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| **Chapter summary from Peter Singer’s collection, Ethics in the Real World, published in 2016 by Text Publishing Company, Australia.** | |
| **Essay details: “A Dream for the Digital Age”, pp. 303-305, in the section called ‘Science and Technology”. First appeared in Project Syndicate December 14. 2009.** | |
| **Relevance of title:**  This title reminds the reader of the memorable “I Have a Dream Speech” by American civil rights activist Martin Luther King, which called the end to racism and racial segregation in the US. However, it seems to be the modern equivalent for that dream. | |
| **Brief synopsis of the chapter’s argument:**  This essay argues that digital technology is a high priority due to its power. This essay also clearly argues how bringing undeveloped societies into the digital age is important due to it allowing them to become economically, culturally and socially advanced. And how it will improve quality of life for the citizens of these nation and will close this division we have in our world. | |
| **Introductory paragraph:** | The paragraph starts of with Martin Luther King and his famous dream. This creates an initial interest towards the piece and hooks the reader. Singer then introduces the topic, of “providing internet access to… who don’t have it.” Additionally, he uses clever syntax to depict how this issue is the current (the digital age) equivalent to the racial segregation that King fought against, which highlights how important it is. |
| **Paragraph 2:** | Straight away Singer addresses the audience’s response to how the motive of Mark Zuckerberg “may seem self-interested”. He states, “may seem”, which provokes a sense of uncertainty and foreshadows how this statement is incorrect. Furthermore, he rebuts the audience’s response by drawing parallels of the growing technological divide to the racial divide with a tricolon of “equality, liberty and a right to pursue happiness”, which also resembles King’s ‘I have a dream’ speech. This causes the audience to realise the magnitude of the issue, which is commonly unknown. |
| **Paragraph 3:** | Singer uses simple to follow statistics of “**two billion** people live in the Digital Age” and “**five billion** are still stuck in the Paper Age” to allow the audience to realise the massive number of people that are living without internet access and the great divide we currently have. Additionally, he uses the labels of “the Digital Age” and “the Paper Age” to contrast the two groups and this also creates further separation. He reinforces his point by using imagery to show how people are” **stuck** in the Paper Age” and juxtaposes this with how people in the “Digital Age have access to a **vast universe of information**”. The diction of “stuck” symbolises how these people cannot escape where they are without help and creates a further sense of need. On the other hand, the metaphor of “a vast universe” symbolises the limitless amount of knowledge we have due to the internet. This highlights the inequality that is present and how drastic it is. He concludes this paragraph by giving authority to his argument due to his generation growing up in the Paper Age, which displays that he has knowledge on this topic. |
| **Paragraph 4:** | Singer starts off this paragraph with “in those days”, which links to his previous paragraph. Additionally, the use of diction by choosing to use the word “those”, creates a sense of divide from that time and therefore the people that live in the “Paper Age”. Singer then elaborates on how expensive and complex some simple tasks were at that time. He uses the examples of the encyclopedia, the library and letters, which in the current day are fading away. He also uses adverbs such as “**prohibitively** expensive” which emphasise how many things were not attainable for the poor. He finally concludes the paragraph by stating how something like a Skype call was “the stuff of science fiction”. This metaphor depicts how technology has advanced us to things that seemed out of this world. This paragraph causes the audience to realise how much technology has advanced our society and how easily we take it for granted and the technological divide we have with the people that live in the “Paper Age.” |
| **Paragraph 5:** | In this paragraph Singer links back to Zuckerberg and his “vision” of Internet.org. When describing it he uses vocabulary such as “new”, “less expensive” and “efficient”. This displays how Zuckerberg’s method is better than most and will most likely have a greater effect. He also tries to alleviate the contentious issue of how organisations may make people choose between buying food and data using this language but falls flat due to it all hypothetical and not having actual examples. |
| **Paragraph 6:** | In this paragraph Singer introduces a counter example of how “providing internet access is not high priority”, which is an opinion Bill Gates has. This creates balance in his argument and creates a sense of trust between Singer and the reader. However, Singer does rebut this opinion and then states the flow on affects that internet access can have. This highlights how implementing it will help individuals like Bill Gates “tackle the problem[s]” that these poor countries face and suggests working together to provide internet access to “transfer the lives of the very poor”. |
| **Paragraph 7:** | An anecdote of Singer’s friend is used to give a first-hand insight of how drastic some of the issues are in these countries. He explains how women “only get five minutes with a doctor, who are their only source of advice". This highlights the inequality that people in countries like Kenya experience and how we take our basic services for granted. It also depicts how internet access can help alleviate problems from already weak economies. However, Singer does not include the issues that might be caused by placing these vulnerable people in the internet, making his piece seem more unreliable. |
| **Paragraph 8:** | He then elaborates on his point with a tricolon of the more societal benefits that internet access could bring. This widens the aspects of how it can affect the daily lives of the individuals and deepens his argument. Singer introduces another issue that many developing countries are facing- family planning, which can have massive long term affects. He points out a viable solution of online consultants, which needs internet access. This creates even greater reason about how positive bringing internet access can be. He also uses a tricolon to highlight how the information and knowledge that internet access can bring can also create a safe place for some and “bypass” many educational issues. |
| **Paragraph 9:** | He broadens “range of topics” that internet access can affect to homosexuality and domestic violence, which can be very traumatic and hard to talk about in small communities. This creates more pathos due to many of these issues having detrimental effects on the people. This also causes the audience to feel remorseful towards these people and creates an emotional reason for his point. He links back to his argument on how the knowledge that the internet brings can help these people and this creates more cohesion in the text. It also highlights how we take our accepting environment for granted. |
| **Paragraph 10:** | In this paragraph Singer focuses on the financial gain internet access can bring to these people. He states how internet access can create connections to “affluent people”. “Affluent” juxtaposes between itself and the “poor countries”. Therefore, this reinforces how the availability of internet access impacts the betterment of people in the paper age. Furthermore, Singer refers to research build a platform for his rhetorical question and create more credibility. He ends this paragraph with a rhetorical question, “if a mere photo and a few identities can do that (make people donate more), what might Skyping with the person do?” This rhetorical question causes the audience to actively think about this topic and the much greater effect internet access can have. Additionally, he uses language like “mere “and “few” to highlight the minute effect Paper Age media, such as photos… have compared to Digital Age media, such as a Skype call. |
| **Paragraph 11:** | Singer equates giving universal Internet access to the Human Genome Project, which was also another huge scientific advancement that had many ethical and societal issues. This causes the reader to realise that bringing internet access to everyone has many risks too. Additionally, he gives an example of pirating, however rebuts this due to it having no long-term affect. The mentioning of issues causes his argument to be more balanced and makes him seem more fair and honest. This allows the audience to trust him and his argument and therefore be more open to his points. |
| **Concluding paragraph:** | In the concluding paragraph Singer states “local cultures may be **eroded**”, again this highlights the power internet access can have; to the point where it can destroy these cultures. It also has very powerful connotation and creates a mixed audience response. However, he equates this by stating how many cultures “restrict freedom” and “deny equal opportunity”, which comes back to the values that Martin Luther King had. Additionally, he also uses language such as “reasonable to expect” to create an appeal to popularity, which causes the audience to want to agree with him. |
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| **Overall summary of the essay:** | This essay is a perfect example of Peter Singer’s ability to address a very scientific and objective issue. He uses various techniques throughout his piece to create more persuasion for the audience to join his philosophical way. Additionally, he uses his style of: statics, anecdotes and research coupled with diction and figurative language to present his ideas and proposals in a simple fashion to the audience. He constantly builds support to his argument. has a strong circular structure and depicts most aspects of society that internet access can affect- social, cultural, economic… And he even makes a very scientific article interesting for the common person. However, he does not include much about education, which can be greatly affected in these countries with the digital age and he also doesn’t include enough counter arguments to create substantial balance. Although, “a Dream for the Digital Age” is a perfect example of how Singer’s style makes it possible for the audience to comprehend the full capabilities that internet access can have and how important it is for the five billion others to receive it. Furthermore, people like Bill gates, who Singer includes in his piece, have now changed their minds and placed internet access as a high priority, highlighting Singer’s forward thinking. |