



Walker, 15

What have you been doing this week?

This was the last week of school for us.

Did you do anything to celebrate the last day of school?

A couple of us went to the movies after the last day. We went to see a movie called *The Losers*. It's kind of like an action movie.

What are you going to do this summer?

I'm going to New Orleans. It's a Habitat for Humanity* trip. We'll be building a house and also, like,* sightseeing. I think there are thirteen of us kids and then there's parents. We'll be there a week. And then there's the swim team.

Tell me about the swim team.

We have our first meet* on Saturday and then another on Tuesday. I swim backstroke and butterfly the best. We practice every day, unless weather conditions won't let us. We have meets every weekend all summer till the beginning of August.

Are you planning anything else?

My dad and I are going to Boy Scout* summer camp. This is like my fifth time. I'm going to be doing archery and a couple other merit badges.* We stay in Adirondacks. They got three sides, a roof, and an open front. We go to a big mess hall* for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. And there are lots of Indian-themed* things. There's a big lake and we go swimming. There are also, like, a lot of sports and stuff.

What is your dad going to do?

He's going to be herding* children basically. He's going to be one of the main dads for the troop,* making sure we don't get hurt and stuff.

Is there anything else that you like to do?

I really like music mostly now. I'm trying to learn to play the piano. That's going to be hard. I already play the trumpet.

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

Hello, from America!

A Few Words

Habitat for Humanity: An organization that helps low-income people build simple and good houses for their families. Because volunteers do most of the work, the cost of the houses is low.

Like: Many young people use the word *like* to fill time while they are thinking of the next word they want to say. Their parents and teachers tell them that this is a bad habit. Walker often uses *like*.

Meet: A swimming competition is called a swimming meet.

Boy Scouts: An international program for boys. It emphasizes doing things outdoors and learning practical skills.

Merit badges: When a Boy Scout learns a new skill, he gets a small patch called a merit badge to wear.

Mess hall: *Mess* is a military word for "meal," and a "mess hall" is a place where people eat.

Indian: In the U.S., Boy Scouts learn about the first people who lived here, the Native Americans, who are sometimes called Indians. In this sentence, the word doesn't mean "from India."

Herding: This word usually means taking care of animals (herding sheep or herding goats, for example). Probably Walker and his dad have been joking about his dad's work at the camp.

Troop: A group of Boy Scouts is called a troop.

Discussion Questions

1. Habitat for Humanity is one way that people can help their neighbors. What are some of the ways people in your community help their neighbors?
2. Walker says that learning to play the piano is going to be hard for him. What is, for you, the hardest thing you are learning to do now? Why are you learning it?