

"I am ready," the teacher said.

"For what?" a young man asked in reply as he fidgeted.

The teacher leaned back in his wooden arm chair. "For your excuse," the teacher replied.

"Why are you always on my case?" the student softly questioned as he looked down at the floor.

The teacher cocked an eyebrow. "I'm waiting," the teacher calmly said.

"I did your assignment! It took me two hours to write!" the student vehemently defended.

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

"Really!" the teacher commented with a unconvinced expression.

"Yes, sir!" the student replied in dismay as he felt the teacher's stare.

"Please, tell me the theme of your essay," the teacher said.

"I knew it! I knew just it!" the student replied as he paced in a tight circle in front of the desk.

The teacher rolled his fingers on the arm of the old wooden chair.

"The theme!" the teacher distinctly enunciated.

The distraught young man tossed his head back, grit his teeth, and stopped pacing.

"You are telling me that do not remember the topic of a paper that took you hours to compose?" the teacher factiously asked.

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

The history teacher 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 United States," the young man began.

The teacher did not change his expression as the young man rattled off unrelated details about the French and Indian War.

"That is very good! However, the assignment was about events leading to the American Civil War. If I recall correctly...that is the North against the South...the Yanks against the Rebs as you informed me yesterday after I disturbed your nap...in class," the teacher said.

The young man stepped back and gasped. His mouth dropped open.

The history teacher arose, walked to the opposite wall, put his hands in his pockets, and then began to explain historical events that should have been included in the assignment. When the history teacher finished, he stepped closer to the wall, pulled a hand out of his pocket, and then gently patted the painted concrete wall. "You understood...didn't you!" the teacher finally said in conclusion.

The young man gazed at the teacher with a perplexed expression.

The history teacher did not even look at the stupefied, speechless sophomore as he sat down at his desk.