spending time with other people

**seal** /si:l/ *n.*

a large sea animal that eats fish and lives around coasts 海豹

**psychiatry** /saɪ'kaiətri/ *n.*

the study and treatment of mental illnesses  
精神病学; 精神病治疗

**collectively** /kə'lektɪvli/ *adv.*

in a way that is done or shared by all members of a group of people; in a way that involves a whole group or society

**simulation** /,sɪmjə'leɪʃən/ *n.*

the activity of producing conditions which are similar to real ones, especially in order to test something, or the conditions that are produced

**unto** /'ʌntu:/ *prep.*

to

**arc** /ɑ:k/ *n.*

a curved shape or line

**fidget** /'fɪdʒɪt/ *v.*

to keep moving your hands or feet, especially because you are bored or nervous

**symptom** /'sɪmptəm/ *n.*

something wrong with your body or mind which shows that you have a particular illness

**reflexive** /rɪ'fleksɪv/ *adj.*

done because of a physical reaction that you cannot control

**flee** /fli:/ *v.*

to leave somewhere very quickly, in order to escape from danger

**fragile** /'frædʒaɪl/ *adj.*

easily broken or damaged

**partisan** /,pɑ:tɪ'zæn/ *n.*

someone who strongly supports a political party, plan, or leader

**casual** /'kæʒuəl/ *adj.*

not formal or not for a formal situation

**stutter** /'stʌtə/ *v.*

to speak with difficulty because you cannot stop yourself from repeating the first consonant of some words

## Independent Learning

**1** Find more information on the Internet or in the library about the terms and names related to the text you have just read. Share what you have learned with your classmates.

1. Facebook
2. The Goldilocks effect

## Analytical Reading

**1** The following outline presents an overview of the text. Fill in the blanks to complete the outline.

Part	Para(s).	Main idea
I	1-3	
II	4-8	
III	9-21	
IV	22	

**2** Answer the following questions.

1. What does Sherry Turkle want to show through the description of the different scenes in Para. 2?
2. What does the phrase “plugged-in lives” mean in Para. 3?
3. How do you interpret the “new way of being ‘alone together’” mentioned in Para. 4? Do you have any similar experiences?
4. “Sip” and “gulp” are used to describe online connection and real conversation respectively in Para. 10. What does that indicate about the difference between the two ways of communication?
5. In Para. 12, Shakespeare is quoted as saying “We are consum’d with that which we were nourish’d by.” What does this sentence imply in this text?
6. According to Para. 13, why does flight from conversation mean less self-reflection?
7. Why does Turkle say that “connection works like a symptom, not a cure” in Para. 18? Do you have any similar symptoms? Share some of your examples.
8. Why does Turkle describe people’s way of life as “I share, therefore I am” in Para. 19?
9. What does Turkle mean by saying “If we are unable to be alone, we are far more likely to be lonely” in Para. 21? Do you agree with her point? Why or why not?
10. Besides the measures mentioned in Para. 22, what else can be done to make room for conversation with parents, friends, etc.?

# Guided Writing

## Technology Enriches Our Lives!

Technology brings us many great things we could never have imagined before. Over the past few decades, China has witnessed huge technological advancements in space station construction, 5G network, mobile payment service, etc., making our lives easier and much more colorful. Write an essay of at least 350 words to analyze the benefits of technology. Pay attention to the depth of your writing. You can follow the guidance given below.

- Select one particular technology which you are interested in.
- State its benefits for individuals and the whole society.
- Include relevant examples from your own knowledge or experiences.

## Further Reading

### ○ H. G. Wells, *The Time Machine*

*The Time Machine* is a science fiction novella by H. G. Wells. It is generally credited with the popularization of the concept of time travel by using a vehicle that allows an operator to travel purposely and selectively forward or backward in time. Read the book and think about what would happen to our lives if one day such machine were invented.

### ○ Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*

In the book, Sherry Turkle explores the power of new technological tools to dramatically alter our social lives. Read the book and think about how we can use technology to communicate better with each other and avoid being “alone together.”