

The ‘Sick’ Reason Students Are Reading Less and Less

A couple of years ago, Common Sense Media [reported](#) a dramatic increase in the number of children who rarely – if ever – read. In 1984, just under 10 percent of children ages 13 and 17 reported doing so; by 2012, those numbers had risen to 22 percent and 27 percent respectively.

So why aren't today's kids reading?

A 9th grade English teacher recently [posed this question](#) to his class of 100 students. They came up with seven reasons, but the top two are especially revealing.

In a nutshell? Students are distracted:

1. Cell phone addiction.

This should come as no surprise. One student told me, “I stay on my phone 24/7.” Another added, “Whenever I see a message on my phone, I have to answer it.”

If students keep their phones in sight while reading, it's virtually impossible for them to finish a page without feeling the urge to check for a text message, Instagram like, or Snapchat.

2. A short attention span.

Several students reported that they have trouble staying focused for a long period of time. For example, one student said, “I get off task easily and get into something else,” while another said simply, “My attention span is kind of low.”

These kids are not alone in their distraction. As famed

blogger Andrew Sullivan [recently confessed](#), the continual din of the digital age ensnared him and eventually led to what he terms a “distraction sickness.” Unfortunately for Sullivan, this distraction led to more than the inability to read, as the kids above attest; it actually broke him as a human being. Sullivan writes:

“But this new epidemic of distraction is our civilization’s specific weakness. And its threat is not so much to our minds, even as they shape-shift under the pressure. The threat is to our souls. At this rate, if the noise does not relent, we might even forget we have any.”

Andrew Sullivan and a majority of today’s adults grew up, learned lessons, and experienced life before the digital age. Thus, even though we too may be falling prey to the “distraction sickness,” like Sullivan, we also have the knowledge and connection with humanity shining through our halls of remembrance.

Is there a way we can instill this knowledge and understanding of humanity in our children so that they will not fall prey to “distraction sickness”?

Image Credit: Buzz Anderson bit.ly/1eBd9Ks