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AP Language

### “Pages or Screens” OPR

Gideon Rappaport’s discourse on the educational disadvantages of technology, titled *Pages or Screens*, demonstrates how students’ reading analysis skills are becoming increasingly superficial, due to a plethora of readily available Internet resources, which offer shortcuts and alternatives for comprehending challenging texts. While it is quite indisputable that technology assumes a distraction and lucid “lifeline” for most high school students in understanding their English homework, Rappaport employs a gratuitous amount of overgeneralization to substantiate his argument, referring frequently from personal experience as a teacher observing his students’ performance, allegedly using “studies,” as well as allusions to the Luddites and Cassandra. Consequently, the article is exceedingly predisposed to enumerate the downsides of technology, but neither discusses the benefits nor positive results from responsibly using the various resources of the Internet to collaborate among classmates and complete assignments.

“Everything a young person sees on a screen—laptop, smart phone, video game, iPad—is instantly comprehended. The medium is pitched so that no degree of concentration and no more than a second or two are required for grasp of its content,” (pg. 5, Rappaport) states Rappaport in the middle of the article. His sophomore syllabus contained works originally composed in the 14<sup>th</sup> century (*Sir Gawain*), 15<sup>th</sup> century (*The Canterbury Tales*), 17<sup>th</sup> century (*Macbeth*), and 19<sup>th</sup> century (*A Tale of Two Cities*) respectively, observing considerable evolution of the English language. Albeit the most recent developments of the English language, it should be apparent that the average high school student in today’s society would certainly not be inherently capable of understanding the significance of “Fair is foul, and foul is fair” (*Macbeth*) without further explanation. They do not have “no experience of the rewards of attention paid to a challenging text over time” (pg. 5, Rappaport), because during middle school or freshman year, the definition of a ‘challenging text’ may have meant something completely different than texts that would fare equally difficult to entry-level students in college. Unless the students are avid Shakespeare enthusiasts, or have read and understood a significant number of his works prior to sophomore year, if the teacher doesn’t instruct his/her students properly on techniques to interpret such archaic language, assuming that “they were not less capable than their predecessors” (pg. 5, Rappaport), the students have no other choice but to resort to explicatory resources, the most accessible of which are on the Internet. Most students of English literature typically wouldn’t be exposed to Shakespeare’s works until about 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> grade, therefore their analysis skills would be inadequate compared to those of students in 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

Furthermore, in terms of the references to Luddites and Cassandra, Rappaport expounds his staunch opposition toward the propagation of digitally enhanced education programs. The Luddite denotes an individual of a group of early 19<sup>th</sup> century English workmen, who sought to extinguish machinery as a means of remonstrance against the prodigious innovations of the Industrial Revolution. Rappaport insinuated how he resists the transition from traditional English literature analysis to “replacing textbooks with ‘digital content’” (pg. 5, Rappaport). On the other hand, Cassandra was the mythological daughter of Priam, King of Troy, associated with anyone whose warnings are overlooked. Rappaport’s inflated predictions of today’s generation to be “speedily multitasking illiterates” (pg. 5, Rappaport) can be equated with the belief technology has no intellectual purposes. In conclusion, without technology, how would future generations of both students and teachers be able to interpret and provide clarification for some of the greatest works of humanity, if English teachers don’t impart the necessary tools for success?