

Material für die Schülerinnen und Schüler

Assignments

Work through the following assignments using your own words as much as possible.

1. Derive a characterisation of the typical “vampire child” from the article.
2. Analyse the means the author employs to make this text appealing and convincing.
3. Choose **one** of the following topics. Write about 250 words.
 - 3.1 Smartphones and tablets should be integral parts of lessons at school. Discuss.
 - 3.2 Printed books belong to the past. Give your opinion.

The Vampire Children

by Tanith Carey

The bedside clock was blinking 2 a.m. when Jennifer McFall woke from a deep sleep, needing to visit the loo.

As she passed her son’s room, however, she spied the familiar blue glow from his computer tablet coming through the crack in his door. “I popped my head around and there was Charlie engrossed in a YouTube clip about the game Minecraft, even though he had to get up for school just five hours later. I asked him what on earth he thought he was doing and he insisted he’d just woken up and turned it on.” Yet the bags under Charlie’s eyes, his grey, almost vampire-like pallor and filthy mood at breakfast the next morning told a different story.

Worryingly, ten-year-old Charlie is among a growing generation of children who are getting a fraction of the sleep they need due to their addiction to the internet.

This is having a serious impact on their health, behaviour and school performance.

The average teenager gets just seven-and-a-half hours’ sleep a night, despite needing eight to ten hours.

Of course, children wanting to stay up late is not a new phenomenon. But the innocent days of torches concealed under blankets as they read Enid Blyton¹ and comics are long gone.

Thanks to the advent of video clips, games and social media, which can be viewed at any hour on hand-held devices easily hidden from their parents’ view, children have never had more opportunity to avoid sleep.

¹ famous writer of children’s books (1897 – 1968)

20 Three million children, aged eight to 15, own an internet-enabled smartphone. On top of that, one in three aged five to 15 has their own tablet. Two-thirds of secondary pupils take these gadgets to bed, according to the charity *Tablets for Schools*.

According to the Sleep Foundation, as many as 65 per cent of children are estimated to suffer from significant sleep deprivation. As many as two million also have sleep disorders, including insomnia.

25 By the time these children are in their teens, using smartphones and tablets into the early hours has become so established that it has its own name: 'vamping', named after the adolescent vampires who never sleep in the *Twilight* books and films.

Indeed, staying up all night has become 'cool' with children competing and egging each other on over social media.

30 Scroll through the social media feeds on Twitter in the early hours and you will find them strewn with dozens of 'selfies' of bleary-eyed teens taken in darkened bedrooms, advertising the fact that they are still awake to their fellow night owls, with hashtags such as 'up all night'.

Social researcher Danah Boyd, author of the book *It's Complicated: The Social Lives Of Networked Teens*, says young people would rather be chronically tired and resort to subterfuge than 35 give up what they regard as 'me time' late at night.

With back-to-back scheduled activities throughout the day, Boyd says they view the quiet hours after lights out as the only time they have to hold intimate conversations away from prying adult eyes.

40 The fallout is such that by the time they have left school, they are sleeping one-and-a-half hours less a day than teenagers their age a decade ago.

Girls are more likely to be sucked into this time vacuum than boys, according to studies, because they feel a more compulsive need to use social networks. [...]

45 According to the Sleep Council, just one more hour of sleep cuts the chances of being overweight or obese by as much as 30 per cent. And studies show that teenagers who have not slept long enough are more prone to negative emotions such as fear, anger and poor behaviour, leading to rows and disconnection from their parents.

Their academic performance also suffers. Nine out of ten teachers complained pupils were so tired they were unable to pay attention in class, and nearly half said lack of sleep made children unruly and badly behaved. [...]

50 To make sure children get enough sleep, [parenting educator] Noel Janis-Norton recommends that at bedtime devices must be handed over to their parents.

Back at Jennifer's house, the tablet she so eagerly looked forward to giving her son three Christmases ago is an ongoing source of conflict.

55 Tortured by lack of sleep, Charlie is so tired in the mornings that recently he had to be taken
to school an hour late. His teachers say his concentration is suffering in class.

But, more than that, his tablet feels like an obstacle between mother and son.

“The sad fact is that Charlie never wants a bedtime story from me any more or to have a
cuddle and chat before he goes to sleep,” says Jennifer.

60 “If I read him a story, he wants to browse on his tablet at the same time. The heart-breaking
thing is he would much rather have time on his tablet than anything else in the world.”

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