Staffer evaluates our generation of "paperless" kids

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I've fought in several wars.

I've fallen in love with countless boys and had my heart broken just as many times.

I've made friends in unlikely places.

I've become a wizard, a shadow-hunter, a half-blood and a fallen angel.

I've lived through the uprising in the Capitol.

I almost sunk through the ground of Everlost.

I watched as the wand flew out of Voldemort's hand into Harry's triumphant one.

I was told that my love is a disease.

Unfortunately, these are experiences a tiny percent of people will come to know and love. Kids nowadays are not reading — plain and simple. I mean, what's the point of lugging around a novel and reading in free time when we have mind-numbing, light-weight cell phones that have vast numbers of candies to crush?

No offense to the education system, but this aversion to the fantastic world of reading comes from the awful books we are force-fed from a young age.

Rewind to fifth grade.

"From the Mixed Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler" . . . really? At that age, we could all read the first Harry Potter and actually enjoy a book that is required for school.

Sixth grade — "The House of Dies Drear." I can't think of a worse book I have ever read except for maybe "Red Scarf Girl" in seventh grade.

Noticing a pattern here? If I hadn't started reading young, then I would never want to pick up a book again based on these picks. Many friendships I've formed were based on discussing novels. Those conversations were endless.

Whether or not "Unwind" or "Everlost" was the better series or why we loved Ty from "Stolen" so much if he was a bad person are some of the best memories from my past.

Reading has helped me on countless vocabulary tests, literary terms and basically anything we do in our English Language Arts classes. Not only this, but many high schoolers are looking for some form of escape. Escaping into a world apart from your own is much healthier than escaping through the loons of heroin.

With books you're somewhere else — your problems don't exist in that world. When I was having relationship problems, I could escape into Jace and Clary's romance from "City of Bones." When my dog got sick, "The Art of Racing in the Rain" gave me hope. Just need a pick-me-up? "Elsewhere" has that power.

This doesn't mean I'm a lonely girl who has no one to talk to, so I go to my imaginary friends — it means I'm smart enough to know how to feel better faster. That intelligence may have also come from reading. With any book you read, you gain some form of knowledge — whether it be a geographical fact or knowing that British people spell "color" like "colour" with a "u" after the second "o".

So go out and pick up a novel. Get lost. Fall in love. Be a new person. Read.