

2004 HSLDA Essay Contest

“Hey! Who turned out the lights?” I shouted down the hall.

“It’s just a blackout, Leah, nothing to worry about. You know the computers controlling the power plant have been malfunctioning lately. It’s all over the news,” my mother answered.

I sighed and turned back into my dark room, fumbling for a flashlight. “Bah, computers!” I mumbled. “What use are they anyway? I could live just as easily as I do now without them.”

A blinding flash from my window startled me. “What...” I began.

“So you think you could live without computers?” a strange voice asked.

“Who...what...are you?” I said completely bewildered.

“Who or what I am does not matter,” it said. “All that matters is that you do not seem to appreciate the true value of computers.”

“What value? They just break down all the time.” I began edging toward my closet, hoping to reach my bat, but jumped when I realized I was no longer in my room.

“Are you saying that life without computers would be no different than life now?” The figure seemed amused.


“That’s exactly what I’m saying.”

“Very well. You will test your theory.” The figure began to retreat.

“Wait!” I cried reaching forward, but darkness took me.

“Leah! Leah, you lazy girl! Wake up!”

“Mom?” I murmured. “What time is it?”



“It doesn’t matter what time it is. The Sun’s up and you should be too. Now get to your chores!” I heard my mother leave the room.

“Chores? What Chores?” I thought as I opened my eyes. I bolted upright in open-mouthed amazement.

I sat on my bed staring at my surroundings. It was as if I had been sent back in time to the late 1800’s. Then I remembered the previous night’s events. I groaned, got up, and stretched. Again I heard my mother shouting. “Leah! Hurry up! The cow is waiting!”


I quickly dressed. “Maybe life without computers will be more different than I thought.” I sighed and went to milk the cow.

“What a day!” I sighed, exhausted by my chores. “I’ve never done so much work in my life. I didn’t realize just how much computers have influenced the modern world.”

I collapsed on my bed. “For starters,” I began, talking to myself, “We milked the cows by hand. On that fieldtrip to the dairy farm last month, I saw electronic machines milking cows by the hundred. There aren’t any TV’s, video games, Internet, e-mail, cell phones, or many other things, either. Few cars are around either; there aren’t any computerized assembly lines to make large quantities. One thing did surprise me, though. People are much better at math; the sales clerks at the general store were amazing! They didn’t even need a simple calculator to add all the prices up.” I yawned. “I sure learned a lot today. Computers really have had a huge impact on our modern world.”

Another blinding flash penetrated my window.

“Now do you see your mistake, Leah?” the voice asked.



“Yes, I do. I don’t I’ll ever forget this ‘vacation’ from computers or how much they have really done for us.”

“Good. My job here is done,” the voice said, and darkness again enveloped me.

“Leah! It’s time for school, sweetie!”

“Mom? I had the weirdest dream...” I said as I opened my eyes.

My mother smiled. “You can tell me about it later, hon. Right now you need to get ready for school.” She left me to change.

“One more thing computers seem to have affected,” I said shaking my head, “is mothers’ attitudes!”