



Student File

Reading
Speaking
Grammar
Language Organiser

The age of mass narcissism  pages 20-21



Pre-reading
Assignment 54

10  

You are going to read an article about current 'mass narcissism'. Do not look at the article yet and keep your Magazine closed. Before reading, discuss the following questions in English with two or three classmates.

- Do you know the following websites: YouTube, Vimeo, Facebook, Idiotvids? What are they?
- Are you a member of Hyves or Facebook? What kind of information do you post about yourself? Why do you do this?
- Have you ever posted pictures of yourself online? What kinds of pictures?
- Have you ever posted videos of yourself online? What kinds of videos?
- Can you think of any disadvantages or risks relating to posting pictures and videos?
- What do you think *narcissism* is?

Reading
Assignment 55

20  



Read the article and answer the questions below. Use your own words as much as possible.

- How does Michael Bywater feel about the things he did in the past that he describes in paragraph 1? What words help you draw this conclusion?
- 'Google knows where they are' (ll. 29-30) is an example of a pun, or word play. What well-known expression is this a variation on? What does the author imply here?
- What is a Flip MinoHD?
- What does Michael Bywater mean with 'This stuff is new' (l. 49)?
- Who are 'they' (l. 50)?
- According to lines 63-67, what's a drawback of Flash video?
- Explain what strange development the author outlines in lines 68-76.
- What is *You've Been Framed*?
- What does 'it' refer to in the phrase 'it's perched at the top of

the computer screen'(ll. 91-92)?

- What possible explanations for the popularity of websites like YouTube and Vimeo does Michael Bywater offer in lines 97-103?
- In the final paragraph, the author says he is '[yearning] for a Flip MinoHD'(ll. 120-121) so that he can 'document it all' (ll. 130-131). Do you think he is serious? Explain your answer.

Reading
Assignment 56

15  

In the article, quite a few opaque expressions and difficult comparisons are used. What's the meaning of the following?

- It would have done for me (l. 1).
 - It would have made me famous.
 - I would have liked posting those things online.
 - I would have regretted making those videos.
 - I would have had a better time.
- It is sucked into the voracious eye of the camcorder (ll. 21-22).
 - The quality of the images deteriorates because of the camcorder.
 - It is all judged by friends and acquaintances, as well as complete strangers.
 - The camcorder records it all.
- Thwacking themselves in the nadgers (ll. 58-59).
 - injuring themselves in the head
 - getting cuts and grazes
 - hitting their testicles
- The Wayback Machine (l. 30).
 - a site like Vimeo or YouTube
 - the device that allows you to film incidents
 - the system that stores information online
 - a Flip MinoHD
- Do you want to sup full-on horrors (l. 32)?
 - Do you want to hear something scary?
 - Do you want to post your own scary videos?
 - Do you want to see what's next?
- Playing silly buggers (l. 53).
 - doing foolish things
 - playing a very old Scottish game
 - tricking and abusing handicapped people
 - happy-slapping other teenagers
- The nadir of human existence (l. 70).
 - the best outcome you can think of
 - just about the worst thing that can happen to you
 - an obligatory but boring activity
 - the highest thing you can aim for
- To grow a sort of woolly bobble hat inside your skull (ll. 74-75).
 - to grow old and unattractive

- B to become boring and lose touch with popular culture
 C to go mad, but in a harmless way
- 9 to have the instincts of the Stasi (ll. 82-83).
 A to be very distrustful and disrespectful of people's right to privacy
 B to be very unpredictable and violent
 C to be rather stupid and slow, never the first one to pick up a new trend
- 10 It wouldn't matter a jot (l. 135).
 A the result would not be
 B it would be obvious
 C it would not be important
 D it would not be apparent

Reading Assignment 57

10



The urge many people feel to post their lives online is called 'mass narcissism' (title) by the author of the article on pages 20 and 21. In line 89 he calls someone who wants to post videos of him- or herself online a 'would-be net narcissist'. But what exactly is narcissism?

Read the following explanatory text and fill in the missing words. Choose from:

nymph – plight – needs – repeating – curse – prediction – conceit – thirsty – pined away – gossiping

Narcissism is the personality trait of egotism, vanity, ... (1), or simple selfishness. Applied to a social group, it is sometimes used to denote elitism or an indifference to the ... (2) of others.

The name 'narcissism' is derived from Greek mythology. Narcissus was a handsome Greek youth who had never seen his reflection, but because of a ... (3) by an Oracle, looked in a pool of water and saw his reflection for the first time. The ... (4) Echo – who had been punished by Hera for ... (5) and cursed to forever have the last word – had seen Narcissus walking through the forest and wanted to talk to him, but, because of her ... (6), she wasn't able to speak first. As Narcissus was walking along, he got ... (7) and stopped to take a drink; it was then that he saw his reflection for the first time, and, not knowing any better, started talking to it. Echo, who had been following him, then started ... (8) the last thing he said back. Not knowing about reflections, Narcissus thought his reflection was speaking to him. He fell in love with the pretty boy that he saw. Unable to consummate his love, Narcissus ... (9) at the pool and changed into the flower that bears his name, the narcissus. Freud believed that some narcissism is an essential part of all of us from birth. The psychiatrist Andrew P. Morrison claims that, in adults, a reasonable amount of healthy narcissism allows the individual's perception of his ... (10) to be balanced in relation to others.

Reading Speaking Assignment 58

10



A
 Read about the characteristics of someone with Narcissistic Personality Disorder:

Someone with Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) has at least 5 of these symptoms:

- has a grandiose sense of self-importance (e.g., exaggerates achievements and talents, expects to be recognised as superior);
- is preoccupied with fantasies of unlimited success, power, or brilliance;
- believes that he or she is 'special' and unique and can only be understood by, or should associate with, other special or high-status people;
- requires excessive admiration;
- has a sense of entitlement, i.e., unreasonable expectations of especially favourable treatment;
- takes advantage of others to achieve his or her own ends;
- lacks empathy: is unwilling to recognise or identify with the feelings and needs of others;
- is often envious of others or believes that others are envious of him or her;
- shows arrogant, haughty behaviours or attitudes.

B
 Discuss with a classmate: which of these characteristics would make someone with NPD shoot videos of him- or herself and put them up on the Internet? Or, alternatively, what narcissistic features do people display when they litter the Internet with video material of themselves?

Reading Assignment 59

15



A
 Go online and go the website <http://psychcentral.com/quizzes/narcissistic.htm>. Here you can find out how narcissistic you are.

B
 Compare your scores with a few of your classmates', and maybe even your teacher's. Are your scores more or less the same, or are there big differences?

Grammar Assignment 60

10



A
 Read the following sentences from the article and answer the questions below.

- The day I got my hand stuck in a park bench while *attempting* to talk my girlfriend into *coming* home with me.

- Videos of themselves *drinking*. [...] Of themselves *playing* the guitar, *playing* the harpsichord, *playing* silly buggers.
- The nadir of human existence was *looking* at your friends' holiday movies/slides/photographs.

1 Can you remember what the form of the verb + *-ing* is called in these sentences?

- A a passive
- B a continuous
- C a gerund
- D an adjective

2 In which cases do you use the *-ing* form (*coming*) instead of the infinitive (*come*)? There are four correct answers.

- A after a preposition (*voorzetsel*)
- B when it is the object (*voorwerp*) of the sentence
- C after a personal pronoun
- D after certain verbs like *love*, *hate*, *start*, *quit*, and *regret*
- E when it is the subject (*onderwerp*) of the sentence
- F when you want to express that something is going to happen in the future
- G to express actions that have already been completed at the time of speaking or writing

B

Choose the correct form of the verb.

- 1 I can't imagine *to go* / *going* to that festival on my own.
- 2 Don't be silly; you just need *to work* / *working* a bit harder.
- 3 I wasn't impressed: I'm used to *see* / *seeing* him like that.
- 4 My favourite pastime is *to dance* / *dancing*.
- 5 Sue found *to lose* / *losing* her best friend very hard.
- 6 Patrick used to *watch* / *watching* television for at least three hours every day.
- 7 *To read* / *Reading* science fiction has never been one of my hobbies.
- 8 Kim can't come to the telephone right now: she's practising *to play* / *playing* the violin.

Language Organiser
Assignment 61

10 



A

In the article you can read that Michael Bywater thinks that *You've Been Framed* has a lot to answer for (ll. 78-80). You can also read that he sometimes feels like he is a 'walk-on' in his own life (l. 133). Here are some more expressions with the words *answer* and *walk*. Make a match.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| 1 to answer for | a to abandon or suddenly withdraw from |
| 2 to answer back | b someone who plays a small non-speaking part in a film or play |
| 3 to answer the description of | c to suit one's actions to one's words |
| 4 to have all the answers | d to respond disrespectfully |
| 5 in answer to | e the position in society that someone holds as a result of their job or social status |
| 6 a walk-on | f to be responsible for or to blame for |

- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| 7 to walk all over | g something easy or pleasant |
| 8 walk of life | h to be confident about one's knowledge |
| 9 to walk on eggshells | i as a response to or result of |
| 10 to walk one's talk | j a person who has an impressive knowledge of facts |
| 11 a walk in the park | k to lose one's job or position |
| 12 a walking encyclopaedia | l to correspond to a description, esp. one of a suspect by the police |
| 13 to walk the plank | m to feel elated |
| 14 to walk away from | n to treat in a disrespectful and exploitative manner |
| 15 to walk on air | o to guide someone through a process |
| 16 to walk someone through | p to be extremely cautious about one's words or actions |

B

Complete the sentences using expressions from A.

- 1 When Jody heard she'd made it to the finals, she was ...
- 2 Harold is very rich, but he knows people from all ...
- 3 I really can't stand Nuala; she's arrogant and thinks she ...
- 4 When you're in a position of authority, for example when you're a teacher or parent, you should ...
- 5 When Olga had her breakdown, we were all ... because she would get upset about the slightest things.
- 6 Some children are very cheeky, and ... when they are told off.
- 7 The procedure is not that difficult, but if you come and see me next Monday, I'll ...
- 8 Compared to last week's maths test, the physics test was a ...

Speaking
Assignment 62

15 



Team up with three classmates. You are going to have a discussion about posting pictures and videos online on sites like Hyves, Facebook, and YouTube. Divide the roles, then take a few minutes to prepare your roles, and have the discussion. Try to convince the other two students of the fun side / evils of recording your life on social networks.

Pair A

You are very much against filming everything you do and putting these materials online. You think it is immature, dangerous, and that people who do this will live to regret it. Try to think of other arguments and of examples to convince the opposing pair of your case.

Pair B

You are very much into filming your life experiences and sharing them with your friends on the web. Think of all the reasons why you like doing this and why it's not as risky as some people seem to think. You think it's hard to believe that there are still people out there who are against sharing on sites like Facebook and YouTube; you feel you should try to convince them to try it!