

Distance Learning for Middle School

Social Studies Day

Instructions: Read the following article. As you read place a STAR next to things that surprise you, CIRCLE things that you find interesting or that connect to you, and UNDERLINE things that you find troubling. Answer the questions at the end.

1 **Social media stars are helping big stores make product decisions** 2 Newsela (adapted from USA Today) August 2018

3 Walmart is the world's biggest store chain. Yet this giant company is counting on a 6-year-old YouTube star
4 to help drum up business. Walmart executives hope the young social media celebrity will draw in crowds of
5 kid shoppers eager for bubble pets, T-shirts and green slime.

6 Last week, Walmart introduced Ryan's World, a new toy and T-shirt line. It was created by a first-grader
7 named Ryan, who is known only by his first name. His YouTube channel, Ryan ToysReview, gets 950
8 million views a month.

9 Anne Marie Kehoe is a Walmart vice president in charge of toys. She says influencers like Ryan on
10 YouTube are the authority for kids today. They are who today's teens and tweens look to for advice on what
11 to buy. That's "why we thought this was something to really move fast on," she explains.

12 **Influence And Popularity Count Big Time**

13 Business has been dropping for many department stores in recent years. In response, big chains like
14 Walmart, Nordstrom and Target are looking for new ways to bring in customers. Increasingly, they are
15 working with people who are stars on YouTube, Instagram and other social media platforms. They are using
16 these social media stars to create product lines, build excitement and get immediate feedback on what
17 shoppers think is – and isn't – cool.

18 Justin Kline is the founder of Markerly, a company that connects brands with social media
19 trendsetters. "Now is the first time ever that your next-door neighbor could have a million followers on
20 Instagram," Kline says. "It's opened up this whole new world of people who have access to this huge
21 following." These people can be tremendously helpful to brands, who hope to harness their influence and
22 popularity.

23 Bigger stores used to rely on famous actors or pop stars to help build their brand. However, many are now
24 rethinking that approach. They are recognizing that many people under 40 are more influenced by a
25 recommendation from someone like themselves.

26 Research conducted in 2016 found that 3 out of 10 of shoppers were more likely to buy a product
27 recommended by a blogger they viewed as a peer than a product advertised by a big star. The number was
28 even higher among shoppers who were 18 to 34 years old. In this group, 7 out of 10 preferred the peer over
29 the celebrity.

30 "Someone who is a teacher ... is looking for what other teachers have in their classrooms," marketing expert
31 Allison Stone says. "This is their lifestyle, what they do every day. It comes from pure experience." So when
32 they recommend a product, it feels more authentic, more believable and real.

33 **What Ryan Says**

34 For viewers, that is the appeal of social media content like Ryan ToysReview. The huge number of kids who
35 watch Ryan on YouTube are basically enjoying a virtual play date. They tag along as Ryan treks through
36 Legoland Japan. They watch as he meets Sponge Bob and tries out new toys and activities. Last year, Ryan
37 was the youngest person on Forbes magazine's list of the highest-paid YouTube personalities. He made about
38 \$11 million in 2017.

39 Now, starting in August, kids will have a chance to buy toys and T-shirts that Ryan picked or helped to
40 design. Walmart says it is the first time a child YouTube star has created their own line of clothing and toys.

41 **"We're Listening To What They're Saying"**

42 The department store chain Nordstrom is also putting an influencer-created collection on its shelves. Last
43 September, Nordstrom paired with popular fashion blog Something Navy to offer a collection of clothing,
44 shoes and accessories. The line, Treasure & Bond x Something Navy, sold very well. Nordstrom will be
45 offering a new Something Navy collection this fall.

46 Arielle Charnas is the woman behind Something Navy. She has more than 1 million followers on Instagram
47 alone. Nordstrom plans to learn a lot from the feedback Charnas gets from her many devoted followers.

48 As the Something Navy clothing line is developed, Charnas has been sharing colors and designs with her
49 followers. She has been asking for and getting plenty of feedback. "We're listening to what they're saying,"
50 Nordstrom said in a statement. Changes have been made to the brand in reaction to this feedback.

51 **Keep The Customers Coming Back**

52 Target has also been working with social media influencers. Last year, it turned to a group of young teens
53 and tweens to help it design its Art Class clothing line.

54 Rick Gomez is Target's chief marketing officer. Influencers are an important part of how the chain reaches
55 customers, he says. However, the focus is not on short-term sales. Instead, the goal is to build a long-term
56 relationship between customers and the store.

57 "That means working directly with influencers who understand and love our brand and who can connect
58 authentically with our guests on Target's behalf," Gomez says.

Respond to the following in paragraph form. *Are you influenced by social media? Can you think of an example? If not, what other things or people influence you to want to buy certain products?*