**Topic: A Dilemma**

**Pictures given: Two friends smiling, a student trying to copy another student’s work, a paper with an ‘F’ grade**

“What are you doing?” the teacher boomed, her face as black as thunder.

“Nothing...” Leia murmured, her head lowered in shame.

“Nothing? Then what is that piece of paper on your lap?” the irate teacher screeched at Leia whose face had turned a deathly pallor and was trembling uncontrollably. She snatched the piece of paper from Leia's lap. A sickening mixture of guilt and regret swirled in Leia’s guts.

Just two hours ago, Leia had to face her biggest challenge. The day of reckoning had arrived. It was the Mathematics examinations.

“I hope the time I spent studying will pay off!” I remarked to my good friend Leia.

“You always pass your exams, unlike me. No matter how much I cram, I can't seem to apply the formulae or make sense of the problem sums. However, I have a plan and I am confident that I will ace my examinations without fail this time!” Leia replied, snickering a little before grinning like a Cheshire cat.

Her over-confidence, her playful grin – something felt wrong but I brushed it aside. I wished Leia good luck and took my seat in the examination hall.

The air in the hall was thick with tension as the students waited for the Mathematics paper to be given out. I stared hard at my question paper. My perplexed face and furrowed eyebrows said it all-I was not Einstein. The hall was silent except for the occasional rustling of papers and the clicking of pens. All heads were bowed as students tackled sum after sum in a frenzied race against the clock. I was just about to check the clock for time when I happened to take a sidelong glance. What I saw shook me to the core!

Leia was cheating! When the invigilator turned her back to walk to the front, Leia surreptitiously pulled out a piece of paper from her pocket and laid it on her lap. Then she
started scribbling furiously. I could not believe that Leia had resorted to cheating. It seemed utterly surreal! My mouth hung agape. Should I report her to the invigilator?

I was stuck between a rock and a hard place. I was in a dilemma.

Leia was my good friend. However, cheating in the school examination was definitely wrong and as a prefect, it was my responsibility to uphold the school rules. I wrestled with my conscience as to whether I should report her or betray her since she was my good friend. What was I to do?

I struggled with this moment of indecision before raising my hand. Leia noticed it. Her face blanched and she gave me a look of desperation, mouthing the words 'please don’t tattle on me'. Seeing the look of anguish on her face, I was on the verge of putting my hand down. However, I stood by my decision and kept my hand firmly raised.

To my utter surprise, the teacher did not come to me, instead she immediately stormed over to Leia and boomed, “What are you doing?”

Snatching the piece of paper from her lap, she snapped fiercely, “How dare you cheat in the exam? Follow me to the principal's office now!”

Copious tears streamed down Leia's face when she knew she had been caught red handed. She bowed her head and meekly apologised to the teacher, before following her to the principal's office. I watched with a heavy heart, before continuing with my work.

The next day, the news about Leia having been summoned to the principal's office for cheating spread like wildfire. According to the school rules, she was awarded a big fat zero for her examination and a big 'F' was plastered on her paper. Although my friendship with Leia was ruined, I believe I had done the right thing. Maybe some years down the road, she will realise it too.

Dillon Lim, P6