

reading comprehension

LIVING IN A SECOND WORLD

Vanity Fair writer Nancy Jo Sales interviewed more than two hundred American girls between the ages of thirteen and nineteen about their use of social media. Below is an extract from one of these interviews.

“I feel like we’re living in a second world,” Riley said. “There’s a real world and a second world,” on social media.

As they started talking about all this, they became urgent and intense. They began talking fast, raising their voices, interrupting and overlapping one another.

“All we talk about all day is what’s happening on our phones, but we never talk about how weird that is,” Sophia said.

“If I go on my phone to look at Snapchat,” Riley said, “I go on it for like an hour, like a really long time, I lose track.”

“The minute I start my homework I have to have my phone by me,” Sophia said, “to see what my friends are texting or if they’re sending me texts, and then I’m automatically in a conversation. It’s like someone is constantly tapping you on the shoulder, and you have to look. It’s distracting.”

All of them said they were in one or more group chats of four to eight friends and that they sent or received “hundreds” of texts a day. “Oh my God, at least three hundred,” Sophia said. “I get a text, and it’s like, *Ooooooh*, I have to check that, like, oh my God, what are they saying? I don’t want to miss anything. I’ll be like, Mom, it’s really important

drama, I have to solve it! But sometimes it’ll be like nothing, like what kind of chips you eat.”

“But I need my phone,” Sophia added, “I can’t survive without it. I stay up all night looking at my phone.”

“Two weeks ago, I really annoyed my parents by going on my phone too much, so my punishment was I had to delete my Instagram app on my phone for a week,” Melinda said. “By the end of the week I was stressing, like, what if I am losing followers?”

“I’ve always wanted to delete my Instagram,” Sophia said, “but then I think, I look so good in all my photos.”

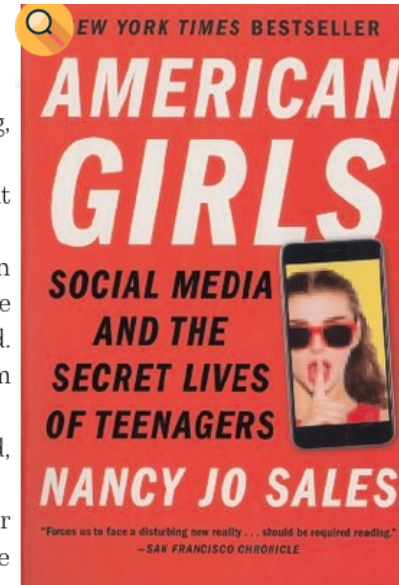
She logged on to her Instagram account to show me her page: it was picture after picture of her face, all with the same mysterious, come-hither expression.

“The classic Sophia selfie, bite-tongue smile,” she said with a laugh. “It’s my brand.”

All of them said they had Photoshopped their pictures and edited them with special filters and apps, especially their selfies. “I never post the first selfie I take. Sometimes it takes

like seventy tries,” [Sophia said.] “I’m so happy when I get

KEY QUESTION: How can social media affect teens?



likes. We’re all obsessed with how many likes we get. Everyone says, I get no likes, I get no likes, but everyone says that even if they get likes, it never feels like enough. I feel like I’m brainwashed into wanting likes.”

What was striking in hearing them talk about this was how conscious they were of what they were

doing, their awareness of the inauthenticity of the self

they presented on social media.

“It’s funny it’s called a ‘selfie,’” Riley said, “because half the time it doesn’t even look like you. So, you’re getting people to like this picture of you that isn’t even real.”

American Girls: Social Media and the Secret Lives of Teenagers,
Nancy Jo Sales, 2016