

Scenario 6

Lea is a sophomore in high school and a member of a local theater group in a nearby city. She likes school, but her passion for singing and acting is huge.

Lately there has been talk going around that some members have been exempt from auditions for the last few productions. Leah knew in the “real world” that can happen sometimes. Some productions have such huge numbers of applicants and so little time that the more experienced, well known actors and singers sometimes get bumped up into the cast without having to try out. But, this wasn’t Broadway, this was a local teen theater group and the whole idea was to give everyone a chance to prove him or herself. She and her friends talked about the rumor and how, if it was true, how unfair it was. It’s one thing to know someone probably deserves to be cast in the production, but another to just put that person in without letting others compete for the same role. They felt close enough to their choir director to talk to him about it. He said he couldn’t imagine that applicants were being exempt. Lea’s friends talked about going to the director, but didn’t want to jeopardize their relationship with him. He was intimidating and, after all, what if he took offense or got mad? Their future chances for good roles could be compromised.

The first week of tryouts for the next musical production Lea was called into the director’s office. He told her she was in for one of the main singing parts. She was ecstatic at first. It was the role she had wanted more than any other. It was a starring spot and would set her up for amazing roles in the future. Then, she realized the director meant she didn’t have to audition. He explained that they simply didn’t have enough time to see every performer’s audition. They knew her work and knew she was right for the role.

Lea was conflicted. What would she say to her friends? How would she explain this to them? What’s more, the choir director agreed with her and her friends that everyone should audition. What would she tell him? She decided she would raise the question to the head director before she left his office. She asked, “What do I tell my choir director or the rest of the cast?” He replied, “They don’t need to know. This is often done with the strongest performers. Just skip the audition and we’ll take care of the rest.”

Now what was Lea supposed to do? What if her choir director asks her how her audition went? And what about her friends? She was the one who talked about how unfair it was to do this exact thing. But, what if she insisted on auditioning? First, she might not get the role. There were over thirty kids that wanted her role. Second, the director might not want to work with her again. You don’t rock the boat and keep a good reputation with directors. Everyone knows that.

NOTES FOR THE FACILITATOR

(this is for you)

This is a helpful case to get kids to talk about dilemmas they know are unfair when the odds are stacked in their favor. My students love to talk about what's unfair. They can do it for hours. It's when I make them argue the other side, or come up with a personal experience where they have benefited from an unfair situation, that the discussion hits a bump in the road.

What is interesting however is that once you get them headed in that direction, they often feel liberated to really get into this idea of being on the "winning" side of an unethical situation. Young people are incensed at unfairness. So, if they know they don't have anything to LOSE, they will still enjoy sharing experiences where they had the upper hand. From that point, it is a small step to get them talking about what this has to do with ethics and how ethics get slippery depending on one's position in the outcome and how it becomes that much more important to hang on to them... or does it?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

(also, debate topics, writing assignments, etc.)

- What should Lea do? What would you do?
- What position did the director put Lea in? Do you think it was fair of him?
- Do you think she should tell her choir director about all this? What about her friends?
- What do you think are the possible outcomes if Lea were to tell her choir director? What if she were to tell her friends?
- Would you talk to your parents about this if you were in Lea's place? What do you think they would do? Would you agree?
- Have you or someone you know ever been put in an uncomfortable position by an adult where you were supposed to keep something quiet? What was the situation? Were you happy with how you handled it? Would you handle the situation in the same way again?