

The wisdom of seventh graders: Living without electronics for a week

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Sixth grade students (ages 11 to 12, roughly) were instructed to imagine that they have no television, computer, or telephone for a week and write an essay (in the form of a letter to their parents) on what they would do with their time and why. The assignment was given under standardized test conditions: 90 minutes with nothing but pencil and paper, with an additional hour available upon request. (In practice, few students ask for the extra hour.) Remember, these are only the funny sentences/excerpts. Do not assume that all students write like this. **Stage One: Denial**

A powerman came to our house and is trying to fix the precious valubles... *But don't touch the family jewels.*

Stage Two: Anger

Since you have forcefully restricted me from using essential, electronics like the TV...

Stage Three: Bargaining (couldn't find an example, sorry) Stage Four: Depression

- My heart is full of grief and sadness, yet I regret nothing but the loss of my precious x-box.
- Although I am in a mood of melancholy over this gloomy oncoming event, I hope my hobbies will cheer me up. *Big words sound bigger.*

Stage Five: Acceptance

Since you have grounded me for a week, I need to nurture my growing sense of fun.

Other excerpts

- [When working in the barn] 1) don't touch the electric fence 2) don't throw poop
- Every day, I am getting closer to achieving my goal of attacking my friends. *You should see what your friends' goals are.*
- ... Gliding on black asphalt ...

- I'm going to play legos until my arms hurt. *In my experience, your feet hurt first.*
- I have a life outside the digital world!
- My grade went from a C- to an A-, and that is the second highest you can get! *So why not do it for real?*
- After a long day of skating, my legs are battered and crunched, and that just means I had a good day.
- I have noticed lately that my social level is not up to my standards. *Level up?*
- I will draw elaborate scratches of lead all over the blank paper.
- Inside used to be another word for trapt. Now it translates to party!
- We have invented a new game. We tie one sister to a post... *I'm not sure who the winner of the game is, but I'm pretty sure I know who the loser is.*
- One of my options for an activity is reading. I have noticed a big collection of books on my shelf and a few look quite interesting. *How'd those books get there?*
- If there were no phones, I would die, but I would still have fun.
- Remember, reading is a movie on pages.
- By going to church, you don't need anything but faith.
- I would go play behind the agresive looking houses. *I prefer passive housing myself.*
- Skydiving I went once it is like diving into a pool you lose your stomache sometimes you find it sometimes you don't. *Somehow the run-on sentence makes it more poetic.*
- It is a very relaxful activity.
- One book I will read is A Purpose Driven Life.

Any final requests?

- The last thing I will do is tape toys together and make new toys.
- The last thing I will do is go bike ridding.
- The final activity I would do is Africa! *Um, you might want to rephrase that.*
- Then, last but not leave, my instruments...

I'm not resentful. Why do you ask?

Sincerely, Your Daughter, the Formerly Loved.

Observe that many students talked about "the last thing" they would do. This is another consequence of adhering too close to formula. "I have three things, so I will say 'The first thing', 'The next thing', and 'the last thing'." They don't realize that when you write "The last thing I will do", it carries a somewhat different meaning.

(Today's post is in support of the millions of people currently without electricity due to Hurricane Sandy.)

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