

## ***When the Bullies Turned Faceless***

### **Lesson 2, Student Activity 2**

Excerpt from New York Times, December 16, 2007

By Christopher Maag  
Dardenne Prairie, Missouri.

LIKE most mobs, the one that pursued Megan Meier was cruel and unrelenting. Its members gathered on the social networking site [MySpace](#) and called Megan a liar, a fat whore and worse.

Megan, 13, fought back, insulting her tormenters with every profanity she knew. But the mob shouted her down, overwhelming her computer and her shaky self-confidence with a barrage of hateful instant messages.

"Mom, they're being horrible!" Megan said, sobbing into the phone when her mother called. After an hour, Megan ran into her bedroom and hanged herself with a belt.

"She felt there was no way out," Ms. Meier said.

Megan Meier's suicide made headlines because she was the victim of a hoax. Lori Drew, another mother in the neighborhood, said in a police report that she had created a MySpace profile of a boy, an invention named "Josh Evans," and that she and her daughter had manipulated Megan into thinking that this fabricated person liked her.

Then, after a few weeks, Ms. Meier said, girls posing as Josh wrote MySpace messages telling Megan that he hated her. He insulted her, and other girls — most unaware that Josh did not exist — viciously piled on. (Later, through her lawyer, Ms. Drew, 48, denied creating the MySpace page used in the hoax and denied knowledge of the final messages.)

Cellphone cameras and text messages, as well as social networking Web sites, e-mail and instant messaging, all give teenagers a wider range of ways to play tricks on one another, to tease and to intimidate their peers.

And unlike traditional bullying, which usually is an intimate, if highly unpleasant, experience, high-tech bullying can happen anywhere, anytime, among lots of different children who may never actually meet in person. It is inescapable and often anonymous, said sociologists and educators who have studied cyberbullying.