

Academic Dishonesty at IHS

Techniques of Cheating

By SHU SONG

The goal in cheating is to get a good grade without being caught. While most techniques are subtle enough that you may never get caught using them, other more daring methods take careful planning and execution. Depending on who catches you doing what, the consequences range from a little talk to failing the quarter. It's a constant struggle for students to find new ways to cheat and for teachers to play catch up.

Most know about commonplace, relatively safe cheating methods, from sneaking a cheat sheet onto the desk while taking a test to asking for information about a test before taking one and others like writing notes on the inside of water bottles and storing formulas on calculators.

students' cheating techniques. Nancy Strippel, an Economics and Global Studies 2 teacher doesn't even give the same tests to students who have to make them up. One of her students took a test late and must have had the answers to her original test when he took the make up test, but it was actually a totally different test. In grading the test, Strippel noticed that the student had all the correct answers to a test that this student was not given, so she failed him.

Strippel spoke with passion about the subject. When her students cheat, she feels responsible. "Because students think the system is corrupt, it gives them the right to cheat," she said, "and I feel obligated to do something about it."

But not all cheaters are



Confessions of a Dirty, Rotten Cheater

I was an unassuming little sophomore who simply hadn't done the *Frankenstein* reading that was assigned for my first period English class. I skimmed through the chapter on the bus ride to school, but couldn't really get a sense of anything. Mr. Asklar had threatened to pop quiz us at some point in time. So when I arrived at school I scrambled into the library, onto the computer, and typed in www.sparknotes.com. I was casually familiar with the site through friends, and ads on TheSpark.com (was there any loser who HADN'T taken every SparkTest sophomore year?).

I hadn't really used the site previously, nor did I care to pass judgment on those who did. I arrived to class, no quiz, just class discussion—no sweat, I could just keep quiet and make up the reading. The usual people raised their hands to talk about the reading, but today there was something eerie about it. Their words sounded strangely familiar, and for good reason. They were essentially quoting the SparkNotes analysis of the chapter. I had always assumed that I was just too much of a dolt to pick up on the themes and metaphors illuminated by these literary prodigies grac-

ing our H-English 10 class with their excess of insights. Now I found that these masters of critique were in fact masters of plagiarism, wracking up class participation points. Their pontifications were not simply unauthentic, but it is very well possible that they hadn't even opened their books.

The ethics behind using book guides as substitutes for reading are very fuzzy. It is certainly obnoxious to regurgitate from them. If you haven't done your reading, please do just keep your mouth shut. I have personally chosen to bear the consequences of not doing assignments because I found that slope to be a very slippery one indeed (I read maybe half of *Frankenstein* in fragments, and definitely couldn't have appreciated it). In general, if a teacher assigns reading it is probably because you will get something out of it. Although I will disclaim that occasionally one may identify an assignment that must have been doled out with the teacher cackling to himself, "Hah, this one will put them to sleep for sure."

—Laura Fattaruso '05



But if you just want all the answers without having to read through tiny written notes, you need to test ahead of time.

A senior, who asked to remain anonymous, said that because one of his teachers gave the same tests from year to year, he looked at tests from previous years from students who had already taken the course and memorized the answers. This senior is not the only one who has done this—at least two other students have confessed to doing so to that same teacher. This ought to be a red light for any teacher who recycles his or her tests year after year.

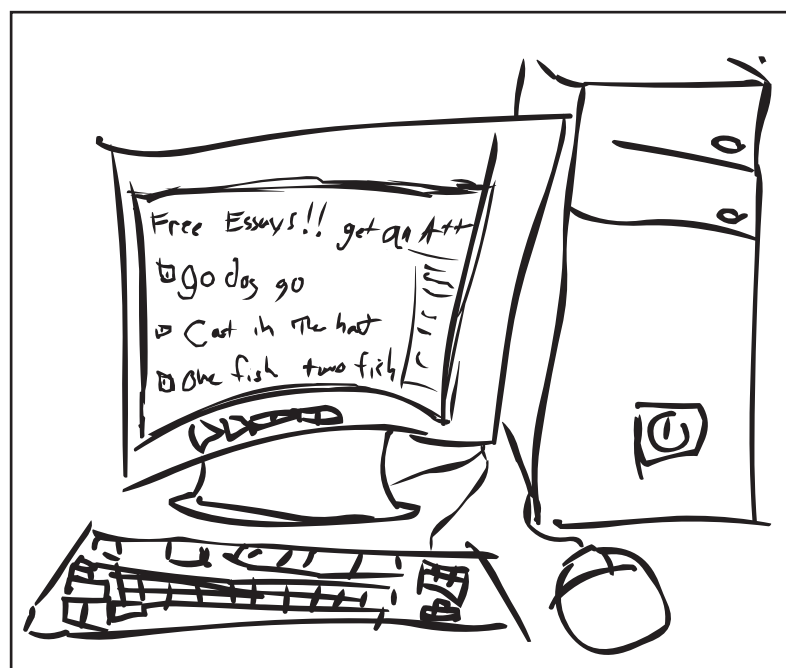
"Those teachers are unwittingly tempting kids to cheat," remarked Roselyn Teukolsky, AP Computer Science teacher, who never gives the same tests from year to year. So it must have been a shock to the student who was caught last year with a complete set of tests that Teukolsky has given the previous year when he found out that the tests that he had were utterly useless.

Teukolsky is not the only teacher trying to keep up with

caught. A female junior—who cheats because "everyone else does" and would feel at a disadvantage otherwise—told me of her elaborate method of cheating that is so obscure and well planned out that she has never been caught doing it.

After getting back a test, she would trace the teacher's markings onto tracing paper and whiteout everything on the original tests except the questions, so the test looks as if no one has taken it. She would then proceed to photocopy the empty test, so the whiteout isn't obvious, and re-answer the all questions again, correctly this time. Then she would put some of the teacher's markings back on the paper and go complain about the teacher's mis-gradings. "It works every time," she said.

"It's still honorable not to cheat," said Teukolsky, "in the final analysis, you know what you achieved." One cannot help but wonder what would happen if that junior had used some of her ingenuity that went into the cheating technique and put it into preparing for the test?



Ethics of Cheating

By RUTH EZRA

For an alarming number of students at Ithaca High School, cheating is a way of life. Whether it's looking over an unsuspecting classmate's shoulders or buying the answers to a test on the lunchroom black-market, academic dishonesty has become so ingrained into the minds of many students that morals and ethics have taken a back seat to an increasingly common desire to do well by any means necessary.

One cause of what many teachers perceive as a cheating problem at IHS is the wide range of definitions students have for what could be consid-

ered unethical. To one junior, speaking on terms of anonymity, "Cheating on things like homework, scribbling vocabulary words on desks, and taking someone else's notes for a reading quiz is okay." The student added that such behavior is not morally wrong given that "reading quizzes are stupid... everyone goes to Spark Notes [an online notation service] anyway."

Another junior elaborated that she doesn't consider work that isn't weighted heavily towards one's grades cheating as such assignments "don't count much... It's not how smart you are, and that makes it okay." One anonymous upperclassman expressed surprise at the lengths students go in order to do well without realizing they're cheating, pointing out that many of his friends take essays used in other years, refer to student-run test banks, and

hand in other students' work "without batting an eyelash." Many students also point to the lenient and unobservant attitude of teachers towards work as an incentive for cheating. Danny Abowd '07 was quick to point out that "[a Biology Teacher's] tests are consistent year to year. The multiple choice format encouraged a lot of people I know to write down letters and share answers with others." A former student of that teacher echoed these sentiments, stating, "In biology, some of my friends would skip the day of the test, copy down the answers upon the test's return, and proceed to

ping into the traditional test bank of the former teacher.

In response to such reports of cheating, teachers are constantly doing their part to curb academic dishonesty and communicate the unethical nature of cheating. Before administering every test, Social Studies teacher Stacey Payette advises her students to "trust yourself, not your neighbors, because chances are, your neighbor didn't study" and encourages her students to do their best by pointing out that there "is no benefit to cheating."

The Math Department now has a policy that prohibits the extension of time on tests to those without special permission, although Leah MacLeod pointed out that this rule was not directly related to cheating in

Course 3. In her classes, MacLeod makes it a point not to collect homework as she considers this "the place where most kids usually cheat on a routine basis" and stated, "I'd rather put my energy into helping those who are doing the right thing than worrying about those kids who can't. It's unfortunate that students put the same energy into cheating they could be putting into their work, but it will catch up to them in exams."

While Jarett Powers, a new teacher in the Social Studies Department, tends to trust students, he also believes that his multiple-choice questions "are worded such that by the time students' are done, they don't recall the questions and don't have a working knowledge of the answer." One junior in Powers's class specifically mentioned that such an idea is "terribly naive... answers to his tests are sold throughout the day."

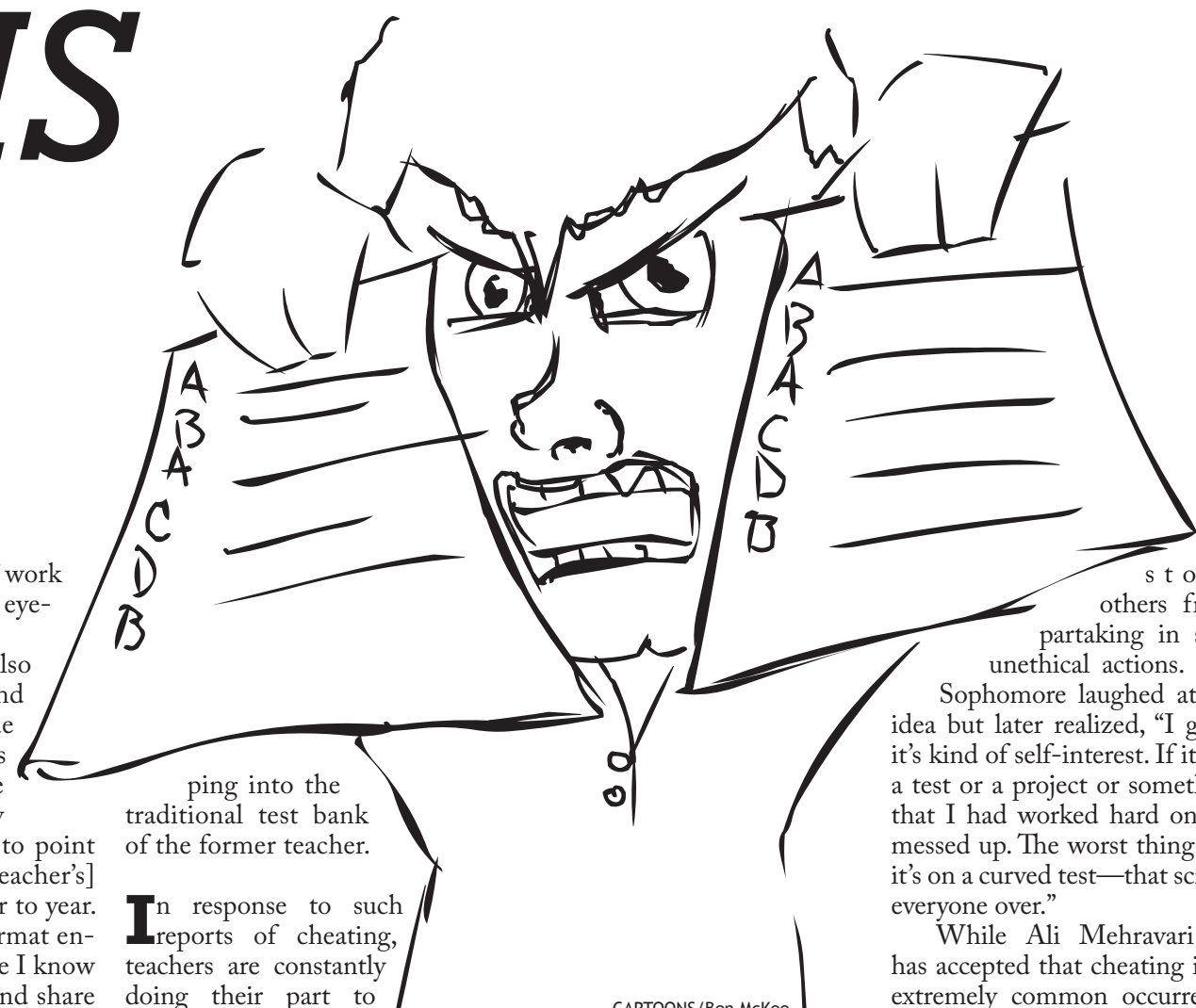
Although a large percentage of students at IHS do not participate in blatant cheating, few feel any moral obligation to

stop others from partaking in such unethical actions. One Sophomore laughed at the idea but later realized, "I guess it's kind of self-interest. If it was a test or a project or something that I had worked hard on, it's messed up. The worst thing is if it's on a curved test—that screws everyone over."

While Ali Mehrvari '06 has accepted that cheating is an extremely common occurrence, she stated, "I trust that it backfires on the students involved, thereby hindering instead of helping." According to Sophie Trowbridge '06, help on homework is okay if people genuinely ran out of time, but "people who slack off or cheat on tests just to get good grades... that's low and says a lot about one's character."

Admitting that cheating is frighteningly common, Casey Easley '06 offered the insight that in the end, it comes down to the motives students have for attending school and succeeding at their studies. "Do you wake up in the morning thinking 'I'm here to learn' or just 'I need to get by?'" she questioned. "Cheating is one means to an end."

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