

## A Master Teacher

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I discovered the advantages of cheating in eighth-grade Latin. Mrs. Sparger entered the room like a mouse and went straight to her desk where she remained for the duration of the class. At the bell, she closed her book, rose and left, unaware that most of the class had translation books hidden inside their textbooks. When other students read from their translations, they sometimes stumbled to lend authenticity to their reading. I envied them. They all passed. I got an “F.” But I learned my lesson.

The following year, in ninth grade English, a major test was coming up. Unsure of some information the test covered, I made a cheat sheet the night before, using a narrow strip of paper, its full length filled with data. I planned to place it on the seat underneath my left leg. When I needed help, I could move my leg, harvest the information, then cover the sheet again.

Mrs. Wolfe was large in girth, plump, but not flabby. Her silver hair reigned like a halo over a well-powdered face and rimless glasses. One day, she taught us how to blow our noses. “Take a tissue, close one nostril and blow gently out the other side. Reverse the sides and repeat.” Subsequently, all our sleeves were cleaner.

On test day, the class was quiet as a cemetery. I took my sharpened pencil in hand and attacked. When I was unsure of an answer, I followed my four easy steps to success: Move the leg; take a peek; reposition the leg; enter the answer.

Engrossed in my task, I failed to observe that Mrs. Wolfe had risen from her desk and walked to the opposite side of the room. From there, she moved down to the far corner, crossed the room, and came up the aisle from behind me. In need of help, and unaware of her presence, I slid my leg over, uncovering my cheat sheet. When I bent my head to grab an answer, on the floor I saw a comfortable, black leather shoe.

For a few seconds, I trembled inwardly till I managed to raise my head and face my teacher, who stared down on me like a sun goddess. Engulfed in shame, I blushed 50 shades of red. My entire body was on fire. Would she take my cheat sheet, tear it up, and throw the pieces in the air? Call my name and announce to the class that seat 4 in the first row held a Cheater? Send me to the principal’s office where only horrible things happened, or call my parents to ask what kind of son they were raising? Or—all of the above?

I looked at Mrs. Wolfe. Mrs. Wolfe looked at me. Our eyes locked. She turned away, walked to her desk, and sat down. She peered at me with the stern face of a heavenly judge. I was wilting inside faster than a daisy in the desert.

To my amazement, she did nothing. No announcement of my transgression to the class; no trip me to the principal's office. Not a word. Not a single word. Not then. Not ever.

I made a promise to myself never to do that again. It simply wasn't worth it.