



Living in a digital age



Joel Rosenbaum/The Reporter

Annemarie Mendonsa, 13, of Notre Dame School in Vacaville earned a third-place honor in Feature Writing for her article about the Internet age.

Book was pleasant surprise

By Lindsey Doolittle
Honorable Mention
Opinion Writing
Division: High School

'How I live Now' was a book recommended to me by Alexandra Provence, the Armijo Librarian.

At first, I was unsure about the book. I assumed it was another whiny teen novel in which a girl goes to a new place, and uncanny things happen, yadda-yadda-yadda. To be honest, when stripped down to the bones, "How I Live Now," does fit into this category, but is much deeper than I expected. I'm glad I decided to keep an open mind, even after reading the first, bizarre chapters, and finished the book.

Daisy, which is a nickname for the main character, Elizabeth, narrates the story as a recollection several years after the bulk of the story occurs. She leaves New York for England to live with her aunt and four cousins: Osbert, age 16, twins Isaac and Edmond, 14, and Piper, 9.

The whole world is on edge, fearing war, but the out-of-the-way house makes everything unrealistic, even when the war does break out while Aunt Penn is on a business trip to Oslo, Norway. The five unsupervised kids relish their freedom for nearly six weeks before the British Army takes over the house and expansive grounds, splits the family up, and sends them to live separately. The rest of the story basically chronicles what Daisy and Piper go through to return to Edmond, Isaac, and Osbert.

The whole book has a sense of anxiety, uncertainty, and urgency. Daisy seems to know more than she's telling, and wants to write it all down in a rush before she runs out of time for the telling. Initially, the illicit, underage affair between Daisy and Edmond was unsettling, but I soon realized that it wasn't meant to shock or appall the reader, nor was it meant to be a radical view of how love "just happens." Luckily for Daisy and Piper, Daisy's love for Edmond is what drives her to reunite her new-found family. The love between Edmond and Daisy is also what makes the final chapters so surprising.

Unlike the usual coming-of-age teen diary novel, Meg Rosoff's "How I Live Now" is an intelligent look at how war, at any time and in any place, can change a person and a family, yet it isn't preachy or blatantly repeating the same old lines.

The eerily believable way in which the story is presented makes the fictional war in the story seem possible now, a thought I hesitate to explore too deeply. I am still surprised by how much I enjoyed "How I Live Now," and I can't wait to see if Rosoff's second book, "Just in Case" matches the standards of her first.

The author was a junior at Armijo High School when she submitted this article.

Internet is an exciting, scary place

By Annemarie Mendonsa
3rd Place, Featuring Writing
Division: 7-8

There may be days when you spend too much time surfing the Web or chatting with your online buddies all over the world or maybe just your friends from around town.

The Internet is becoming a huge issue in the lives of mainly teens in our world today. The world's teens are plugged into the Internet like never before. Sometimes you might even promise yourself that you will mow the lawn or put away the dishes after looking at "just one more Web site," which leads to "just one more site," which leads to "just one more."

Do not worry; it happens to every "cybercitizen" now and then. My opinion on this subject is that teens do spend too much time on the Internet; I even confess that I probably spend more time on the Internet than I should. It has its good and bad points.

When did the Internet get its start? The U.S. Department of Defense created an early version of the 'Net in the late 1960s. It was intended as a communications system for the U.S. government. For the next two decades, it was mostly used by government agencies, universities, and libraries. That changed in the early 1990s, with the

arrival of the World Wide Web. The Web took the Net into homes and businesses around the world. In December 1990, there was just one Web site. Today, there are 70 million sites and counting! But there is a downside to being wired 24/7.

"We're so accessible, we're inaccessible," a technologist told a New York Times columnist recently. "We can't find the off switch on our devices or on ourselves ... We want to wear an iPod so much that we block out the rest of the world."

For today's teens, the "virtual world" is just a few clicks away.

Today's generation is the first to grow up in a digital world, where laptops, iPods and Sidekicks are changing the way people communicate. But the worst of these is the Internet. We are so used to connecting instantly with people everywhere, it is difficult to imagine life before the digital age. According to a recent Pew Internet study, 87 percent of U.S. kids ages 12 to 17 are online. That is definitely above average.

Many kids go on the Internet for many different reasons. Examples can vary from research for school, chatting with friends, relieving boredom, or getting into trouble. If you are just researching for school sure that's fine,

but other parts of the Internet can have a down side. These days, chat rooms cause major problems.

They can be good, but in my opinion anything can lead to trouble. It all depends on the person's action that make that difference. You need to be very careful when surfing the Internet or chatting online.

The most popular networking sites today include MySpace and Facebook. People have had problems with these sites, because of not being smart and making the right choices to stay away from trouble. Still, some kids say that interest in such sites is cooling.

For other kids, the lure of collecting friends online is irresistible. Adding people you don't know to your friend list can be risky. The 13-year-old you think you're talking to may really a 45-year-old looking for trouble.

I believe that kids should probably spend there time with other things rather than just the Internet. I know it may be hard, because the Internet can become an addiction, but a little won't hurt. Be on the lookout, and stay away from trouble. I sure know I will.

The author was a seventh-grader at Notre Dame School in Vacaville when this entry was submitted in February 2007.

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Annemarie Mendonsa

Meet the Students of Reporter U

Blogs written by local students @ college campuses around the country

MEET OUR COLLEGE BLOGGERS:



Michael Sean Carpenter, aka Sean Flood, is a 2004 Vacaville High School graduate who is attending San Francisco State University this fall.



Jami Crabtree is a Fairfield High School graduate who is majoring in literary journalism at UC Irvine.



Aaron Crawford, a student at Hendrix College in Conway, Ark., is a graduate of Will C. Wood High School.



Chad Golden, a 2005 Vacaville High graduate, is junior at California State University, Chico double majoring in construction management and concrete industry management.



Jonathan Lord, a Buckingham Charter Magnet High graduate, is majoring in music at Azusa Pacific University in Southern California.



Noren Shoyeb is a 2007 graduate from Will C. Wood high who is majoring in psychology with an emphasis in mathematics at UC Davis.



Courtney Innes is a sophomore at Brigham Young University and a Will C. Wood graduate.

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