

English Test		
10th Form		February 2010
Name: _____	Number: _____	Class: _____

Read the following text.

6,473 Texts a Month, But at What Cost?

Julie Zingesser texts at home, at school, in the car while her mother is driving. She texts during homework, and as she walks the family dog. She takes her cellphone with her to bed. Every so often, the hum of a new message rouses the Rockville teen from sleep. "I would die without it," Julie, 15, says of her text life. This does not surprise her mother, Pam, who on one recent afternoon scans the phone bill for the eye-popping number that puts an exclamation point on how growing up has changed in the digital age. In one busy month, Pam finds, her youngest daughter sent and received 6,473 text messages. For Pam Zingesser, the big issue is not cost - it's \$30 a month for the family's unlimited texting plan - but the effects of so much messaging. Pam wonders: What will this generation learn and what will they lose in the relentless stream of sentence fragments, abbreviations and emoticons? "Life's issues are not always scented in sound bites," Pam says.

Parents, educators and researchers are grappling with similar concerns as text messaging has exploded across the formative years of the nation's youngest generation. Teens now do more texting on their cellphones than calling. And although it's too early for conclusive data on the effects of prolific texting, questions abound, even as many experts point to clear benefits.

The tap, tap, tap of connectivity can benefit teenagers at a time in life when they cannot always get together in an unscheduled way. For families, the text world can bring convenience as never before in arranging rides, doing errands, letting parents know of changing plans. But some experts say there are downsides, starting with declines in spelling, word choice and writing complexity. Some suggest too much texting is related to an inability to focus. Others point out that family time at home takes a hit. Parents and teens might be in the same room, but often a texter's attention is elsewhere. Most parents know little about who their children text or what is being said. Sometimes children text their parents inside their homes -- from one room to another.

Sherry Turkle, a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, wonders whether texting and similar technologies might affect the ability to be alone and whether feelings are no longer feelings unless they are shared. Texting might also affect the separation process between parents and children, she said. There used to be moments when teenagers knew they were on their own -- riding a subway alone, for example -- but now "their parents are always there."

In Rockville, mother of two Pam Zingesser has given it all a lot of thought. "I'm concerned that in the long run they will be addicted to instant communication," Zingesser said, questioning how Julie and her friends will come across in the business world, how they will hone skills of persuasion. She said she worries that the next generation does not appreciate the benefits of face-to-face conversation and that maybe "they are uncomfortable with it."

By Donna St. George Washington Post Staff Writer www.washingtonpost.com
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