Who Controls Your Feed?

What do you think are some of the pros and cons of social media?

Watch part of the Crash Course episode Social Media: Navigating Digital Information (from 2:34–8:27) and answer the following questions:

I was surprised or interested to learn that ____________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

We don’t have to pay to use social media because…
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

Social media companies need to keep us engaged because…
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

Social media companies keep us engaged by….
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_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
Assignment: How does your most-used platform decide what to display in your feed?

*Note: Social media platforms are constantly making changes to their algorithms. Some changes are small tweaks, some are large shifts. The information you find will give you an idea of the current policies.

Research the questions below for your most-used platform. This could be YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, etc. Record notes on the answers to turn in and use in a whole class share out.

Where can I find this information?
- The support page for the platform is a good place to start (Google the platform name + support or help to find it). It will probably be vague.
- Reputable online newspapers of magazines
- Reputable technology and marketing sites

Make sure you’re getting current information: On Google, select “Tools” and set “Any Time” to “Past Year” or a custom time frame.

What search terms should I use?
Feed, algorithm, targeted ads, ads, data, privacy

Most-used Platform: _____________________________

Who owns this platform?

How does this platform decide what posts to display in your feed?
- Does it display all posts from people you’re following, or do they choose which ones to highlight in your feed?
- How does it order posts? Chronologically? If not, how does it decide the order? Do you get a choice in the order, for example, can you choose to display posts chronologically if that’s not the default?

How does this platform decide what ads to show you?
- Does it have targeted ads? (Ads selected just for people like you)
- Does it let you view the information it uses about you to target ads?
- Does it let you turn off targeted ads?

What data does the platform collect on you? What does it do with this data?