The Economist | EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

CYBER ATTACKS

PART 1: IN THE KNOW

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NEWS CYCLE WHAT'S HAPPENED SO FAR?

How did hackers shut off a pipeline?
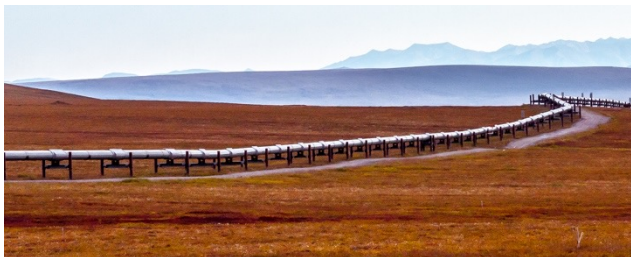
The Colonial Pipeline in America transports nearly half of the east coast's fuel supplies - so when hackers cut off the oil on Friday May 7th, it caused chaos. The attack caused oil prices to rise as people panicked about fuel shortages: millions of barrels-worth of oil were stranded in Texas and cities in the north struggled to get what they needed.
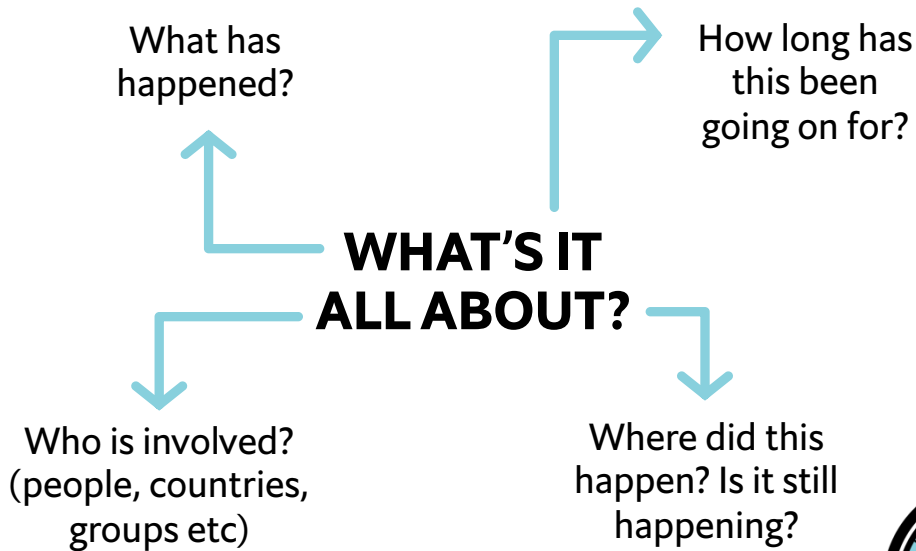
So how can computer hackers stop oil from getting from one place to another? The Colonial Pipeline relies on parts that are connected by digital technology, such as pressure sensors and pumps, to control the flow of diesel, petrol and jet fuel. This technology is controlled by a central system, which a cyber-criminal gang were able to hack. Experts think their attack was made easier because more engineers are accessing the central system remotely due to the pandemic.

"Some of the biggest attacks we've seen all started with an email," Jon Niccolls, a cyber-security expert explained. "An employee may have been tricked into downloading some malware, for example."

On Monday May 10th the Federal Bureau of Investigation confirmed that a gang called DarkSide, thought to be based in or around Russia, was responsible for the attack. "Our goal is to make money and not create problems for society," DarkSide wrote on its website.

President Joe Biden considered the attack a national-security risk and said that he was being "personally briefed" on the situation each day. Although some of the pipeline is now back in action, Colonial plans to keep other sections offline until it is sure it has regained full control of its computer systems.

Want to know more? Look here: youtube.com/watch?v=zSLDT7st7DI

What has happened?

How long has this been going on for?

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

Who is involved? (people, countries, groups etc)
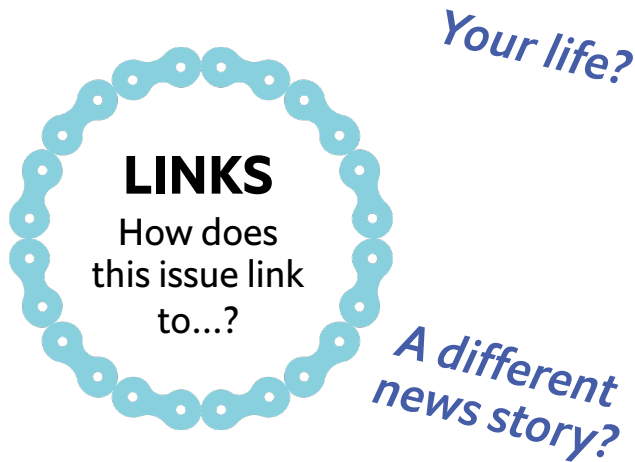
Where did this happen? Is it still happening?

NEWS SCALE

How big is this issue for you? Mark your opinion on the scale below with an X. What about someone who works for Colonial? Where would they put their X? What about someone whose business relies on computer systems?
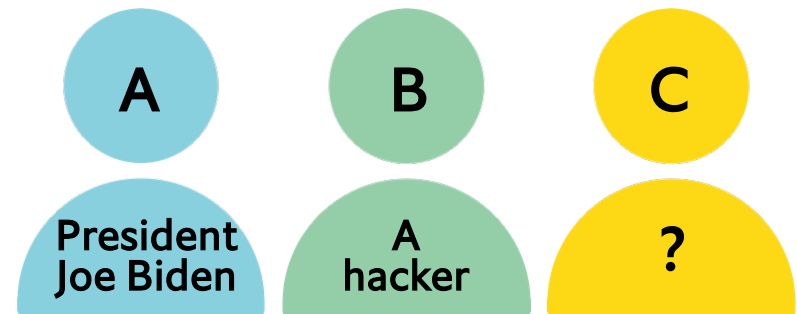
BIG ISSUE ●————————————● **SMALL ISSUE**

NEWS CONCEPT: justice?

Your life?

LINKS
How does this issue link to...?

NEWS CONCEPT: power?

A different news story?

PERSPECTIVE FLIP

What would Person A think about this issue? How are they affected by the issue? Now flip to Person B and think about the same questions. Are any perspectives missing?

A — President Joe Biden

B — A hacker

C — ?

CHALLENGE: how is this issue developing in the news?