



ENGLISH WITH MRS BRIGHTWELL HIGHER BROADLY DISCURSIVE EXEMPLAR



Title: Who Gave One Wee Ping This Much Power

Note: this exemplar is for learning and inspiration only — borrow the method, never the words.

Ping. Somewhere, a friend has remembered you. A photograph arrives; a private joke crosses the miles; three quiet words - are you okay? - soften a difficult evening. For young people, social media can be a meeting place, a lifeline, even a refuge. Any argument for banning it must begin with that truth. Yet connection should not require children to surrender their sleep, concentration and privacy to companies that profit from every second of their attention. The case for a ban is not an attack on young people's friendships; it is a refusal to let those friendships be engineered for profit. The real question is not whether social media connects young people, but when connection becomes control.

That distinction matters because the argument is often reduced to a tired contest between adults who think every phone is evil and teenagers who insist that nothing is wrong. Neither position is convincing. Social media is not one simple thing: it is friendship, entertainment and information, but it is also an industry. The same platform that helps a lonely teenager find a community also benefits when that teenager cannot bear to look away. A sensible debate must therefore separate genuine connection from the machinery designed to keep young people endlessly available.

Ping. The sentence on the page is abandoned halfway through. Ping. A conversation pauses; eye contact breaks; the person sitting beside us is quietly replaced by someone who is not even in the room. This is no accidental distraction. Each alert is a small electronic tug on the sleeve,



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designed to pull young minds back towards the screen. What promised connection now repeatedly fractures concentration.

It is tempting to dismiss this as a minor irritation: put the phone face down, switch it off, show some willpower. Yet that advice places the entire burden on the young person while ignoring the design of the product. Notifications arrive in bright colours; unread messages wait inside red circles; streaks turn absence into failure. The phone does not merely wait to be used. It repeatedly announces that something may be happening without you. Homework, sleep and face-to-face conversation must compete against the possibility of being left out.

Another like arrives. Ping. Another streak survives. Another polished life appears, carrying proof that somebody else is happier and somehow enjoying a far superior Tuesday. The sound no longer offers friendship. It issues orders: keep up. Look better. Reply now. Approval comes numbered, comparison has no closing time, and silence risks exclusion. For a young person still learning who they are, belonging becomes a performance measured in hearts and views. When connection turns self-worth into a public score, the companies behind the screen gain far too much power over children still learning how to value themselves.

Nor does that pressure end when the screen goes dark. A photograph can be retaken, filtered and judged before breakfast; a message can be analysed for hours because somebody replied with a full stop; an evening can be spoiled by watching everyone else appear to enjoy theirs. None of these experiences proves that social media alone causes insecurity. They do show, however, how easily ordinary uncertainty can be collected, displayed and intensified. Adolescence has always involved



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comparison. Previous generations simply did not carry a pocket-sized scoreboard that updated throughout the night.

Ping. The sound that once announced friendship now resembles an alarm. It warns that a generation's attention has become something companies can measure and sell before its owners are old enough to understand the transaction. We keep asking whether young people possess the self-control to put their phones down. A more urgent question remains: why have adults allowed companies to make putting them down so difficult?

Supporters of a ban can therefore make a powerful case. Age restrictions already recognise that children require protection from products and spaces they are not ready to navigate alone. Schools also have a duty to protect learning from constant interruption. If a platform depends upon compulsive checking, public comparison and the collection of personal information, asking it to leave children alone is hardly an attack on freedom. Sometimes a boundary is not a punishment; it is the condition that allows freedom to exist elsewhere.

Yet a ban carries its own cost. For a teenager isolated by where they live or who they are, a ping can open a door that the local world has kept shut. It can bring a friend into a silent evening and reveal a community where difference needs no apology. Removing that access entirely may protect some young people while deepening the loneliness of others.

That objection deserves more than a token sentence before the argument marches onwards. A complete ban may be satisfyingly simple, but young people's lives are not. It could push them towards less visible



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platforms, encourage false ages and make honest conversations about online behaviour more difficult. Enforcing it could also require yet more personal information from the very users whose privacy we claim to defend. Protection that creates new risks is not automatically progress.

The better answer lies in restricting exploitation rather than relationships. Platforms should face firm rules on features designed to create compulsion, particularly endless notifications, public popularity scores and systems that punish users for stepping away. Young people should receive stronger privacy by default and clear control over what reaches them and when. Schools and families still have a role, but lectures about self-control ring hollow while billion-pound companies employ teams of experts to capture attention. Responsibility must sit with the adults who design, regulate and profit from these spaces, not solely with the children moving through them.

So, this time, the phone ping can wait. The answer is not to exile every teenager from digital life, but to return their attention to its rightful owner. Platforms must face firm limits on addictive design while young people retain the freedom to connect. Technology should remain a tool, not become a leash. The next notification will come. The question is whether we will still permit it to command us.

Feedback

Estimated mark: 14/15 — Strong

This is a thoughtful, engaging argumentative essay with a clear and convincing line of thought. The opening immediately captures the reader's attention, while the recurring "ping" motif helps connect the different stages of the argument. Importantly, its meaning develops: it begins as friendship, becomes distraction and pressure, and finally represents control.



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The essay considers both sides fairly. The counterargument about friendship, community and loneliness is explored properly rather than dismissed. This makes the final judgement—restrict exploitation without removing genuine connection—feel balanced and mature.

The expression is confident and varied, with memorable images such as “a pocket-sized scoreboard” and “a small electronic tug on the sleeve.” The short sentences and repeated commands also create a strong sense of pressure.

To make this a secure 15/15, include two or three carefully selected pieces of research, such as an expert opinion, statistic or real example relating to notifications, concentration or young people’s wellbeing. This would provide firm evidence for the excellent ideas already presented.

Overall: A skilfully written, well-structured and convincing piece. The argument is strong and the motif earns its place throughout. Add authoritative evidence and it would be very difficult to keep this ping away from full marks.