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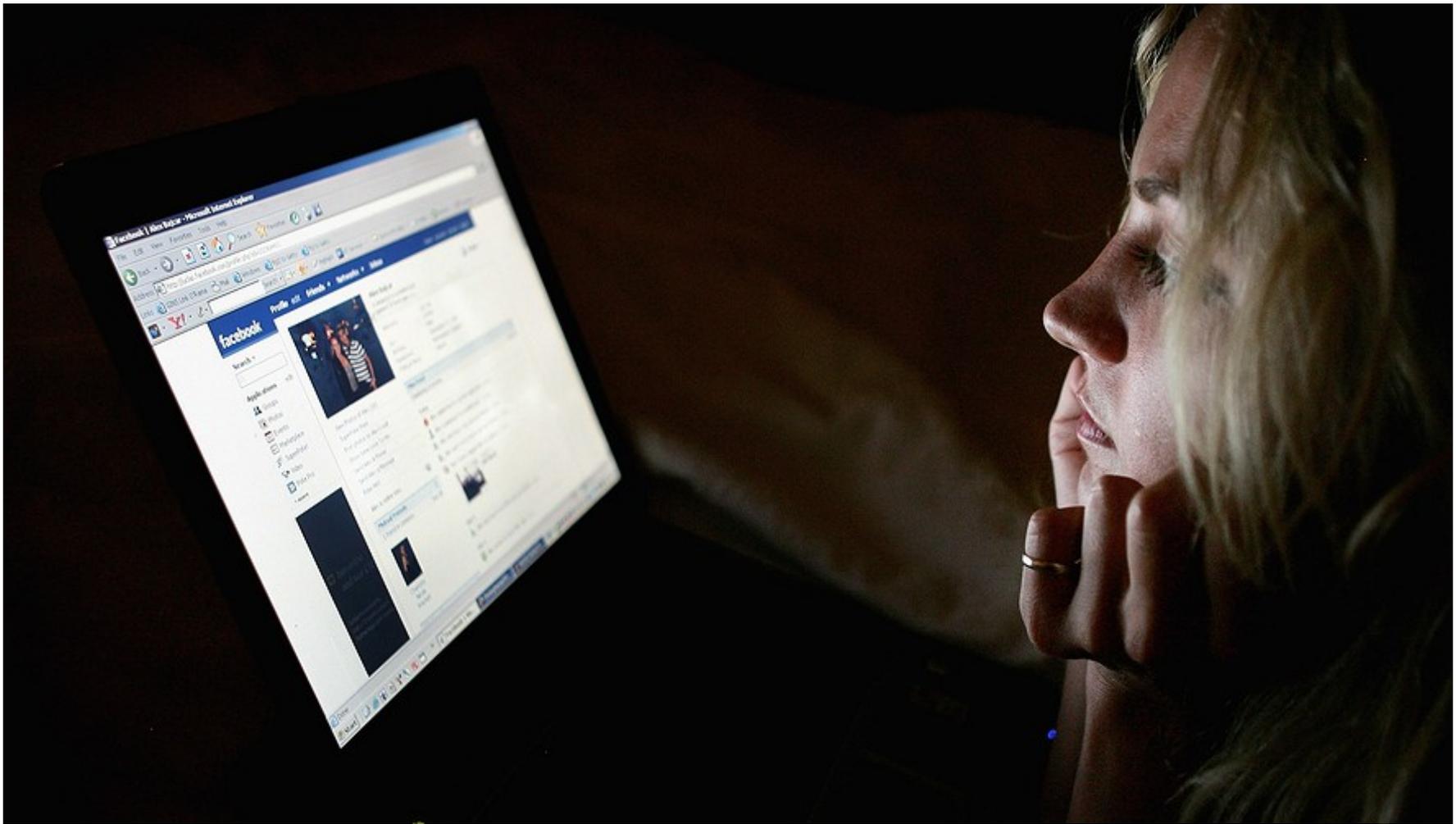
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A girl browses the social networking site Facebook on July 10, 2007 in London, England. Photo: Chris Jackson/Getty Image

Issue Overview: Are social networking sites good for our society?

ProCon.org, adapted by Newsela staff

Social networking websites were made for connecting with friends and family. People can create profiles on these sites. They can chat and send messages. They can also post photos, videos and links.

More and more people use these websites every year. Some people think this is a good thing. They say social networking is a good way keep in touch. They think these websites help people find and share information.

Others disagree. They say these websites keep people from talking in person. They say that the sites make it too easy to spread untrue information. Some also think social networking makes kids behave badly.

The First Social Media Websites

SixDegrees.com was the first social networking website. It existed from 1997 to 2001. Other websites like it soon followed.

Facebook was one. It was started in 2004. Today, it is the most popular social networking site. By 2012, 1 in 7 people around the world had joined Facebook. Today 1.8 billion people around the world are users. Pew, a research company, did a study. It found that more than half of U.S. adults who go online use the Facebook website.

At first, Facebook was just for college students. Soon it allowed anyone to join, though. By 2014, most Facebook users were between 15 and 34 years old. Now, Facebook is getting more users who are 55 and older.

Political Activity Online

World leaders use social networking, too. It has become a big part of elections in the U.S. This was true in the 2016 race to become president. Both Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump used it to speak to voters.

The White House started using social networking in 2009. It joined Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and a few other popular sites. President Barack Obama said doing this would make the government more open and creative.

Other leaders seemed to agree. By 2011, 35 global leaders had Twitter accounts.

Organizing Protest Movements

Social networking has also helped people who are protesting against their leaders. In 2010, the Arab Spring began. It was a series of protests led by people in the Middle East and North Africa. They were protesting against their governments. The protesters relied on social networking. It allowed them to connect with each other. It also helped them promote and share their cause.

The Scary Side Of Socializing Online

Some say social networking has created new problems. Companies worry about their workers using these sites. Some employees need it to do their jobs. Others are just wasting time.

Social networking may put people at risk. In 2012, 7 million households that use Facebook reported a problem. These problems had to do with safety and privacy. Some people noticed that a stranger was trying to use their account. Others were threatened online.

Useless Distractions?

These websites can also distract students. In 2015, a study was published. It said that first-year college students were spending two hours a day on Facebook. This caused their grades to drop.

Today, social networks are growing. They are always available to users. Their supporters say this is good. They believe social networking will help society.

On the other side, people aren't so sure. They worry that social networking wastes too much time. They also think it presents new dangers.

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GRADE 3, ANCHOR 2: **CENTRAL IDEA**

What is the main idea of the "Political Activity Online" section of the article?

- A** The White House has had a Facebook account since 2009.
 - B** The candidates for president in the 2016 election both used social media.
 - C** Many world leaders use social media sites to share their ideas with people.
 - D** Leaders from places outside of the United States like using Twitter better than Facebook.
-

2

GRADE 3, ANCHOR 3: **PEOPLE, EVENTS & IDEAS**

According to the article, why are some businesses against social media?

- A** because it costs too much to pay for using social media each month
 - B** because social media does not help them earn extra money
 - C** because social media keeps people from getting work done
 - D** because social media makes it easy for people to learn about better companies
-

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GRADE 3, ANCHOR 2: **CENTRAL IDEA**

What is the main idea of the article?

- A** Facebook is the most popular social media site when compared to the many other options.
- B** Research shows that college students of all ages spend too much time on social media sites.

- C** As social media networks get more users, people from around the world worry that there will be more protests.
 - D** As social media networks continue to grow, people debate their advantages and disadvantages.
-

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GRADE 3, ANCHOR 3: **PEOPLE, EVENTS & IDEAS**

According to the article, what does the Arab Spring show about social media?

- A** It is a powerful tool that people use for organizing.
- B** It has the ability to help people make a lot of money.
- C** It is disliked enough to inspire protests from some groups.
- D** It has the ability to block governments from abusing their power.

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