

Name _____ Date _____

Can You Hack It?

Robert, 13 years old, is very good with computers and likes a challenge. Exploring the Internet, he figures out how to enter the computer system used by his city. Just for fun, and to prove he was there, Robert makes a very small change to the city's home page. He adds, "It's MY town!"

Would you consider this a harmless joke? Why or why not?

Sonia and **Brandon** are at work on a school project. They come upon a hate site that really upsets them. It says the Nazis were the heroes of World War II and denies that they murdered innocent people. The two figure out how to enter the site. They type, "It's a bunch of lies!"

Are Sonia and Brandon's actions right or wrong? Why or why not?

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WHOSE property is it?

Every computer, and the files it contains, is the property of some person or organization. People who enter computer systems without permission are committing a crime. It's called hacking, cracking, or plain old "breaking and entering." It's a crime that can be committed while sitting in your own home, school, or library.

Why do kids say they do it?

"I was looking for a challenge."

"Why not? It doesn't hurt anyone."

"It's fun."

"I was bored."

"I wanted people to know how good my computer skills are."

"I didn't think I could get caught."

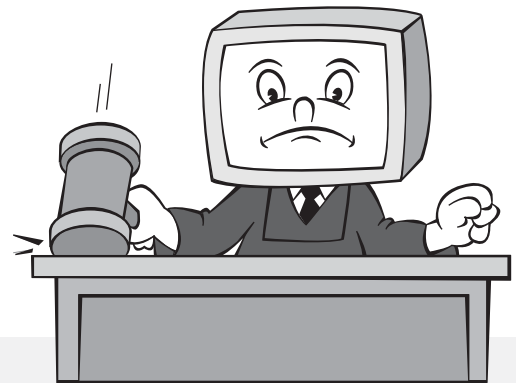
"I'm doing them a favor by showing them weaknesses in their security system."

What are the consequences?

Unauthorized entry causes a lot of trouble for computer system owners. Valuable information can be lost. Systems have to be shut down to look for damage. Business cannot be carried on. Customers get angry and take their money elsewhere. It all costs the owner a lot of money.

In addition, hacking causes trouble for people whose data is stored in these computer systems. Their private information can be stolen, changed, or deleted.

Teen hackers also cause trouble for themselves when they are eventually caught. Their Internet connection can be taken away. They can be fined. A few, tried in court as adults, even face jail time.

**Hold a Mock Peer Court**

Rather than go to court, Robert, Sonia, and Brandon decided to go before a jury of their peers.

Decide who will play the defendants, their parents, prosecuting attorney, defense attorney, bailiff, jury members, and judge.

Then conduct the peer court. Focus on the rights and wrongs in each of the two cases. Explore why the students did what they did. Make sure that the punishment will help the defendants become better citizens.