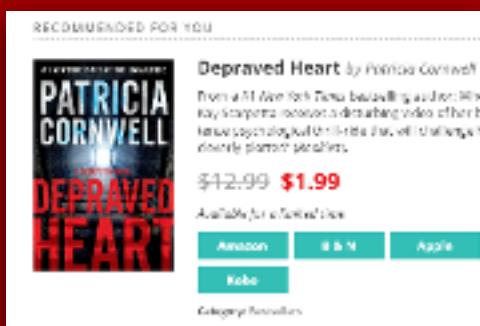


# The Learning Center Newsletter

## BookBub: Free Ebooks

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## Trolling: Innocent pranking or the ultimate in online bullying?

Students spend a lot of time on the Internet. As teachers we tell them there is good, bad and ugly to be found online. We give them the tools to decipher one from the other. However, due to the rapidly changing nature of the internet it can be challenging to keep up with it all. A recent **TIME magazine article**, "**Tyranny of the Mob**", by Joel Stein, deals with a phenomenon known as trolling, a subject that falls into the bad and ugly categories of web content. Wikipedia compares trolling to "online harassment". It goes on to say that trolls rarely believe what they post. Trolls set out to annoy whomever they can. Trolls want to provoke a reaction or response and it's often not a personal attack because they don't really care who they upset. That doesn't lessen the affect on someone who is sensitive and reads what a troll has said about them.



Terms like alt-right and doxxing are a part of this culture. The alt-right, according to Stein, is "an internet grown reactionary movement" that is using trolling to advance men's rights and anti-immigration movements. Stein further states, "trolling is the alt-right's version of political activism". Doxxing can be defined as publishing someone's personal information like phone numbers and account information. Additional terminology associated with trolling: lulz, which means laughs and swatting, which is when a phony emergency call is made so a SWAT team is sent to a victim's home.

While some adults are responsible for this behavior, it's high school students who see what is being posted and, possessing a teenage brain, lack the decision making skills needed to realize the negative affect trolling has on society.



So, how can we avoid trolling and fight its adverse affects on the students in our classrooms? Advise students to ignore the troll and don't respond. Trolls enjoy stirring the pot and getting a reaction to their posts. One way to counteract the affects of trolling is to combat it with kindness. Once a person has become a victim of trolling others will inundate their

accounts with kind words. Be aware that sites like Reddit, which is popular with Chardon High students, is high on the trolling spectrum.

By becoming familiar with the latest online activity we as teachers (and parents) can be aware of negative influences potentially affecting our students.