

BlackBerry: is this RIP for BBM?

Level 1 • Elementary

1 Key words

Complete the sentences using these key words from the text. The paragraph numbers are given to help you.

innovation

app

swap

alternative

rioter

1. An _____ is a new idea, method, piece of equipment etc. (para 1)
2. A _____ is someone who is involved in violent protests. (para 2)
3. An _____ is something you can choose instead of something else. (para 3)
4. An _____ is a piece of software that is designed to do a particular job, especially one that people use on a smartphone. (para 3)
5. If you _____ something, you give it to someone in exchange for something else. (para 3)

upgrade

sophisticated

sticker

unlimited

isolated

6. A _____ is a more sophisticated version of a smiley face and is used by some instant messaging applications. (para 3)
7. An _____ is a piece of equipment or software that is designed to make a computer or mobile phone more powerful. (para 5)
8. If something is described as _____, it is complicated and advanced in design. (para 5)
9. If your phone has _____ messages, you can send as many messages as you want without paying any more money. (para 9)
10. If you are _____, you feel alone and unhappy. (para 10)

2 Find the information

Find the following information in the text as quickly as possible.

1. When did BlackBerry bring instant messaging to the mobile phone?
2. Where are BlackBerry phones from?
3. When did the London riots take place?
4. How many downloads did BBM have when it was released on Apple and Android phones?
5. How many monthly users does BBM have after its upgrade?
6. What percentage of 16- to 24-year-olds in the UK use Facebook every day?

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Juliette Garside
29 October, 2013

- 1 In 2005, BlackBerry brought instant messaging to the mobile phone and the company was just entering its period of success. Then, the iPhone was still just an idea and BlackBerry's innovations made its smartphone one of Canada's biggest exports.
- 2 Six years later, in the summer of 2011, there were riots in London and other UK cities. Rioters used BlackBerry Messenger (BBM) and politicians wanted the service to shut down. But, two years later, the users themselves are leaving BBM.
- 3 Fewer and fewer people want BlackBerry phones. There are now many alternative products, from Facebook's and Apple's instant messaging applications to independent apps such as WhatsApp and Kik (which is also Canadian). They are free to download and use, and they use the internet to swap text messages, pictures, voice clips, 'stickers' and even videos between most types of phones.
- 4 BBM is trying to keep its customers and you can now use it on Android and Apple phones. There are many other apps people can use, but lots of people want to use the BBM app – more than 20 million people downloaded it. But many people believe BBM will not survive. "The move to bring BlackBerry to the iPhone is four or five years too late," says James Gooderson, a technology blogger. "WhatsApp has made BlackBerrys unnecessary for young people."
- 5 BBM says it has 80 million monthly users after its upgrade, but WhatsApp has 300 million. Other services show BBM's weaknesses: Skype and Viber have video or voice calls, but BBM doesn't; Path does location sharing, but BBM doesn't; there is no video sharing, as on iMessage; and the stickers (a more sophisticated version of the smiley face), that kids around the world adore, are also absent. Even the contacts and calendar sharing that BBM made possible on BlackBerry phones are not on the Apple and Android versions.
- 6 Messaging is now becoming visual. Photos that are uploaded to Instagram get instant comments and Snapchat's pictures have opened a world of other possibilities. Like BBM, all of these services are free for any phone with an internet connection. But, in 2011, BBM was so powerful that it helped to start a revolution in Egypt; and at the time of the London riots, people used BBM, not their televisions, to find out quickly what was happening.
- 7 Nearly 80% of young smartphone owners regularly use a social networking application but two-thirds use more than one. 60% of 16- to 24-year-olds use Facebook every day, but 46% use alternatives. "It's much more complex," says Benedict Evans, a digital media specialist. "All of these apps use your smartphone. Apps rise and fall like fireworks. Some, like Instagram, last; others just disappear."
- 8 Thirteen-year-old Bennett has three phones. He keeps his BlackBerry for messaging, he uses an iPhone to play games, and he makes phone calls on an Android phone. His friends are still on BBM. At the touch of a few buttons, you can send a single BlackBerry message to several hundred people; on WhatsApp, the limit is 50. But, for Bennett, Instagram is now a major social network. "Instagram is Facebook without parents," he says. "Facebook is now for older people."
- 9 The low cost of buying and using a BlackBerry is still an advantage. Anyone with a second-hand phone and a £7-a-month deal from a telecoms company can use unlimited BBM messages. But people no longer trust the privacy of BBM. Business people, revolutionaries, demonstrators and rioters used to believe that their messages were secret. The arrests that followed the riots showed that wasn't true.
- 10 In the rich London district of South Kensington, the older pupils at one school all have Apple phones. They all use WhatsApp. For many, BBM is a distant memory. "I still have a Blackberry, but I'm the only one," says one teenager. And how does that make him feel? "Isolated," he says.

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3 Comprehension check

Match the beginnings and endings to make statements about the text.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. BlackBerry used to be ... | a. ... than BBM. |
| 2. Now there are ... | b. ... the most popular instant messaging service in the UK. |
| 3. During the riots in London in 2011, rioters ... | c. ... to buy and use. |
| 4. You can now use BlackBerry Messaging on ... | d. ... a number of alternative products. |
| 5. WhatsApp has a lot more users ... | e. ... Android and Apple phones. |
| 6. BlackBerrys are cheap ... | f. ... used BlackBerry to send messages to each other. |

4 Chunks

Rearrange the words to make phrases from the text.

- Canada's biggest of exports one
- the 2011 summer of in
- is visual becoming messaging now
- too five late years or four
- the at of button a touch
- phone connection internet an with any

5 Verb + noun collocations

Match the verbs in the left-hand column with the nouns and noun phrases in the right-hand column to make phrases from the text.

- | | |
|-------------|------------------------|
| 1. play | a. photos to Instagram |
| 2. make | b. apps |
| 3. download | c. text messages |
| 4. start | d. games |
| 5. upload | e. a revolution |
| 6. swap | f. phone calls |

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6 Word-building

Complete the table with words from the text.

	noun	adjective
1.	power	
2.	month	
3.	smile	
4.	vision	
5.	society	
6.	isolation	

7 Discussion

How do you stay in touch with your friends?

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KEY

1 Key words

1. innovation
2. rioter
3. alternative
4. app
5. swap
6. sticker
7. upgrade
8. sophisticated
9. unlimited
10. isolated

2 Find the information

1. 2005
2. Canada
3. in the summer of 2011
4. more than 20 million
5. 80 million
6. 60%

3 Comprehension check

1. b
2. d
3. f
4. e
5. a
6. c

4 Chunks

1. one of Canada's biggest exports
2. in the summer of 2011
3. messaging is now becoming visual
4. four or five years too late
5. at the touch of a button
6. any phone with an internet connection

5 Verb + noun collocations

1. d
2. f
3. b
4. e
5. a
6. c

6 Word-building

1. powerful
2. monthly
3. smiley
4. visual
5. social
6. isolated