

## The Purchased Paper

One dark and stormy Thursday in December, first-semester student **Emma Allen** told her roommate, **Kate**, “You might as well start looking for a new roommate. My college days are coming to an end.”

Emma’s bad luck had started late that afternoon with a text from **Mr. Long**, manager of the office supply store where Emma worked part time. The message said, “I just found out that the regional manager wants an inventory of the entire store completed by Monday morning. To get this done, I need everyone at the store from 9:00am to 9:00pm on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. No excuses. Be there!”

*What a disaster!* Emma thought. She had planned to spend the whole weekend working on the final paper for her composition class. It was due Monday morning, and she could not imagine writing a passing paper while working 12-hour shifts all weekend. Worse, without at least a C in English, she would lose her financial aid, and then she would have to drop out of college. The money she made working part-time barely covered her food, rent, car payments and insurance, and there was no way she could pay tuition on top of that. **Mrs. Allen**, Emma’s single mom, was planning to buy a new car—her first ever—and she made it perfectly clear she was not going to help with her tuition: “I’ve taken care of you and your older brother for 24 years, and now it’s *my* time to enjoy life!”

Panicked, Emma called **Professor Pine** to tell her she would not be able to turn in the composition on time. She explained the situation and begged for an extension. “I am sorry, Emma,” Professor Pine replied. “I warned everyone weeks ago that I have to turn in final grades on Tuesday. If I do not get your paper on Monday morning, you will earn a zero. I guess you have an important choice to make!”

“That’s no choice,” Emma told Kate. “If I fail the class, I’ll lose my financial aid, and if I don’t show up for work, I’ll get fired. Either way, I’m through in college.” “C’mon, man!” Kate countered, “No one writes their own papers anymore. There are thousands of papers for sale on the Internet. I’ll even find you one.”

But all weekend at work, Emma kept telling herself that she was *not* going to turn in a purchased paper. She would write the paper herself, even if she had to stay awake the whole weekend. But after work on Friday and Saturday nights, she was too tired to concentrate so she went to bed vowing to write the paper Sunday night no matter what. When Emma returned from work exhausted on Sunday night, Kate met her at the door. “Great news! I found you an English paper on the Internet and it’s a guaranteed ‘A.’ I printed it out with your name on it, and I had a campus security guard put it in Professor Pine’s mailbox. Your semester is officially over, my friend, and now you’re coming with me to the party to celebrate.” She grabbed Emma by the arm and dragged her out the door. “All right, all right,” Emma said. “I’m too tired to argue.”

It took Professor Pine about five minutes of searching the Internet to find the essay that Emma had submitted. She liked Emma and knew she was under a lot of pressure. Actually Emma had some good writing skills, and if she did not count this plagiarized paper, she’d easily

get a C in English, keep her financial aid, and stay in college. *Everyone needs a break once in a while*, she thought. But when she told her colleague **Professor Cordova** that she was going to overlook Emma's plagiarized paper, he exploded. "Oh, no you're not! You have to fail this person and make an example of her! Otherwise, you will get a reputation as a sucker and a pushover. Worse, once that happens you'll lose the respect of your colleagues. Don't even think about passing her!"

Embarrassed by Professor Cordova's reprimand, Professor Pine wrote a zero on Emma's paper and entered an F for her final grade.

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**Listed below are the characters in this story. Rank them in order of their responsibility for Emma's failing grade in English. Give a different score to each character. Be prepared to explain your choices.**

**Most responsible ← 1 2 3 4 5 6 → Least responsible**

\_\_\_ Emma Allen, English student

\_\_\_ Mr. Long, Emma's boss

\_\_\_ Kate, Emma's roommate

\_\_\_ Mrs. Allen, Emma's mom

\_\_\_ Professor Pine, Emma's teacher

\_\_\_ Professor Cordova, Professor Pine's colleague

Diving Deeper:

Are there others not mentioned who may also share responsibility for Emma's failing grade?

Are there incorrect assumptions that anyone made?

Adapted from On Course, Inc. case study with the same title.