Gordon, 15

What have you been doing this week?

Let me think. I go to school. I had soccer practice only once a week 'cause it's winter. I went to see the Trans-Siberian Orchestra. They come to town every year. They're really good.

What kind of music do they do?

It's like rock, but it's like Christmas too sort of.* It's a really good show. They've got lasers and pyrotechnics. I also went to church and choir practice. I do the sound board* most of the time.

What are you studying in school?

I'm taking pre-calculus, AP European history,* band, English, French, chemistry, and environmental science.

What instrument do you play in band?

I play the bassoon for concert band. For marching band I play the tuba. They're completely different instruments. You can't march with a bassoon.

What do you study in environmental science?

So far we've studied a lot about weather and weather patterns. We also learn about earthquakes and tornados and that sort of stuff.

What will you do after high school?

I plan to go to college. I'm not sure what I'll go for yet. Probably something in science because I enjoy science.

Is there anything that you'd like to say to kids in other countries?

Um. I think that a lot of the things that the rest of the world thinks about America, that they get in movies or on TV—from reality TV shows and things like that—don't really portray American life. We're probably not that different from you.
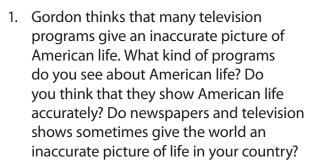
A Few Words

Sort of: This is an informal phrase and means that something is similar but not exactly the same.

Sound board: This is the set of controls for microphones and speakers in a sound system.

AP European history: AP stands for Advanced Placement. AP courses are difficult courses. A very good high school student can take an AP course and then a test. If the student does well on the test, he or she gets university credit for the subject.

Discussion Questions

1. Gordon thinks that many television programs give an inaccurate picture of American life. What kind of programs do you see about American life? Do you think that they show American life accurately? Do newspapers and television shows sometimes give the world an inaccurate picture of life in your country?

2. What do you think are the similarities and differences between American teens and teens in your country?