
WebQuest: Cyberbullying



This WebQuest deals with the harmful phenomenon of cyberbullying, which affects many people. Our goal is to raise awareness of this phenomenon among young people and adults. The WebQuest will consist of various tasks that you can complete individually or in a group.

Exercise 1

Read Martin's story. Martin experiences cyberbullying; he's a fictional character, but such situations do happen in real life. Maybe you have heard a story like this, or you have experienced something similar yourself?



Don't shoot!

Martin is a first-year high school student. He's an introvert who doesn't like to speak up in class and who mostly keeps to himself. He contributes to the class group chat only if he really has to. He has one classmate, Patrick, with whom he spends time at school, but outside of class he mostly plays computer games or reads fantasy books. His classmates tolerate him, referring to him as the "class basement dweller" or "nerd". Martin doesn't mind as long as he's left alone.

One day, one of the popular students, Katie, sends a meme to the class group chat — it's a photo of Martin with a rather mean-spirited caption alluding to the stereotype that quiet students often initiate school shootings because they have no luck with girls.

The whole school puts a label of "a loser school shooter" on Martin basically overnight. Katie's meme sets off a chain reaction: after some time, practically everyone is exchanging memes referring to Martin's alleged disgraceful reputation.

Whispers, giggling, finger-pointing, and comments thrown straight to his face begin almost immediately. Martin initially hopes that after a few days everything will blow over and the students will find another scapegoat, as they usually do. Unfortunately, the memes continue to circulate around the school. What's more — new ones start to appear, each more vile and insulting than the last one.

Martin's parents are hard-working people with their own worries to take care of; he doesn't want to bother them, so he decides to talk to the school counsellor.

Ms. Greene receives him during lunch break. Martin tries to explain his situation as briefly as possible, however, the counsellor interrupts him mid-sentence: "just ignore them, eventually they will get bored and leave you alone anyway". Martin does not have the strength to explain to her that he has been ignoring the horrible treatment for a long time, and it doesn't look like the teasing is going to stop anytime soon.

He turns to his form teacher for help instead. Mrs. Carter listens to Martin, then tells him, rather sternly, that such is life, that people don't like "loners" and it's high time Martin started behaving "normally" and then no one will pick on him.

Exercise 2

As you have noticed, neither the counsellor nor the form teacher responded the way they should have. They do not understand that all the things that happen online can directly affect the reality of a teenager!

Let's change the story!

Revise the story to make the counsellor and the form teacher react to Martin's situation appropriately. You can rewrite the ending of the story, draw a cartoon or, if you work in a group, act out a scene.



Exercise 3

Your task will be to learn as much as possible about the phenomenon of cyberbullying. Look for:

- the definition of cyberbullying and what forms it takes on,
- the statistics on how many people it affects in your country,
- the information on legal punishment for online harassment in your country,
- legal advice from experts.

People who experience such difficulties often think they are completely isolated in this, which is not true!

Food for thought:

A common "argument" of cyberbullying perpetrators is that it's just "a prank" or "a joke". Consider where the line between joking and being hurtful would fall for you. How do you recognize that it's not okay anymore?

Exercise 4

When minors get hurt, it's a good idea to report it to trusted adults. Unfortunately, not all adults understand the intricacies of the virtual world the way you and your peers do. This is not always due to ill will!

Based on the information you have collected in the previous exercise, **create a presentation describing cyberbullying in such a way that adults have a chance to understand its consequences.** This will give those affected by this phenomenon a chance to get more meaningful support!

When creating your presentation, keep in mind that adults often have a completely different perspective on the Internet and use it in different ways than you. It is more than worthwhile for them to learn the perspective of young people.

You can use Canva, Powerpoint or any other graphics program you enjoy using.

Exercise 5

Patrick and Amy, Martin's classmates, see what's going on, but have no idea how to react.

Patrick feels guilty, because before Martin became the target, he had been hanging out with him at school quite a lot.

Now Patrick avoids Martin because he doesn't want to draw unwanted attention to himself.

Amy doesn't know Martin well but she doesn't want to be passive either. She doesn't know how to react in a way that doesn't make things worse for Martin.

In addition, both Patrick and Amy are afraid that if they openly side with Martin, they will too become targets of cyberbullying.

Your task is to think about how Patrick and Amy can support Martin in this situation.

Write down your ideas!

Exercise 6

We realise that cyberbullying takes on many forms, and each case is as difficult to deal with as it is complex; coming up with simple and universal solutions might be impossible. It is the students of a given school who are the experts on the issues connected to their school reality. If you are working in a group, organise a discussion to address the following topics:



- Can we expect Patrick and Amy to publicly stand up for Martin? Why? Why not?
- How can Patrick and Amy help Martin without exposing themselves to harassment?
- What can be done to prevent cyberbullying tendencies? Why do people have such tendencies in the first place — where does the need to bully others in such away come from?
- How to inform adults — school staff and parents — about such cases?
- Do the same moral rules apply online as to face-to-face interactions? Why? Why not?
- Is the Internet culture a breeding ground for cyberbullying? Which online spaces are more prone to this phenomenon?



***Thanks a lot for your participation in theWebQuest.
If you'd like to know more, we included some links
to verified sources below. Remember, in such
situations, the safety and comfort of those affected
by cyberbullying are the most important factor!***

Sources

- <https://www.tabasco-erasmus.eu/crossmediaplatform/>
- <https://www.verywellmind.com/the-psychology-of-cyberbullying-5086615>
- <https://www.verywellmind.com/cyberbullying-and-depression-1066791>
- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyberbullying>