

Dumb New World

The Internet may be one of the most paradoxical human innovations of all times. On the one hand, it has put unfathomable depths of information at everyone’s fingertips, at a relatively low cost. And it is transforming education. The popularity of massive open online courses (MOOCs) is soaring. Online study groups, flash cards, lecture notes, and countless other educational tools are available for free. Many schools are beginning to use digital devices in favor of textbooks, and investment in education technology companies increased from over four times from 2007 to 2012. Classic works of literature are available to everyone for free. But is anybody reading them? Critics of the Internet claim that search engines and electronic information storage are robbing us of our intellect and our powers of concentration. Our memories have gone on vacation. The proliferation and ever-increasing popularity of film and television have robbed us of our imaginations, while blogs and YouTube have made off with our attention spans. E-mail, Twitter, blog posts, and comment threads have eroded our vocabularies. And what of all that free, great literature that is our heritage as human beings? The seemingly unlimited options for diversion have resulted in children who no longer develop the religious, historical, or cultural knowledge that literary study requires. They are easily bored. All of these things in combination make literary comprehension, appreciation and interpretation impossible. The Internet hasn’t just changed how we live as human beings, it has altered our capacity for humanness—reducing our ability to use critical thinking, imagination and empathy.



1. What is the central idea of the passage?

2. Briefly summarize the passage.

BONUS: The title of this article is a literary reference. What is it a reference too? Explain.
