

Man vs. Machine

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NSL Reads 2nd Annual Writing Competition

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3rd Place

Children's Division

Have you ever wondered what life would be like with a machine that could read your mind? Well, Bob found one.

One day Bob discovered the Electro while his dad was working on it .The Electro was a small brick that could answer any question. Bob was frustrated with his homework “9897969897981537+98659975373578” and started to talk to himself. For some reason he could not name, a voice in his head told him the answer. Suddenly he realized the Electro could read his mind. He envied the Electro and wanted to keep it himself, but worried that his dad would find the Electro missing and trace the evidence back to him. So the second he heard the garage door opening, he bolted downstairs and put the Electro back in the closet. The very next day he tested the Electro again and was amazed. He started to secretly take the Electro to school, and his test scores skyrocketed.

Once he was assured that schoolwork had been taken care of, he turned his attention to the regional math competitions. Bob thought about it all night and finally drew the obvious conclusion that he would use the machine to claim those prizes for himself. So he told his parents about the regional math competition, hiding only the fact that he had ‘borrowed’ the Electro. Dad replied, “ I’m glad you’re challenging yourself”.

That night before the competition, he was restless. He could not wait until tomorrow morning when he could get up and polish the Electro as a final preparation. However, back in his mind he felt the seed of guilt. The next day his parents went along to support him. Sure enough the Electro did its magic and he won first prize! He was awarded \$25 and a certificate

to move on to the next round. He sped through homework and jumped onto his bed. He thought to himself, "life is great".

He worked his way up until he finally competed against his friends at the national math competition. Bob was on a roll. The crowd was cheering for the last two candidates. Bob was competing against the youngest math wiz of the country, Joe. The facilitator asked one of the last questions, "How many 7 are in 1 to 1000?" Joe hesitated for a moment and answered, "189". Bob knew the correct answer thanks to the Electro. He took a second to calm himself down and answered "200" in the most graceful way. Bob was the champion! Just as the announcer was about to declare him as the winner, he saw the tears in Joe's eyes and felt the seed of guilt had sprouted into a plant. Bob took a deep breath and said, "Alas, he is the real winner. I had some help and that was undesired". Then he left the stage.

"I thought the Electro was my friend, but it was actually my biggest nemesis. After all, it is more important to be honest than to win."