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Mr. Mullen

Essay 1

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Title

Last June I was in my math class with my best friend Dagwood taking the final exam. It was a tough test. It had 50 multiple-choice questions and three open-ended problems. I had studied hard for the test, but Dagwood had not, even though he needed to pass the exam to pass the class. In the middle of the test he asked me to show him a few answers. I care about Dagwood a lot since he is my best friend, but I also consider myself an honest person who does not cheat. I didn't show him the answers. He failed the exam, and he ended up having to go to summer school. He was mad at me for a few days. I called him the night I found out he failed, but he didn't return my call. We were supposed to go to the mall together about a week after he failed, but he never showed up. He eventually got over it. I own a car and he does not, so he was stranded as long as he was mad at me.

I was torn between helping my friend and sticking to a principle. Dag and I have been hanging together since third grade. We have gotten into and out of a lot of crazy situations together, but nothing that required me to cheat. Part of me felt that I had to help a friend get through a tough situation, but another part of me was angry that Dag wanted me to cheapen myself to help him get along. I may not be the best student in the world, but I am not a cheater. I had to make up my mind between bailing out Dag and staying true to myself. In the end, I chose integrity. The choice wasn't easy. Sitting in that classroom, I looked at Dag, a friend in need, and thought to myself, "What do I care about math or some stupid test? Just hand over the answers and forget about it." Just as I was about to show him my paper, I hesitated. I thought about how hard I had studied for the test. Why didn't Dag do that? I thought

about how everyone would laugh when they found out we cheated. We-- not Dag-- cheated. I didn't want to be known as a cheater.

My situation was similar to Tim O'Brien's in "On The Rainy River." When he was tempted to run away to Canada to avoid fighting in the Vietnam War, he was choosing between his own sense of integrity and what he thought other people wanted from him. His choice was different from mine. He chose to satisfy everyone else. I chose to stay true to myself. I wasn't a coward. I stuck up for myself, even against my best friend.