2024-2025 Middle School Ethics Bowl Case Set

To learn more about this event, please visit:

https://www.ethicsatkentplace.org/student-programs/middle-school-ethics-bowl

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Case 6: "Dear Grandma"

Haley has been meaning to write a letter to her grandmother who will turn 80 in a few weeks, but finds herself struggling to find the right words. Her grandmother's health has been declining recently, and Haley feels it is important to express just how much her grandmother's unwavering support has meant to her over the years. Despite her best efforts, the words simply won't come.

As she sits at her desk, frustrated by her inability to translate her feelings onto paper, Haley remembers a commercial she saw on television recently. In it, a father uses Google's Gemini AI tool to help his daughter write a fan letter to her favorite athlete. AI takes the daughter's scattered thoughts and turns them into a polished, heartfelt message. Intrigued, Haley decides to give the tool a try.

She opens Gemini on her laptop and with a mix of hesitation and curiosity, types a few sentences about the memories she shared with her grandmother, and how grateful she is for her grandmother's unconditional love and support. Within moments, AI generates a beautifully written letter, thoughtful and eloquent, capturing everything Haley wanted to say. It's perfect - but Haley can't shake the feeling that the letter isn't entirely hers.

This raises an uncomfortable question: Is using AI to write such a personal letter akin to cheating on homework? Does it violate personal integrity in the same or similar way that using AI to write an essay for school violates the principles of academic integrity? In her classes, Haley has been taught that relying on AI assistance to generate content crosses ethical boundaries because essays are meant to reflect the student's own understanding and abilities. Does the same concern apply to a letter to her grandmother? Is it wrong to let AI articulate personal emotions, or is AI simply a tool to help her express what she couldn't put into words herself?

Haley hesitates, torn between sending the polished, perfect letter generated by Gemini and writing something in her own words—even if it isn't as eloquent. She knows that her grandmother will appreciate anything she sends, but she can't shake the feeling that her own words fall short. Is the letter written by Gemini a true expression of her love and gratitude? Or has Haley, in her desire to express her emotions perfectly, allowed AI to speak for her, thereby stripping the letter of its true meaning?

Match Questions
1. Should Haley send the letter written with Gemini? Why or why not?
2. Is there an ethical difference between the circumstances in the ad and Haley's situation?

Study Questions
1. How might using AI change people's relationships?
2. How important is authenticity in personal communications?
3. How might using AI for everyday tasks change the way we think?