



*Jacob, 17*

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**What have you been doing this week?**

I've been, sort of, preparing for finals,\* finishing up work, trying to balance the things I need to do with the things I should do. I need to do things like studying for a test now or getting in assignments that are past due, and I should do things like exercising or catching up on things that will help me up ahead, on tests in the future. I've been trying to work on a big English assignment and prepare for finals. I stayed up all night trying to finish, as well as preparing for a performance on the clarinet.

**Have you been doing anything else?**

I've been trying to get a basic draft of a book I want to write. I feel like the essays you write at school are constricting. This is writing I enjoy doing. It helps me relax and wind down.

**What do you want to do after high school?**

After high school I want to go to a university and get a doctorate in some kind of science. Right now I'm aiming for entomology, the study of insects, especially ants. That's my passion. I'm really interested in the complex societies they form and how they work together. If you want to get me talking, ask me about ants. They have really complex and diverse societies. They are the most complex of all animal societies. It's ants, not elephants or primates or monkeys, that are the closest to human societies.

**I know that when you were small, you had serious health problems. Your parents had to take you to the hospital really fast many times. Is that still true?**

I still have health issues. I have allergy-induced asthma. That means I have allergies that sometimes make it very difficult to breathe. It limits me from doing activities or going places sometimes. It's just a part of my life. I live with it.\*

**Are you doing anything for Martin Luther King Day?\***

I'm probably going to study with a friend because I have finals right away. We had a powerful assembly program at school. The African-American student community group gave a serious eye-opener\* on how bad it was at that time period. A lot of people were disturbed by it.

**Is there anything that you would like to say to kids in other countries?**

Hmm. In the end,\* we're all human. It's good to have an identity and celebrate your history, but in the end, we're all human.

## A Few Words

**Finals:** The exams at the end of a school term are called finals.

**Live with it:** If you can't remove a problem from your life, you "live with it."

**Martin Luther King, Jr. Day:** This is a holiday in January in honor of a man who helped lead the struggle for equal rights for all citizens of the U.S., no matter what the color of their skin is or what their family background is.

**Eye-opener:** An event that helps you see or understand a problem that you didn't notice before is an eye-opener.

**In the end:** This means "after we have thought about everything."

## Discussion Questions

1. Jacob thinks ants are very, very interesting. What animal do you think is interesting? Why?
2. Jacob has a serious health problem that doctors can't cure. He "lives with it." What is a problem that you or one of your friends lives with? What do you do to help you live with the problem? This could be any kind of problem, for example, an economic problem, a medical problem, a family problem, a community problem.