

BlackBerry: is this RIP for BBM?

Level 2 • Intermediate

1 Key words

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

sophisticated
mobilize

sticker
rioter

innovation
upgrade

encrypted
limitations

app
looting

1. An _____ is a new idea, method, piece of equipment etc. (para 1)
2. If you _____ people, you bring them together in order to achieve something. (para 2)
3. A _____ is someone who is involved in violent protests. (para 2)
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. A _____ is a more sophisticated version of a smiley face and is used by some instant messaging applications. (para 3)
6. An _____ is a piece of equipment or software designed to make a computer or mobile phone more powerful. (para 5)
7. If something has _____, it has disadvantages or weaknesses that make it less effective. (para 5)
8. If something is described as _____, it is complicated and advanced in design. (para 5)
9. _____ is stealing things from houses or shops after a riot, a fire, a natural disaster etc. (para 7)
10. If a message is _____, it is protected by a code so that other people cannot read it. (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. When did the London riots take place?
3. How many downloads did BBM have when it was released on Apple and Android phones?
4. How many monthly users does WhatsApp have?
5. What percentage of 16- to 24-year-olds in the UK use Facebook every day?
6. What percentage of 16- to 24-year-olds in the UK use alternative social networking applications?

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Juliette Garside
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- 1 Back in 2005, when BlackBerry brought instant messaging to the mobile phone, the company was just entering its boom times. While the iPhone was still just an idea, BlackBerry's innovations ensured its smartphone was one of Canada's biggest exports.
- 2 Six years later, in the summer of 2011, when there were riots in London and other UK cities, BlackBerry Messenger (BBM) was so effective at mobilizing the rioters that politicians wanted the service to be temporarily shut down. But, two years later, it is the users themselves who are pulling the plug.
- 3 Demand for BlackBerry phones is falling. Dozens of alternatives have sprung up to take its place, 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 In an attempt to keep its customers, BBM has been released on Android and Apple phones. Despite the competition from other apps, the response has been extraordinary, with more than 20 million downloads. But, despite this interest, many people believe BBM's wider release will not save the service. "The move to bring BlackBerry to the iPhone is four or five years too late," says James Gooderson, an 18-year-old student who blogs on technology. "WhatsApp has made BlackBerry's 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 limitations: unlike Skype and Viber, it does not yet offer video or voice calls; unlike Path, it does not do location sharing; there is no video sharing, as on iMessage; and the stickers (a more sophisticated version of the smiley face), adored by kids all over the world, 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 moving from verbal to visual. Photos uploaded to Instagram get instant comments and Snapchat's pictures, which self-delete after ten seconds, have opened a world of other possibilities. Like BBM, all of these services are free for any phone with an internet connection. But as recently as 2011, BBM was so powerful it helped to start a revolution in Egypt; and at the time of the London riots, it was a more immediate source of news than the television screen.
- 7 "We could see on our BlackBerry messages where the rioters were going next; TV news would catch up four hours later," said Jean-Pierre Moore, 28. He manages a youth club in Stockwell, south London, an area with some of the highest levels of crime and poverty in Britain. Moore mainly communicates on an iPad now. He does not agree with the idea that a shutdown of BBM would have stopped the looting. "The social networking wasn't the reason," he says.
- 8 Nearly 80% of young smartphone owners regularly use a social networking application but two-thirds use more than one. Among 16- to 24-year-olds, 60% use Facebook every day, but 46% use alternatives. "It's a much more complex, multifaceted environment," says Benedict Evans, a digital media specialist. "All of these apps use your smartphone – they plug into your phone book and your photo library. Apps rise and fall like fireworks. Some, like Instagram, last; others just disappear."
- 9 Thirteen-year-old Bennett has three phones. He keeps his BlackBerry for messaging, uses an iPhone to play games, and makes phone calls on an Android phone. His friends are still on BBM. At the touch of a few buttons, a single BlackBerry message can be sent to the phone owner's entire contacts book – several hundred people, in some cases; on WhatsApp, the limit for a broadcast message is 50. But, for Bennett, Instagram is now a major social network. "Instagram is Facebook without parents," he says. "Facebook has been taken over by the older generation. When I saw my mum on Facebook, I deleted my account."
- 10 The low cost of buying and communicating on a BlackBerry is still an advantage. Unlimited BBM messages are available to anyone with a second-hand phone and a £7-a-month deal from a telecoms company. But people no longer trust the privacy of BBM. Part of the attraction to business people, revolutionaries, demonstrators and rioters

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was a belief that encrypted words sent over the company's secure servers could not be traced back to their writers. Arrests and prosecutions after the riots put an end to that belief.

- 11 Across town from Stockwell, outside the gates of a private school in the rich district of South Kensington, the older pupils all have Apple logos

on their phones. They all use WhatsApp. For many, BBM is a distant memory. "I still have a Blackberry, but I'm the only one," says a teenager standing with a circle of friends. And how does that make him feel? "Isolated," he replies.

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3 Comprehension check

Are these statements true (T) or false (F) according to the text?

1. BBM's upgrade has not proved popular.
2. More people use WhatsApp than use BBM.
3. BBM offers video calls and location sharing.
4. BBM is better than WhatsApp for sending messages to large numbers of people.
5. Thirteen-year-old Bennett still uses Facebook.
6. He believes Facebook is for older people now.

4 Find the word

Find the following words and phrases in the text.

1. a two-word expression meaning *a period when there is a sudden increase in the popularity of something* (para 1)
2. a three-word expression meaning *stop an activity, especially by no longer providing the money to allow it to continue* (para 2)
3. a two-word phrasal verb meaning *appear or be produced suddenly and quickly* (para 3)
4. a verb meaning *like something very much* (para 5)
5. a two-word verb meaning *remove itself from a computer, phone etc* (para 6)
6. an adjective meaning *containing many different aspects, features or qualities* (para 8)
7. a verb meaning *find something you are looking for by asking questions and getting information* (para 10)
8. an adjective meaning *feeling alone and unhappy* (para 11)

5 Compounds

Match the words in the left-hand column with those in the right-hand column to make words from the text.

- | | |
|------------|----------|
| 1. smart | a. work |
| 2. up | b. hand |
| 3. down | c. grade |
| 4. shut | d. phone |
| 5. net | e. down |
| 6. second- | f. load |

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6 Word-building

Complete the table with words from the text.

	verb	noun
1.	apply	
2.	riot	(person)
3.	respond	
4.	share	
5.	demonstrate	(person)
6.	prosecute	

7 Discussion

How do you stay in touch with your friends?

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KEY

1 Key words

1. innovation
2. mobilize
3. rioter
4. app
5. sticker
6. upgrade
7. limitations
8. sophisticated
9. looting
10. encrypted

2 Find the information

1. in the summer of 2005
2. 2011
3. more than 20 million
4. 300 million
5. 60%
6. 46%

3 Comprehension check

1. F
2. T
3. F
4. T
5. F
6. T

4 Find the word

1. boom times
2. pull the plug
3. spring up
4. adore
5. self-delete
6. multifaceted
7. trace
8. isolated

5 Compounds

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

6 Word-building

1. application
2. rioter
3. response
4. sharing
5. demonstrator
6. prosecution