

1a SPEAKING Work with a partner. What can you see in the photo? Look at the title of the article. What do you think a 'screenager' is?

1b READING Read the text, ignoring the gaps. Check your answer in 1a.

Look around you. Are there any people of your age about? **1** They'll almost certainly be busy swiping, pinching or tapping some type of screen.

You only have to look at some of the statistics for this generation of 'screenagers'. It's said that 36% of children use electronic devices during family meals. **2** Forty-nine per cent of 14 and 15-year-olds feel that they are addicted to the Internet and 77% take a phone or computer to bed. Their greatest fears? Not being able to pick up a wi-fi signal, a glitch with their latest app or their battery unexpectedly running out.

Technology is clearly at the heart of Generation Z, or Gen Z, the generation which is made up of the youngsters born between 1995 and 2010. It's the first generation to have grown up with the touch screen as the norm. Some say that Gen Z doesn't just represent the future. **3**

Is there a positive side to this generation of connected teenagers? The answer is yes. Take Ann Makosinski. She was just 16 when she came up with an ingenious device – a flashlight which is charged and powered by the heat of a human hand. **4** It was the fact that Makosinski, who was born in Canada, took her inspiration from the difficulties of a friend in the Philippines who had failed her school exams because she had no electricity to study at night.

An advertising agency called Sparks & Honey, which is based in New York, has been investigating Gen Z and has come up with some interesting findings. On the whole, perhaps surprisingly, the overall picture is quite optimistic and positive. In fact, it has been claimed that, thanks to technology, Gen Z is possibly the smartest and most sophisticated generation in history. **5** They are bright thinkers like Ann Makosinski. Other examples include Jack Andraka, who at the age of just 15 created a cheap device to detect pancreatic cancer, or Angela Zhang, who helped to improve cancer detection when she was just 17.

Meanwhile, people of older generations tend to warn of the negative effects of computers and technology. **6** They also say that touch screens and keyboards, which teenagers use all the time, are responsible for students gradually losing the ability to write. Certainly, statistics seem to justify another claim: that young people cannot concentrate for long periods. Sparks & Honey state that the average attention span of American teenagers in 2014 was just 8 seconds, down from 12 seconds in 2000.

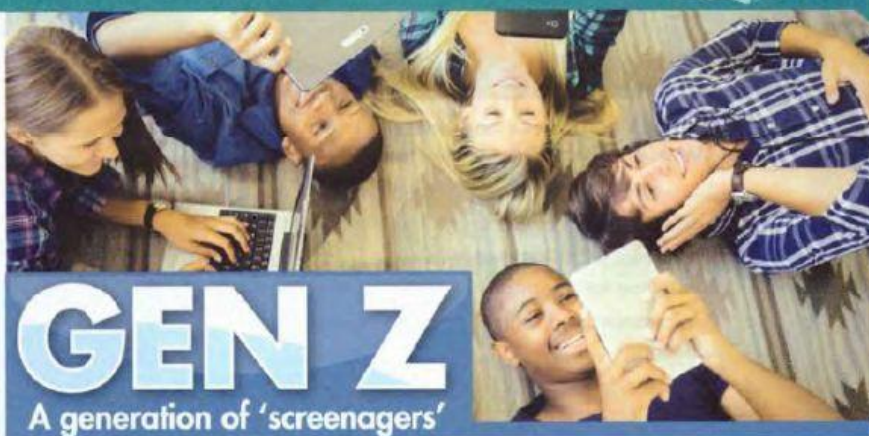
But, while some of these concerns do seem valid, it is also true that Gen Z appears to be acquiring new skills to

replace those skills which they are losing. Today's teens are totally at ease switching from screen to screen and adjusting from task to task within seconds. **7**

Of course, any generation reflects the society that it has grown up in. Gen Z has not had it easy. Its members are very aware of the impact of global warming, for example. And the economic recession has also had an impact. **8**

According to Sparks & Honey, nine out of ten feel optimistic about their own future. Instead of depending on other people to offer them a job or waiting for opportunities to appear, Gen Z makes things happen. Rather than wanting to work for a big company, 71% want to start their own business.

Although it can be worrying to see teenagers burying their heads in screens, paradoxically it would appear that modern technology is creating more communication and solidarity between people around the world. Sparks & Honey claim that 78% are concerned about world hunger and 77% are concerned about children around the world dying of preventable diseases. Meanwhile, 26% would need to fly to visit most of the friends they've made through social networking. Technology has made Gen Z a truly connected, worldwide phenomenon.



GEN Z

A generation of 'screenagers'

2 Read the text again. Complete with A–G.

- A Some claim that, because of easy access to information on the Internet, young people are no longer exercising their memories.
- B But it wasn't just the invention that was impressive.
- C In fact, this generation is actively creating it.
- D However, adversity has not made this generation negative.
- E If there are, they probably aren't talking to one another.
- F Their stars are not teen singers and actors.
- G This is something which previous generations find more difficult.

3 CRITICAL THINKING

Think! Then compare ideas with your class.

- Do you agree with the description of Gen Z? Why/Why not?

4 What do the underlined words in the text mean? Guess and then check in your dictionary.

5 SPEAKING What about you?

- 1 How long do you spend looking at a screen per day?
- 2 What device do you use the most, and for what?