



Blake, 15

What have you been doing this week?

Well, exam time is coming up and I've been trying to study hard for them, taking notes and all. It's a very stressful time for me.

How do you prepare for the exams?

Well, the teachers give us notes, and we write them down and study 'em and then take the exams, but most of us barely have any time to study, especially the basketball team. They have a lot of games next week. I'm actually in the church choir. I have to do all my exam work and practice for the choir,* and we have all this stuff coming up for Christmas.*

Tell me about singing in the choir.

We usually have practice once or twice a week. We sing, we get to meet each other, and we all have fun together, and we all sing together at church. The choir sings every Sunday. My dad sings every Sunday and I do too. But we have extra practices for Christmas music. On an ordinary Sunday we do one to three songs, and Christmas we do, I don't know, like ten songs, and that's why we have extra practices for Christmas music.

Tell me what you did this weekend.

This weekend I got to go to my grandmother's house, which was a very big treat for me. I love to help her out,* and I did work in her yard. I got paid for it, but I'd work without pay anytime she wants me to because I really love her.

Tell me about her.

My grandmother is very sweet. She helps a lot of people. She's a Methodist,* so she goes to a Methodist church every Sunday. She helps anyone who is in need. She has two sweet dogs, Bell and Ella. One is a golden lab and the other is a mixture. She has the best cooking ever. Her cake is wonderful. Her pies are FANTASTIC! If the only thing I ever had to eat for the rest of my life was her cooking, I would be happy. She makes the best grilled cheese* ever!

How is your family?

My family's been OK. I mean, a little argument here and there, but that's OK. It's a very happy time we have. We're kind of last-minute people. So we set up everything at the last minute and then get ready for Christmas.

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

Happy Holidays!

A Few Words

Choir: A group of people who sing together, usually in a school or church.

Christmas: The major winter holiday in the United States. Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus, and everyone celebrates—family, friends, and community.

Help out: This means the same as *help* but people often use *help out* when they talk about helping someone who has problems or someone who has too much work to do.

Methodist: Christian churches are divided into groups that are a little bit different in organization and style of worship. Blake goes to a Presbyterian church and his grandmother goes to a Methodist church, but this never causes problems for the family.

Grilled cheese: This is a hot cheese sandwich.

Discussion Questions

1. Is music an important part of your culture? What kind of music do you enjoy listening to or performing?
2. Blake says that his family sometimes argues a little bit, but they are a very happy family anyway. Do you agree that small disagreements are a normal part of family life? How do you take care of disagreements in your family or among your friends?