

Flash mobs

I – Definition: fill in the blanks

A flash mob is a sudden and _____ gathering of strangers at a particular _____.
This meeting has been organized using electronic media such as cell phones or the Internet and people _____ in a predetermined (and often silly) manner for a predetermined amount of time, and then quickly _____.

II - Text : Give each paragraph a title.

- a) Social networks: a double-edged sword c) A spontaneous riot
b) New technology running loose d) Mass manipulation by the media

CNN, WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 17, 2011 AT 7:02PM

1 In the past, people seemed to require a massive "cue"(1) to form a mob. The New York blackouts of the summer of 1977 resulted in citywide looting, not just because alarm systems were down, but because a whole lot of hot, angry, frustrated people had an excuse to act en masse.

5 Media can certainly accelerate or even reproduce this process. Radio gave Hitler a way to unify angry crowds as never before, and it both inspired and facilitated the chasing down and murder of about 800,000 Tutsis by gangs with machetes in Rwanda.

10 Are social media such as Facebook and Twitter serving a similar function? This year, we've certainly become aware of how these technologies can coordinate the activities of protesters and rebels acting against repressive regimes. The Arab Spring was initiated on Facebook pages, orchestrated through Twitter accounts, and video recorded on cell phones. But as we're also beginning to witness, these same technologies are being used to orchestrate "flash" looting of stores and almost entirely destructive (or at least poorly justified) riots in England. A mob beating in Wisconsin was reportedly organized through social networks, as were attacks in Cleveland, Chicago, and Washington.

15 Is access to technology through which a network of friends can so easily be turned into a gang of thieves or assailants just too dangerous for people to handle? By putting what had formerly been the capability of broadcast networks in the hands of everyone owning smartphones, have we unwittingly empowered the "mob" and given new life to the lowest form of crowd behavior?

(1) sign

<http://www.rushkoff.com/blog/2011/8/17/cnn-cutting-social-media-no-answer-to-flash-mobs.html>

III - Find in the article the synonyms of:

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------|
| crowd: | see: |
| power outage: | violent public disorder: |
| stealing goods: | deal with: |
| pursuing: | previously: |
| organized: | without intention: |

IV – After reading the summary of the text, underline and correct the 4 mistakes.

This article from CNN focuses on the negative aspects of social media. For instance, in the hands of Hitler, the media played a minor role in manipulating crowds or spreading propaganda. Today, flash mobs, which can't be easily organized via social networks such as Facebook or Twitter, may be used for the wrong purpose as was the case during the summer riots in Australia, in 2011. Yet, such social media can also be destructive like in the Arab Spring rebellion. What is paradoxical about the use of social media today is that they can serve the cause of democracy but also be used wrongly and have disastrous consequences.

V - Does the idea of flash-mobbing appeal to you? Why or why not? (Give several reasons)

chain mail

to gather, to assemble at a moment's notice

a means of communication

a common cause

a sense of belonging

to get out of control

unlawful/unauthorized activities

spontaneity, spontaneous

entertainment

social media

modern technology

dangerous tools

to fight impressive regimes

to cause a sensation

a non-violent act

demonstrations, sit-ins

to create positive change

randomly

without purpose

mass text messaging

a blessing ≠ a curse

a phenomenon

Civil Rights Movement

harmless

leaders

messages