

Shakespeare Didn't Blog

Seattle, WA – Somewhere out there is the mind that will produce the next great American novel. If, however, that would-be author is under the age of 18, the words they write may be more of “SOZ” and “TGGTG” than beautiful, flowing prose.

“We have a whole generation being raised without communication skills,” says Jacquie Ream, former teacher and author of “K.I.S.S. Keep It Short and Simple” (Book Publishers Network). She contends text messaging and the internet are destroying the way our kids read, think, and write.

A recent National Center for Education Statistics study reports only one out of four high school seniors is a proficient writer. A College Board survey of the nation's blue-chip companies found only two thirds of their employees are capable writers.

“These kids aren't learning to spell. They're learning acronyms and short hand,” says Ream, “Text messaging is destroying the written word. The students aren't writing letters, they're typing into their cell phones one line at a time. Feelings aren't communicated with words when you're texting; emotions are sideways smiley faces. Kids are typing shorthand jargon that isn't even a complete thought.”

Reading may not be the problem. Neilson/NetRatings reports the average 12 to 17-year-old visits more than 1400 web pages a month. Ask that average teenager what they read, and they may be able to tell you. Ask the average teenager what their opinion is on that blog or article, and you may find them fumbling for thoughts that are their own.

“What's not taught today,” says Ream, “Is critical thinking skills. Teachers are forced to use what little classroom time they have to teach to the standardized tests. The kids learn how to regurgitate information to parrot it back for the correct answer, but they can't process the thought and build on it.”

School system money is often tied into the standardized testing results. Many teachers complain of being pressured to spend so much time teaching to the test, that they don't have the time to guide the children into true, thought provoking learning.

“There's a whole generation that can't come up with new ideas,” says Ream. And even if they did have a breakthrough thought or opinion of their own, they couldn't share it with the rest of us.”

This generation, however, isn't a complete ‘write off.’ Ream says the parents can make a big difference in the way their children communicate. She suggests reading the same book your teenager is reading – then trying to open a dinner table conversation about the plot of that novel.

Ream says writing is a skill that can be learned. Her book, “K.I.S.S. Keep It Short and Simple” lays out a formula she says makes writing easier: Teach your kids to organize their thoughts on paper; compare the subject with others to show how the ideas are similar; contrast the subject with others to show how the concept is different; and interrelate – write the essay to show how the subject relates to the reader.

Every generation has great minds with great thoughts that can guide the rest of us. If teenagers aren't taught to groom their opinions and ideas so that they can write effectively, society will lose out on a generation of creativity. “If we let these kids get caught up in technology, if we let politicians get caught up in testing, it's America as a whole that loses out on great words, thoughts and novels that will never be written.”

About the Author

Jacquie Ream has been a teacher, a workshop director, a daycare owner, and is now the author of “K.I.S.S. Keep It Short and Simple.” She has devoted her life to guiding others how to clearly and concisely share their thoughts and ideas on paper. She has a BA in English and a Masters in Creative Writing from the University of Washington. www.reamink.com

Source: <http://www.spivo.com/articles>