

Sample #1

Twitter Glue
By The Real McCoy

Ever wonder what lies between a cellphone and the average person's hand? The answer is most likely glue. This question goes through my head as I walk the halls of Sachem East high school. It is rare to see the average student during passing time to not have this little computer, glued to their hands at all times. I am one to be hypocritical and sucked into the epidemic considering my cell phone in fact is distracting me as I write this. The epidemic is rapidly spreading, faster than the rapid updates on my twitter feed.

Monday morning- You would think Sunday night's twitter drama about the past weekend would be over. You're wrong. 7:00 a.m. as I can barely keep my eyes open, twitter opens them for me, with tweets that cannot be missed. "Square up", "I'll see you when I see you," and "sub tweets" that are clearly about this girls boyfriend; twitter is going wild within seconds.

Sunday night- If you aren't updated with all the drama that happened this weekend from the parties, to the break-ups, you are either working or asleep soon to check up on what you missed. Why watch football games when I can refresh my twitter feed? "Eli Manning with the interception once again!!!!!! #SMH"

Saturday night- Tweets ranging from "What's going on tonight" to "Crazy night," I can't keep track of who went out on a date to who went to that huge party. Yet here I sit, putting together one girls "You're so fake" to another's, "Look who's talking," to find out things clearly went down at that party.

Doesn't this get old? Watching and refreshing my phone, God forbid I miss a tweet. If someone were to rip this glued cellular device out of this bickering girls hand, however would the world know when she is fighting with her best friend? Or worse... How would we know when she's going in the shower? These are things the social media fans could not live without knowing.

Word Count: 343

Quietude

By John Doe

My name is John Doe, and I have no friends.

In truth, that's not true, but in modern society, having anything less than a thousand friends is downright sacrilegious. It seems everyone simultaneously heralds and decries the breaking down of social barriers nowadays, allowing people around the world to interact in ways that were unheard of in years past, even in the fantastical stories of the future (come to think of it, the futures described in those stories are often strictly dystopian; tyrannical governments and shattered ecosystems aren't exactly great conversation starters). Yet like a persistent ulcer in the stomach of progress, we few who cherish our solitude are increasingly branded "shut-ins" or other derogatory monikers meant to mock us (such ridicule seems rather counter-intuitive).

While there are certainly people who spend all of their time indoors shunning their fellow man, introverts such as myself only spend *some* of their time doing that. We are considered a strange lot; we may as well be living in the swamps of Dagobah. Additionally, we are not the best conversationalists, sometimes by choice. I personally find small talk banal and prefer conversations about topics I am genuinely interested in, not topics like sports, the weather, or politics. Many are baffled by my taciturn demeanor, despite the fact that there is no grand mystery to be solved; I simply don't have many interesting things to say. Other people are (mostly) great, truly they are, but after a certain point they're just plain insufferable.

The increasing ridicule of hermits is due, in large part, to the emergence of social media over the past decade. These sites allow—nay, they *encourage*—anybody with an internet connection to contribute to the torrential downpour of mind-numbing fecal matter. Anyone without an account on one of these networks is regarded as some sort of bizarre creature that has never seen the light of day. I find that I interact with my fellow man in the real world often enough for my tastes; I don't need to hear some regurgitated inspirational quote, I don't need to read the funny (or should I say "funny") tweet *somebody else* posted, and I certainly don't need to see your half-eaten breakfast.

Everyone but the most coldhearted individuals enjoys spending time with others, understandably so; it's a basic human need. I like to loudly enjoy myself with my friends as much as the next person (perhaps not *as* much), yet I do not blindly pursue companionship in every facet of my life. I'm quite content with burying my nose in a book, immersing myself in a videogame, or going to the movies alone. When it strikes my fancy, I'll happily partake in these or other activities with friends, but it's not always necessary for me to enjoy myself. Other people, however, search for any excuse just to interact with other humans. They'll sit in a parking lot for hours at a time doing nothing! They'll go to wild parties to gyrate their hips and get totally wasted, man! Then there's my personal favorite—they'll go to Applebee's weekly "Half-Apps" promotion to...eat half-priced appetizers. Woo! Nothing says "fun" like eating food that wasn't good enough to be the main course!

I realize I may have come across as condescending or overly caustic—fitting, since that was my intent. My goal was to convey the message to the whole world (or, more realistically, whoever had the displeasure of reading this) that people who do not rabidly crave human interaction should not be ridiculed for it. There is much enjoyment to be had when others are not around, a joy that fewer and fewer people are experiencing. Since nothing seems to stay in the public's consciousness for very long without a catchy slogan, I leave you with this bit of wisdom, dear reader:

Be yourself, by yourself.

You're Not Special

By: S.P. Eak Truth

You are not entitled to anything.

Well, not exactly. By law you are entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. However, having a sense of entitlement brainwashes you into believing you're superior to other people (newsflash! You're not). This narcissistic mindset that the universe revolves around oneself should be ridiculed, and not sought after. After all, possessing such an egocentric attitude typically drives people away, anyways.

While accommodating someone with a favor, or simply doing a good deed, there should only be one intention- to ultimately make someone happy, and feel content with yourself. Some though, may have ulterior motives, like only providing for someone merely to expect something in return. This goes both ways, though. If someone does a kind gesture without being forced, or having to comply, don't act like they owe you something. Be grateful for the kindness in others because today, modern society takes others' kind acts for granted.

On another spectrum, people shouldn't believe that they deserve any more than the next. Having a degree does not entitle you to a job. Having money does not entitle you to being rude. Being smart does not entitle you to bragging rights. Playing the game does not entitle you to a trophy. Using personal experience and traits that define you, shouldn't automatically allow you to boost your ego by stomping on others. Feeling superior to someone else because of your own accomplishments and bashing them for it is not the way to go. Accumulating confidence should be a personal journey, gained through random acts of kindness and personal victories- not insulting or bashing on others as a self-absorbed way to put oneself on a pedestal.

As an independent individual, it is vital that you work hard for what you want. If you want something, do it. Do not have the mindset that something is going to be handed down to you on a silver platter because *you want it*. Just "wanting" something is not a good enough excuse to be entitled to that something. If just "wanting" something was a good enough reason to get that something, there wouldn't be scientists, doctors, astronauts, or any other high-skilled professionals. People with these professions worked hard to get to where they are. Their degree was not handed to them. Work for what you want, and don't expect it to just be handed to you without effort.

If this self-absorbed, entitled society we live in continues, consequences will result. Nobody will work for anything, nobody will try to succeed, and nobody will be able to live on their own. The intelligence level in the futuristic society will be significantly less than today, and the level of disrespect coming from others will increase. By teaching children from a young age that they won't always get what they want, we can start to solve this issue. Having young adults and teens solve their own problems will help as well- for their parents aren't going to be there forever for them. People need to learn respect, and how to treat others.

Word Count: 518

Sticky iPad Kids

By Eye M. Happy

Grimy hands, teary eyes, and a scream that could shatter a window. The kicking and stomping has everyone turning their heads, and the poor mother has no choice but to give in. Yet again, she finds herself handing over the box that keeps her kid calm. The room goes silent. And her child's eyes are no longer filled with tears, but with the blue light of an iPad playing paw patrol over and over again.

Sticky iPad Kids: The description of a little kid who's unusually addicted to electronics at a young age (usually have some sort of goo on their hands) and have built up an inexcusable anger towards being told "no". They're the product of parents who are, unfortunately, unable to gain control over them. I don't mean to judge the parents of course, because I know they've got a lot on their plate. But I mean come on... How can you let your kid build up such an addiction to a device?

It all starts at a family party. Little Tommy is bored and begging to go home, but mom hasn't finished gossiping with her aunt yet. So naturally, Tommy begins to throw a tantrum. In order to avoid the embarrassment, mom decides to hand over her phone and let her son watch cartoons for the remainder of the party. Evidently, Tommy goes quiet and the party continues peacefully. Mom gets to chat with her aunt and Tommy just hangs out, eyes glued to the screen. Now this seems to keep everyone at bay for now, but it becomes a habit. He stays well behaved during the car ride to school, at the restaurant, and at many more family gatherings. And mom can enjoy herself without dealing with tantrums and tears. But it only lasts so long. The second she takes that device away a nightmare breaks loose. The screaming comes back, the tears shoot out like bullets, and Tommy's whole world falls apart. This poor kid is now officially and *dangerously* addicted to his iPad. And he's only five years old.

Children who grow up around constant technology are going to suffer from it in their time ahead. Effects such as a short attention span, impatience, and an inability to focus will be seen throughout their lives. They are disconnected, and this poses a great threat to everyone's future. I believe my generation recognizes this problem. Not just with kids but within ourselves. As a group we can break the cycle of unnecessary technology and guide our kids into real life. No more fake lives behind a screen. We all need to be brought back into the real world.

As you can see, these "Sticky iPad Kids" are a bigger problem than previously thought. It's not their fault. Babies scream, it's what they do. But I hope we can all agree that a child crying for their mother is way better than one crying for an iPad.

Word Count: 497

Unwritten Rules

By Jane Smith

Relevancy is more than just a rank on a number scale. It is how a person is perceived. A more defined explanation is an implicit or explicit rank order of individuals or groups with respect to a valued social dimension. The social hierarchy of high school is distinct, while looking at an individual a person can immediately tell what division they fall into. There are only three main sections, and everyone belongs to one.

The upper class. At the top are the athletes, skeletons with long blonde hair, and kids who get what they want when they want. To be a part of this high-class group you need wealth, beauty, and muscle, as well as no emotion, because you need to be detrimental to others. This group adds to the intimidation of high school.

The middle class. This is where the outcasts sit. This group covers most people in high school. They fit in, but only with their friend group. Not even one dares to step foot out into another social bubble. They are comfortable where they are and who they are surrounded with. Most accept this position because they are aware that they will never get any higher status than this.

Lastly, the bottom shelf. Here lies the social rejects including the overweight, immature, drama kids, and emo students. These groups are the loners and are unknown to the population of Sachem East. Most keep to themselves, and you wouldn't even recognize them if they sat behind you in class.

"I pronounce you King and Queen of the class of 2023..." The most predictable sentence ever because the unwritten rule is to vote for the popular couple. They are seen as the "cutest" relationship in school and on Instagram, and they thrive in an impeccable relationship with each other. Little does the class of 2023 know those they voted for are far from perfect. Would it count as perfect when Johnny had a cheating scandal with another girl? Maybe when Suzzie writes horrid sentences and rumors on the bathroom stalls and signs her name underneath? Only if the population of Sachem East could process these flaws and consider not just listening and dismissing.

The last time I checked Kings and Queens had to earn their spot on the throne. What if the competition for class royalty was strictly for one's commitment to their community or a local organization? This way everyone has an equal chance, and anyone can run. Forget the stereotypical social hierarchy of high school and dumb ranks because this is the time to represent who you are and the impact you want to create for humanity.

Word Count: 447