

## Brilliantly Boring

It is agreed that we are more bored today than ever before. And at the age of the Internet, when the average person has access to vastly more fascinating information than at any point in history, what are the sites that consistently achieve cult status, from the birth of the web up to the present day? The most boring ones.

Just as frequently, though, boredom seems to be the very point of a boring website - as if we truly appreciate the quiet, uncomplicated space of a few moments spent watching, for example, a nest full of eggs or chicken in a farm with our web cam. In an information-saturated society, writes sociologist Orrin Klapp, we suffer anxiety, since the slow horse of our comprehension is unable to keep up with the fast horse of the information that we can access. It would be nice to believe that boring websites are popular because they are a rebellion against too much information overload - a space for our slow horses to live.

Except for one problem. The truth is that we all know how the web has a power of distraction, somehow absorbing our boredom without really curing it. This is what we mean when we say that web-surfing is addictive. Big Brother has this effect, too: you don't feel bored while you're watching it, but afterwards, you still wish you hadn't spent so long in front of the TV. Similarly, the fact that you just spent 10 minutes watching the Big Brother website does not automatically mean that you really wanted to, nor that it was good for you to do so.

Oliver Burkeman (The Guardian 3-4-2007, G2, p. 4-7)

I. Answer the following questions using your own words but taking into account the information in the text (2 points: 1 point each)

1. Why does so much information generate anxiety?
2. Why may boring websites be so popular?

II. Are the following statements true (T) or false (F)? Identify the part of the text that supports your answer by copying the exact passage on the answer sheet (1.5 point: 0.5 each)

1. Only the websites that contain fascinating information achieve cult status.
2. Boredom is the main reason why people visit boring websites.
3. People watch Big Brother on the Internet only if they really want to.

III. Find a synonym for each of the four words below from these six options: (1 point: 0.25 each)

*achieve frequently unable overload space mean*

1. incapable
2. imply
3. excess
4. obtain

IV. Choose a, b, or c, in each question below. Only one choice is correct (1.5 points: 0.5 each)

1. We are anxious today because...  
a) we cannot process all the information that is available.

- b) we only process the information that is communicated slowly.
- c) information comes from too many different sources.

2. Web-surfing is addictive because...

- a) users spend hours and hours on the Internet.
- b) users are attracted by its power of distraction.
- c) users feel depressed after using the Internet.

3. After watching Big Brother on TV...

- a) you wish the program was longer.
- b) you regret wasting your time.
- c) you wish you were even more bored.

Part B. Composition (130-150 words approximately). Choose one of the following topics (4 points)

1. Do you think the Internet can become addictive? Give reasons.
2. Explain what you use the Internet for.

Have fun....and take care!