 Black Mirror Writing Project

Goals:

**Compose written texts using appropriate style, structure, and voice**

* Express ideas with clarity and style
* Use appropriate linking words
* Employ correct grammar (conditional clauses, adjectives and adverbs)

1. Nosedive

**Nosedive** is the first episode of the third series of the British science fiction [anthology series](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthology_series) [*Black Mirror*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Mirror). The episode is set in a world where people can rate each other from one to five stars for every interaction they have, and which can impact their [socioeconomic status](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socioeconomic_status). The episode poses a number of interesting questions. One of them is: *how do social media influence a person’s perspective on another person?* Or in other words: *how does one’s online personality influence one’s offline personality and life?*

**A Before watching the episode, answer the following questions:**

1. Imagine that someone who doesn’t know you can see everything you look at on your phone. What kind of impression would that person get of you? Would that match how your classmates see you? And how you see yourself? Explain your answer.

* Use 80 - 100 words.
* Use at least 3 different linking words ( SSL-list) and 2 if-clauses.

1. Give a description of someone you have never met in person, but know through social media. Answer the following questions, before you start writing:
2. What do you think this person is like?
3. How do you know? What do you look at most? ( number of friends, what they say/post, what they like/dislike, what they look like, what they do, what friends they have, etc.)
4. Which social media platform(s) do you look at?

Now write your description, using the answers you just gave.

* Use 100 – 150 words.
* Pay special attention to your vocabulary. Use interesting adjectives and adverbs.

1. Choose someone you know (classmate/ friend) who is very active on social media. How does his/her online personality differ from their offline personality? Which do you like better and why? If you don’t know anyone who’s active on social media, describe how you use social media or explain why you don’t use it at all.

* Use 80 – 100 words
* Use at least 6 different linking words.

1. Team up with a partner and read each other’s work.

* Did he/she answer the question and use enough words?
* Did he/she use linking words and if-clauses correctly?
* For each answer/assignment, underline the two sentences you liked best. What makes them stand out?

**B After watching the episode, read this article and answer the questions.**

*Black Mirror* considers the murky relationship between humans and technology, the latter of which often threatens to progress so quickly that our ethical frameworks don’t have the chance to catch up. (1) Brooker has said that the show’s name refers to “the cold, shiny screens” of the devices we’re so attached to, but it also seems to offer a message that technology reflects the darkest elements of humanity right back at us. Some episodes are set in vividly imaginative future worlds; the most disturbing ones, though, are set in the present, and shine an uncomfortable spotlight on the ways in which we’re already living.

In that sense, “Nosedive” is both dystopian (2) fiction and acute social satire. Lacie (Bryce Dallas Howard) lives in a version of America where every tiny interaction is ranked by the people involved on an app that syncs with augmented-reality (3) contact lenses (or retinal implants, it’s unclear). The minute you see someone you can also see their ranking, meaning that reality has morphed into a pastel-coloured nightmare of aggressive cheeriness, as citizens attempt to out-nice each other and bump up their ratings. (4) The episode is set in a *Truman Show*-style universe that seems designed explicitly for Instagram. (5)

1. Explain what is being said here in your own words and give an example.
2. What is meant by ‘dystopian’? What is its opposite, or antonym? In what sense is *Nosedive* an example of dystopian fiction?
3. What is augmented reality and how is it different from virtual reality? Explain, and give two examples of each.
4. Paraphrase this. How would you say this in your own words?
5. Explain what is meant here. What is it about the *Nosedive*-world that makes the writer of this article think of Instagram?

**C Research and share**

1. Team up with a partner. One of you reads up on China’s Social Credit System and the other one on the relatively new phenomenon of cancel culture. Write 200 – 300 words each, answering the following questions:

For China’s Social Credir System:

* What is the purpose of China’s social credit system?
* How does the system collect and use data?
* What are some examples of rewards for a high social credit score?
* What are some consequences of a low social credit score?
* Is there a single nationwide social credit score, or does it vary by region and sector?
* What are some criticisms or concerns about the social credit system?
* How does it affect people’s behaviour?
* How is it related to *Nosedive*?
* What do you think about it?

For cancel culture:

* What is cancel culture, and how did it originate?
* What are some common reasons why individuals or organizations get “cancelled”?
* How do social media platforms influence cancel culture?
* What are the potential positive effects of cancel culture?
* What are some criticisms or negative consequences of cancel culture?
* How does cancel culture differ from traditional forms of public criticism or boycotting?
* How is it related to *Nosedive*?
* What do you think about it?

Try to show your reader how you feel about this system/phenomenon from the start.

( e.g. It is an amazing system…/ Why anyone would see … as a threat boggles the mind) Use the passive voice at least three times.

1. Read what your partner wrote. Was the passive used correctly? Underline all words and phrases that show what your partner thinks about the system/phenomenon.
2. **The Entire History of You**

**Black Mirror: The Entire History Of You** imagines a near future in which our memories are stored on hard drives implanted in our skulls. These memories could then be endlessly replayed, slowed and zoomed on home plasma screens, like Sky Sports presenters analysing controversial penalty incidents.

**A After watching the episode, do the following assignments.**

1. Tweet (140 characters only) your reaction to this episode. X (Twitter) is all about communicating effectively and efficiently, so make sure your message (i.e. your opinion) is clear and concise.
2. If life-replay technology was available, would you use it? Explain your answer.

* Use 80 – 100 words.
* Use a gerund at least twice.
* Use at least two relative clauses

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| Ik leer:  • op een effectieve manier schriftelijk informatie of diensten verkrijgen over zaken van persoonlijk belang, en mijn tekst afstemmen op mijn doel, het medium dat ik gebruik en de ontvanger(s).  *Succescriteria product*  Ik kan:  • de relevante informatie voor mijn doel overbrengen en duidelijk maken wat ik het belangrijkst vind;  • de structuur en de (beleefdheids)conventies van een formele e-mail toepassen;  • langere zinnen vormen en deze met elkaar verbinden met behulp van enkele logische verbindingswoorden;  • een breed scala van eenvoudige woorden en uitdrukkingen op een passende wijze gebruiken om mijn doel te bereiken;  • redelijk nauwkeurig gebruik maken van veelgebruikte grammaticale constructies; het is niet foutloos, maar in ieder geval altijd duidelijk wat ik wil communiceren;  • spelling, leestekens en layout redelijk correct toepassen.  *Succescriteria proces/zelfregulatie*  Ik kan:  • criteria voor een goede en effectieve formele e-mail zelf herkennen en benoemen;  • mijn keuzes uitleggen en onderbouwen;  • reflecteren op de kwaliteit van mijn schrijfproduct of van het schrijfproduct van een andere leerling;  • mijn schrijfproduct verbeteren aan de hand van feedback;  • reflecteren op wat ik meer moet oefenen om effectiever te schrijven in het Engels en daarbij een passende aanpak kiezen. |

**B Do the following assignments.**

1. Write a letter of complaint from a parent to an English teacher. Use 200 – 220 words.

In your letter:

* Zeg dat je schrijft naar aanleiding van een gesprek dat je gisteren had met je zoon. Je zoon heeft verteld dat hij in de les een aflevering van een Netflix-serie, genaamd Black Mirror, heeft gekeken.
* Zeg dat je verbijsterd was toen je dit hoorde. Je zoon zit elke dag al uren Netflix te kijken, ondanks jouw pogingen om dit te veranderen.
* Zeg dat je steeds meer vraagtekens plaatst bij het huidige onderwijs. Geef twee voorbeelden van dingen waar je het niet mee eens bent op school. Gebruik een voegwoord om de twee zinnen aan elkaar te verbinden.
* Zeg dat je een verklaring eist van de docent. Wat was zijn beoogde lesdoel? Zeg wat je zult doen als de docent je niet kan overtuigen van het nut van zijn onderwijsmethode (gebruik een conditional).
* Sluit af door te zeggen dat je uitkijkt naar het antwoord.

1. Write a letter to the editor of the Guardian (= een ingezonden brief naar de krant) about the Black Mirror episode you just saw. You don’t like social media and are suspicious of technological progress. Use 200 – 220 words.

In your letter:

* Leg je uit welke serie je gezien hebt, wat voor soort serie het is en wat de aflevering *The Entire History of You* je geleerd heeft over life-replay technologie.
* Zeg dat je je na het kijken vreselijk boos en overstuur voelde en het niet kon laten je gedachten te delen middels deze brief.
* Zeg dat je met toenemende ergernis ziet hoe iedereen alles online zet. Mensen delen hun beste en slechtste momenten op facebook en lijken meer bezig hun leven vast te leggen dan het te leven.
* Zeg welk gevaar hier volgens jou in schuilt.
* Vat krachtig samen hoe jij denkt over life-replay technologie.
* Zeg wat er volgens jou zou gebeuren als deze technologie beschikbaar werd (gebruik een conditional).
* Sluit af met een oproep aan de lezers van de krant.

**C Choose one of the following assignments.**

1. Write the outline of a new Black Mirror episode. Use at least 150 words.
2. Write an essay (of at least 250 words) on one of the following questions:
   * + Life-replay technology: an enhancement of the human experience?
     + Should we say ‘no’ to technological progress?
     + Can technology help us to become better people?