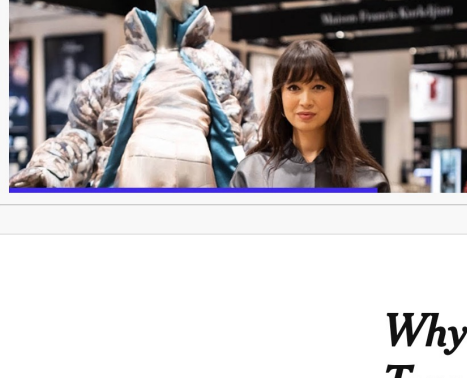


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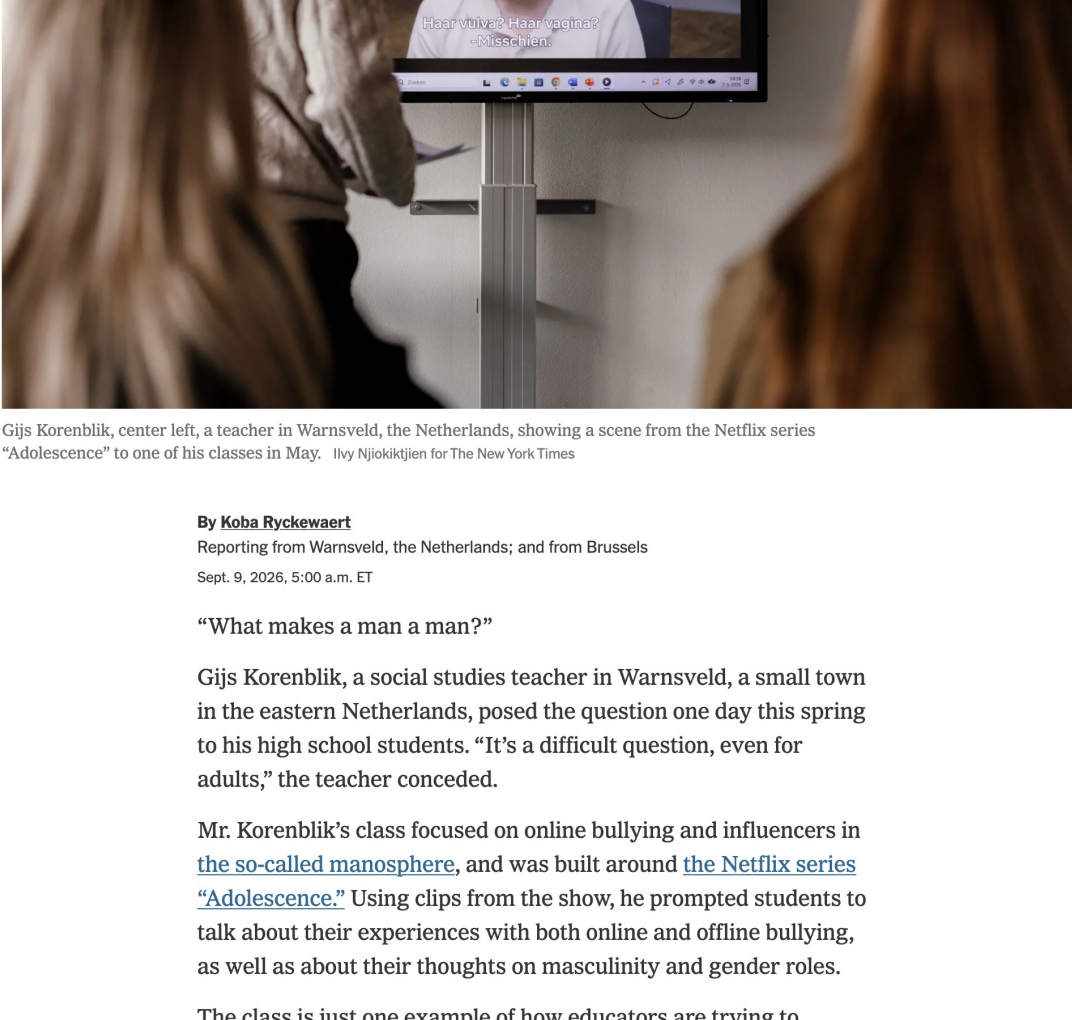
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Why This Small Dutch Town Is Teaching ‘Adolescence’ in School

The Netflix series is seen as a way to kindle debate about gender roles and to confront online bullying.



Gijs Korenblik, center left, a teacher in Warnsveld, the Netherlands, showing a scene from the Netflix series “Adolescence” to one of his classes in May. Ivy Nijakikjen for The New York Times

By Koba Ryckewaert
Reporting from Warnsveld, the Netherlands; and from Brussels
Sept. 8, 2025, 9:00 a.m. ET

“What makes a man a man?”

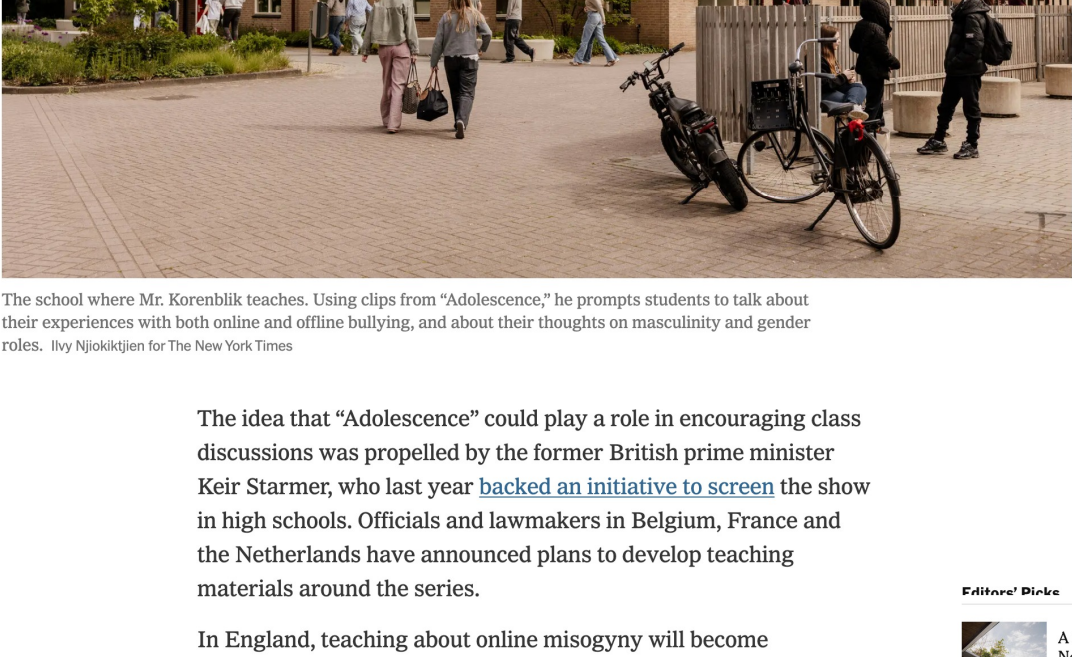
Gijs Korenblik, a social studies teacher in Warnsveld, a small town in the eastern Netherlands, posed the question one day this spring to his high school students. “It’s a difficult question, even for adults,” the teacher conceded.

Mr. Korenblik’s class focused on online bullying and influencers in the so-called [manosphere](#), and was built around the [Netflix series ‘Adolescence.’](#) Using clips from the show, he prompted students to talk about their experiences with both online and offline bullying, as well as about their thoughts on masculinity and gender roles.

The class is just one example of how educators are trying to counter misogyny and other forms of online hatred that young people can find on their social media feeds.

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“Adolescence,” which was released more than a year ago, is about a 13-year-old boy who is suspected of killing a girl after seemingly falling down a rabbit hole of online misogyny. The show tapped into widespread anxiety about what teenagers see online and how such content affects them.



The school where Mr. Korenblik teaches. Using clips from “Adolescence,” he prompts students to talk about their experiences with both online and offline bullying, and about their thoughts on masculinity and gender roles. Ivy Nijakikjen for The New York Times

The idea that “Adolescence” could play a role in encouraging class discussions was propelled by the former British prime minister Keir Starmer, who last year [backed an initiative to screen](#) the show in high schools. Officials and lawmakers in Belgium, France and the Netherlands have announced plans to develop teaching materials around the series.

In England, teaching about online misogyny will become mandatory starting this month. Harriet Over, a professor of psychology at the University of York, in northern England, leads a [research group](#) helping to develop classes to fulfill the requirement, though they do not use “Adolescence” specifically, she said.

Educational materials and guides about online misogyny generally have also been designed in [Australia](#), [Belgium](#), [Canada](#) and [the Netherlands](#).

In England, Ms. Over said, the courses her team was working on were meant to help students combat misinformation and sexist stereotyping. She said in an interview that children were “almost inevitably going to come up against these sexist myths, like women aren’t as clever as men, or men can’t be kind and caring.”

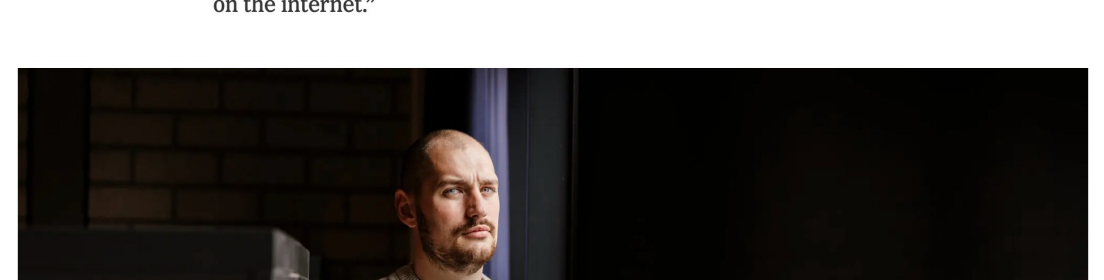
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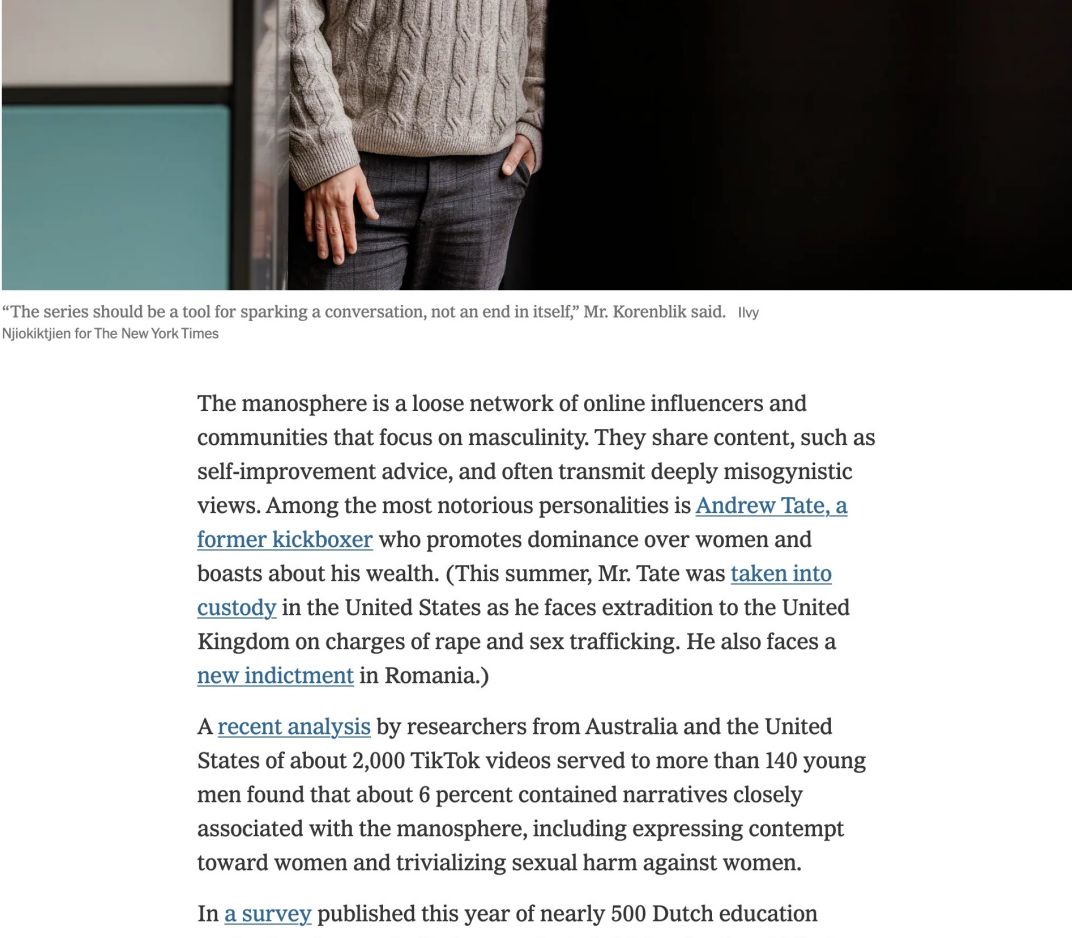
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It would be safer, she said, for them to be able to learn about these stereotypes “from trusted adults in an environment where it can be constructively challenged, rather than in the form of toxic memes on the internet.”



“The series should be a tool for sparking a conversation, not an end in itself,” Mr. Korenblik said. Ivy Nijakikjen for The New York Times

The manosphere is a loose network of online influencers and communities that focus on masculinity. They share content, such as self-improvement advice, and often transmit deeply misogynistic views. Among the most notorious personalities is [Andrew Tate](#), a former [kickboxer](#) who promotes dominance over women and boasts about his wealth. (This summer, Mr. Tate was [taken into custody](#) in the United States as he faces extradition to the United Kingdom on charges of rape and sex trafficking. He also faces a [new indictment](#) in Romania.)

A [recent analysis](#) by researchers from Australia and the United States of about 2,000 TikTok videos served to more than 140 young men found that about 6 percent contained narratives closely associated with the manosphere, including expressing contempt toward women and trivializing sexual harm against women.

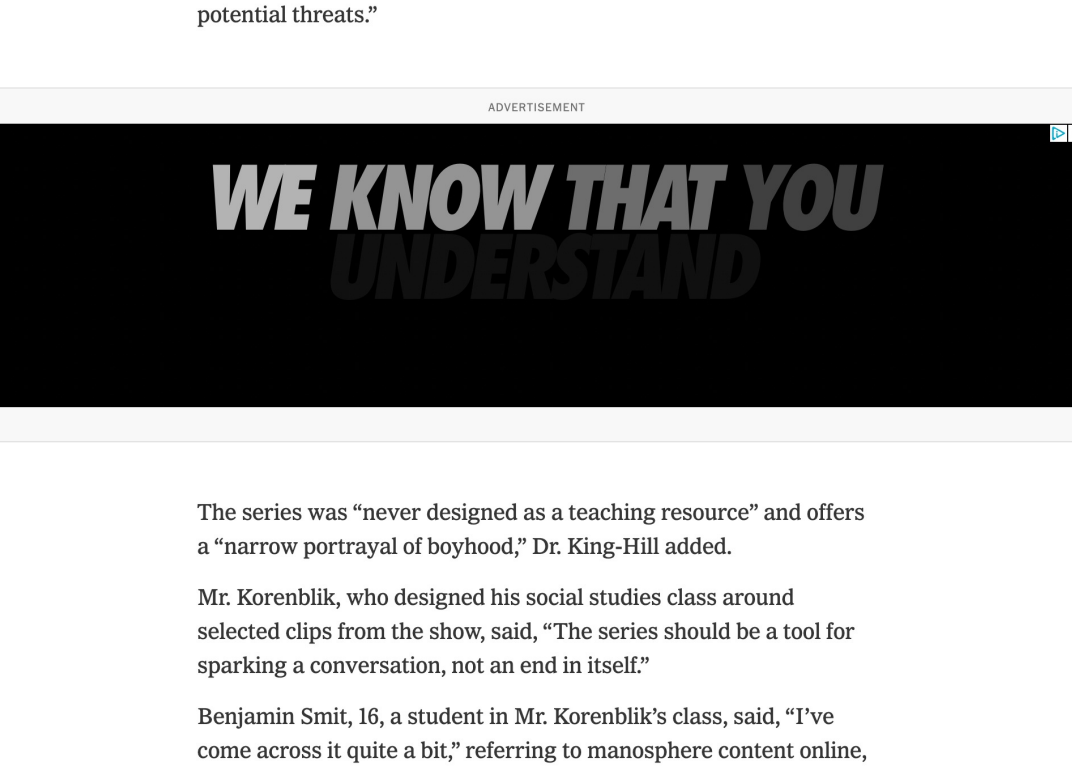
In a [survey](#) published this year of nearly 500 Dutch education professionals, over half of respondents in high schools said that, over the past four years, they had seen a rise in behaviors among boys that may be linked to the manosphere. Those behaviors included praising Mr. Tate as a “great thinker” as well as expressing general sexist views.

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In Australia, [teachers have reported](#) seeing among some boys more overt and explicit misogynistic behavior, such as barking at female school staff, making comments about their bodies or using misogynistic slurs against female students.

Will Adolph, a psychotherapist who gives presentations at schools on male emotions, said “Adolescence” had “raised awareness” of online portrayals of masculinity. “The conversation now is shifting toward solutions,” Mr. Adolph added.



Students in Mr. Korenblik's class. Educators around the world are trying to find ways to counter misogyny and other forms of online hatred that young people can encounter on their social media feeds. Ivy Nijakikjen for The New York Times

Not all experts agree that using “Adolescence” in class is useful. Ms. Over said some professionals thought the practice “could lead boys to feel demonized, and then not engaged.”

Sophie King-Hill, an associate professor at the University of Birmingham, in central England, whose research focuses on sexual behaviors in young people, said that using “a very extreme, very unlikely example,” such as that in the show, “frames boys as potential threats.”

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The series was “never designed as a teaching resource” and offers a “narrow portrayal of boyhood,” Dr. King-Hill added.

Mr. Korenblik, who designed his social studies class around selected clips from the show, said, “The series should be a tool for sparking a conversation, not an end in itself.”

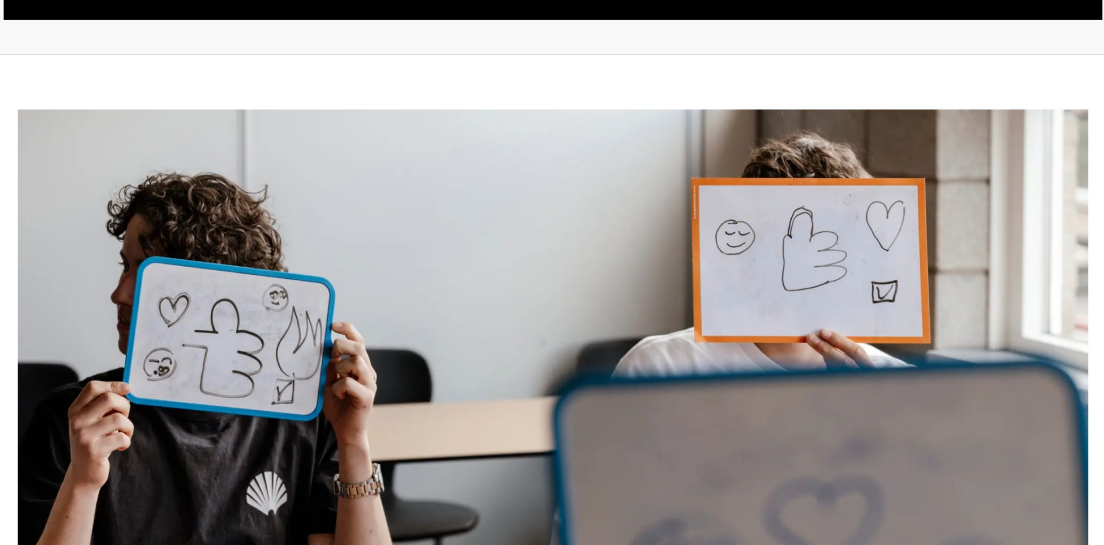
Benjamin Smit, 16, a student in Mr. Korenblik's class, said, “I’ve come across it quite a bit,” referring to manosphere content online, particularly on TikTok.



Benjamin Smit, 16, a student in Mr. Korenblik's class, said that he had come across manosphere content online, particularly on TikTok, “quite a bit.” Ivy Nijakikjen for The New York Times

Benjamin said he spent several hours a day on social media despite also working as a waiter at a local restaurant.

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His father, Marco Smit, said he had only recently realized how frequently manosphere content appeared on his son's screens. While watching a [recent Louis Theroux documentary](#) on the subject together, Mr. Smit said he had been surprised to discover that Benjamin knew every influencer featured.

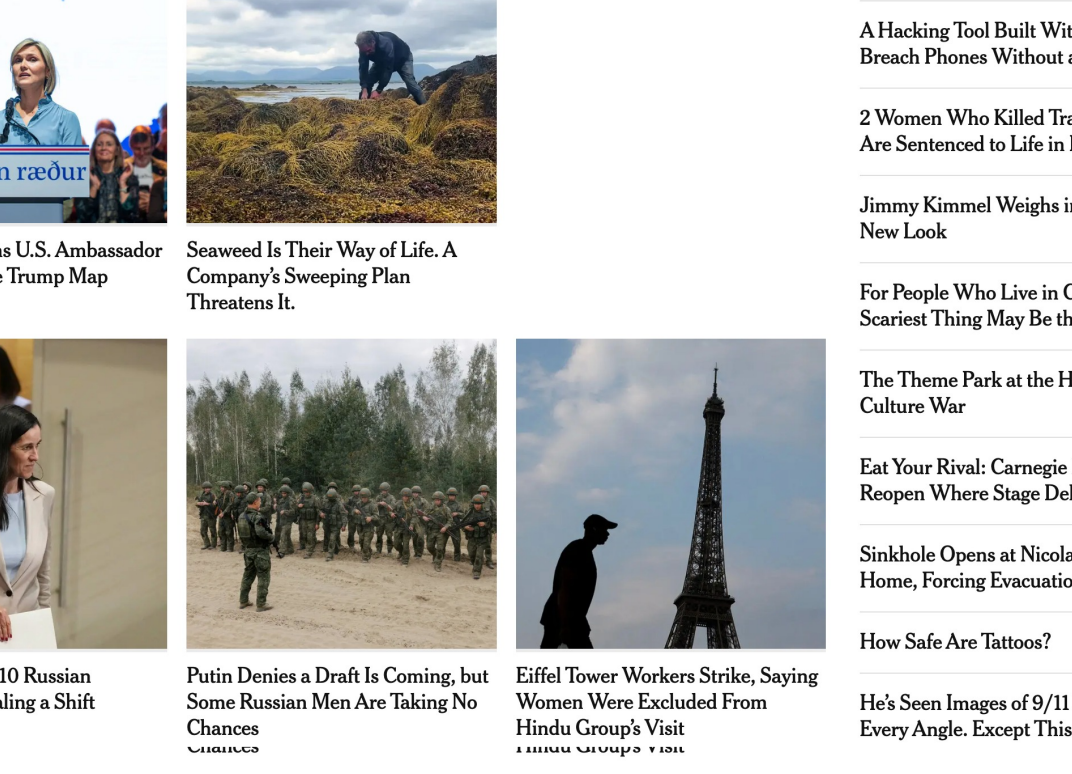
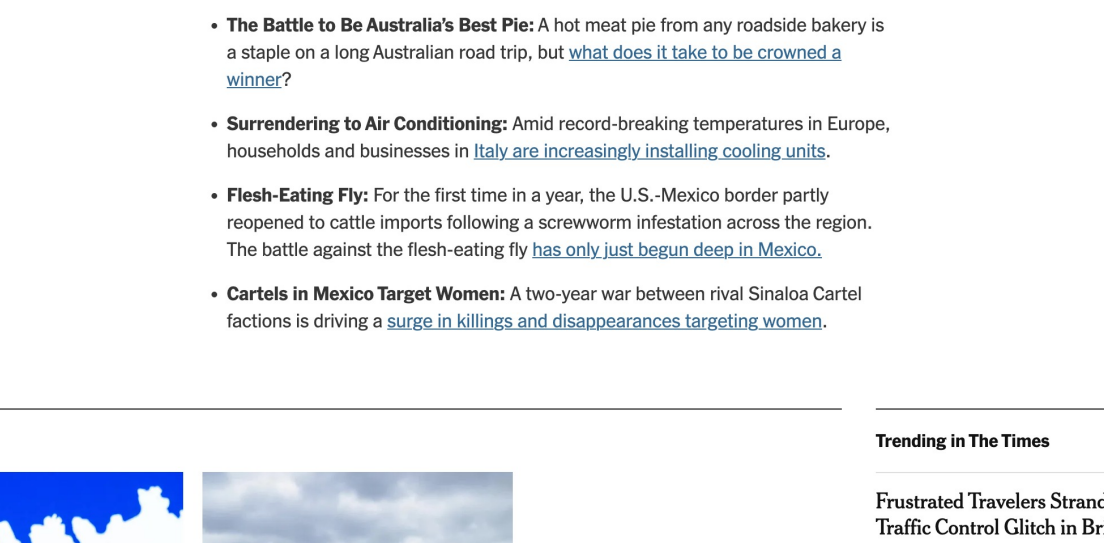
He said he thought his son was “sensible enough to know it’s not serious,” but added, “I do find it worrying.”

During Mr. Korenblik's class, the students offered different views on the question of what makes a man.

A man keeps his word and treats everyone with respect, one boy said. A man takes care of his family, a girl added.

Some students, Mr. Korenblik said, will say that men who are gay or who dress in a feminine way are not real men. When that happens, he said, he tries not to pass judgment.

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During Mr. Korenblik's class, students held up diagrams of emojis they used a lot. Ivy Nijakikjen for The New York Times

“I just ask questions,” he said. Mr. Korenblik added that to him, it was most important for students to hear that their classmates might think differently.

“That way, a student comes out of their bubble,” he noted.

Benjamin said he found manosphere influencers more comical than convincing. “I watch the video, and then I usually think they’re kind of losers,” he said.

Jeanna Smialek contributed reporting.

Koba Ryckewaert is a reporter and researcher for The Times based in Brussels.

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