

Activity 2

Student Diary A

Monday, 2/1—Dad was really discouraged today. The plant where he works is old and poorly maintained. His suggestions for improvements are discouraged and ignored. I heard him telling Mom that he's tired of doing work that he hates and of getting paid the same as other men at the plant who often don't show up for work or do little once they arrive. He says they have no incentive to work. They get paid even if their work is poor. Mom reminded him we have much to be thankful for. The government provides us with an apartment, guaranteed retirement benefits, free health care, and job security.

Mom tries to lift Dad's spirits. I'm not so sure he isn't right about many things. Prices for consumer goods are kept low but we have so few choices, and sometimes the stores run out of even the few things they usually have to sell. It can take hours standing in line just to get a loaf of bread or a piece of meat. Last week I stood in line for 50 minutes to buy meat for dinner and then couldn't get what Mom wanted. I took what they had, even though I knew Mom would be disappointed. I want new shoes but there are so few choices and they are not well made. My friend has a pair of blue jeans. I'd love a pair! But I'd have to buy them illegally, like he did.

Monday, 2/8—I passed the entrance exam for the university, to study engineering. I don't want to be an engineer. My teachers tell me I should go to the school, because there are always jobs for engineers in the government factories. I really want to be a writer.

Tuesday, 2/9—It snowed today and our apartment was cold. The government is always promising things will be better next year. I doubt it. The government cares more about supplies for the military, the space program, and Olympic sports than it does for its citizens.

Thurs., 2/11—I took Grandma to the doctor. She has many problems, but fortunately health care is free. We waited all afternoon before she got to see the doctor. She needs an operation. The doctor says there's a long waiting list, maybe as long as a year.

Friday 2/12—Mom and Dad were arguing again. Dad said what good is a guaranteed job when you don't like the work and you are not free to change jobs or start your own business. Mom points out that it's the same for everyone. Do as you're told and be happy with what you have. We don't have much but at least the government will take care of us.

Activity 3

Student Diary B

Monday, 2/3—I hate babysitting my younger brothers. Mom says it's just until Dad gets his new consulting firm off the ground. Then we can afford extended daycare. Why did his old employer need to downsize? The paper says the economy is doing well. 3% growth and inflation is under control, whatever that means. Did they really need to cut my Dad's job and make my life miserable? Starting a business is risky. He's never around. Mom isn't either these days. She's opening a second restaurant. They took out a second mortgage on the house to help pay for the restaurant renovations. It's a huge risk but something she's been wanting to do. Dad encourages her. Says consumer spending is up and she'll have people filling her new restaurant in no time at all. But what about me? Don't they realize I have things to do?

Tuesday 2/4—I couldn't go out with my friends. Mom and Dad are working late and I had to watch my brothers. I complained. It's not fair! They said to be patient. I didn't say too much. They're upset with me. My brother told them I haven't been wearing my seatbelt. I hate wearing it when I drive. I got a lecture. I already know the pros and cons. We've been debating the issue in school. The state legislature passed a law making it mandatory. What right do they have to dictate wearing seat belts? It's bad enough that my parents are on my case.

Wednesday, 2/5—I reminded my parents I work after school on Thursday and Friday and can't help out at home. Then they wanted to know how much of my paycheck I have been saving. Well, not much since I had to pay for my car insurance, buy new clothes, movie tickets, CDs, and pay for gas. That started it. I got another lecture on the importance of saving for college. As if I don't know how much college costs. They're so concerned about college and getting a good job. My best friend went to college and then couldn't get a job in her field. Maybe I'll work for a year before college, or just go part time. I bet that won't go over well.

Thursday, 2/6—I got a raise! My boss complimented me on my "work ethic." I didn't even know I had one. He fired his other after-school employee because she was always late and made too many mistakes. I was surprised he did it, because finding workers is tough with the unemployment rate so low. He asked me if I wanted to increase my hours. He's willing to send me for training on the new computer he bought. Wow! I could really use the money, but there goes what little free time I have now.