

"I'm ready," the teacher declared.

"For what?" the disgruntle student asked as he fidgeted.

The teacher leaned back in the rickety-armed chair. "For the excuse," the teacher replied.

"Why are you always on my case about...," the student muttered, and then looked around.

The teacher cocked an eyebrow. "I'm waiting," the teacher said with an edge to his voice.

"I did the assignment. It took me two hours," the young man defended.

"Some kids were running around the bus this morning. The bus driver yelled...and, I tried to get the antsy boys to sit. My books got knocked off the seat. My papers were scattered. I thought I picked all of them up. My English and History assignments are missing," the student added in a nonchalant manner.

"You don't say," the teacher exclaimed with a pronounced unconvinced expression.

"Honest," the student replied in dismay as he felt the history teacher's piercing gaze.

"Ummmm. Tell me the theme of your essay," the teacher said.

"I knew it. I knew it. I knew it!" the student said as he walked around in a tight circle.

The teacher slowly rolled his fingers.

"The theme," the teacher enunciated.

The sophomore tossed his head, grit his teeth, and then paraded in a larger circle. The young man pondered.

"You cannot remember the theme of an essay that took you two hours to compose?" the teacher quizzed.

"I had lots of homework. I wrote the essay first," the young man defended.

The history teacher slowly lowered his head, and then looked over the rim of his glasses.

"Okay...okay...it's about some French dudes wanting to take over the USA before our country was the USA," the young man began.

The teacher did not change his expression as the student rambled.

"That was very good. However, the essay was about events leading to the American Civil War. Let's see...that's the North against the South...the Yankees against the Confederates," the teacher said with a frown.

The young man stepped back, and then gasped. His mouth stayed open.

The history teacher stood up, walked to the corner of the room, put his hands in his pocket, and then talked about events that the young man should have included in his essay. When the teacher finished, he stepped closer to the wall, pulled a hand out of his pocket, and then gently patted the painted concrete block wall. "You understand...don't you," the teacher said.

The young man looked at the teacher in bewilderment, but the history teacher did not even glance at the speechless sophomore. Rather, he sat down at his desk, and then opened the textbook for his next class.