



God said:
 $\epsilon_0 \oint \mathbf{E} \cdot d\mathbf{A} = \sum q$
 $\mathbf{B} = \mu_0 \int \mathbf{J} \cdot d\mathbf{A} + \mu_0 \epsilon_0 \frac{d}{dt} \int \mathbf{E} \cdot d\mathbf{A}$
 $\oint \mathbf{E} \cdot d\mathbf{s} = -\frac{d}{dt} \int \mathbf{B} \cdot d\mathbf{A}$
 $\oint \mathbf{B} \cdot d\mathbf{A} = 0$
....and there was light!

CHAPTER 2



The Rebels

“ . . . when they said ‘Sit down’ I stood up”

—FROM THE BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN
COMPOSITION ENTITLED “GROWIN’ UP”

These students are a teacher’s nightmare—I’ve heard them called “Rebels Without a Pause.” They don’t want to be in school, are aggressively uninterested in what you are teaching, and are frustratingly unimpressed with whatever punishment you throw their way. I was one of these teenagers, which has turned out to be a tremendous advantage when I spot one in my class. Sometimes I’m not exactly sure what to do, but I sure know what not to do.

❧ Creating Rules That Make Sense ❧

I was a full-blown Rebel by the time I was in seventh grade—I had to be. I was raised in a male-dominated household with a “my way or the highway” father whose opinions and rules were not open to discussion. As the only girl among four siblings, I had two choices: disappear or learn to stand up for myself. By the time I entered junior high school, I was frustrated with the lack of control I had over anything that mattered to my life, so school became the place where I would try to wrest what power I could. If an overly critical autocrat of a teacher pushed all of the wrong buttons in me, I would spend a great deal of my time in that class devising creative means of upsetting that teacher. The worst mistake a teacher could make with me was to allow me to be anonymous—just another troublemaker. I loved sitting in the back of the class, hiding behind one of the girls with big hair, waiting for an opportunity to disrupt the lesson. I was a jerk, without a doubt—rude, obnoxious, unreachable—but in some cases, I was aping the behaviors the teachers were modeling for their students.

My poor ninth-grade English teacher, Mrs. Smith, was a nervous woman whose basic method for classroom management centered on threats and insults—there is no doubt in my mind that she was given the standard “Don’t smile until Christmas” advice when she was preparing to become an educator. I never got to know her as a person, but I’ve often wondered why she chose teaching as a profession because the general impression most of her students had was that she hated kids. Her classroom management strategy was to take control of her class from the first day through the use of strict rules and fear. The trouble was (1) none of us was afraid of her and (2) her rules were unenforceable. The minute I spotted her list of “Classroom Don’ts” posted in the front of the room, I knew we would have an amusing session that day—at least for my classmates and me. Within the first 10 minutes, Mrs. Smith was screaming at random people to “sit down and shut up!” I knew better than to overtly defy her—by this time, I considered myself a seasoned professional and

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preferred more subtle methods of introducing chaos into the classroom. I waited while Mrs. Smith forcefully recited her list of rules, smiling to myself after I heard the first two. "Rule Number 1: No Talking! Rule Number 2: Do Not Get Out of Your Seat!" There were several other commands concerning hands and feet and the chewing of gum, but they weren't necessary for my plan. Mrs. Smith concluded her speech with a few vague threats as to the consequences of breaking any of these rules, but it was obvious to me that this teacher had come to class without a clear idea of what she was asking the students to do—or what she would do if they refused.

I knew that at some point, Mrs. Smith would turn her back to the class to write something on the board. That was my chance. I took the pen off my desk and tossed it on to the floor about three feet to my left. When she turned around, the first thing she saw was my desperately raised hand flailing in the air.

Mrs. Smith: (sharply) What is it!

Me: I'm sorry, Mrs. Smith, but I dropped my pen, and I can't reach it. It's against the rules for me to talk, so I can't ask Mindy to get it for me; and I can't get out of my seat, so would you please get it for me?"

Mrs. Smith was stunned and looked suspiciously at my innocent smile, but the class was watching, so she marched to the back of the room, picked up my pen, slammed it on my desk, and headed to the front again. I thanked her sweetly, then tossed the pen to the right of my desk before she reached the first row. She faced the class again, and there was my hand frantically flagging her down.

Mrs. Smith: WHAT!

Me: I'm sorry, I guess I'm just nervous because it's the first day of class and I want to do everything just right, but I dropped my pen again—it's over there, but I can't ask Joey

to get it because I'm not supposed to talk, and I can't get out of my seat, so would you please. . . .

I never got to the end of the sentence.

Mrs. Smith: "COME WITH ME TO THE OFFICE, YOUNG LADY!!!"

I was already out of my seat. I'd been to the office many times in previous years, so this was nothing new. My fellow students applauded and gave me the thumbs up sign: "Way to go, Vickie, a new record!" They were most appreciative because I'd just bought them 15 minutes of teacher-free time. In their minds, the teacher got just what she deserved.

Mrs. Smith dragged me into the principal's office where he winced when he looked up and saw me, "What did you do now?"

"Oh, sir, I'm trying so hard to start out this year on the right foot, just as you suggested at the end of last year. And she has these rules, and one says don't talk, another don't get out of your seat, and I dropped my pen, and, and, and. . . ."

"Is this true, Mrs. Smith?" he asked.

Poor Mrs. Smith sputtered and fumed, but what could she say? I'd followed her rules to the letter. I'm sure I spent many hours over the next few months sitting outside of her classroom, but I didn't care. She lost me within the first few minutes of the school year, and even though English was my favorite subject, our relationship was so antagonistic that I preferred to doodle in my notebook as I sat on the floor in the hallway rather than listen to her lessons. She had no idea that I read every book on the assigned reading list, but I failed the tests on purpose. I didn't want her to think that she'd taught me anything.

No doubt, I was a jerk. I was winning lots of battles, but eventually I would lose the war. Mrs. Smith controlled the grades, and even though I was never held back a year, I ultimately paid the price by having to attend a junior college for two years to earn a grade point average (GPA) that would get me into a university. When I spot an overt

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Rebel in my classroom, I'll sometimes act out this story for his or her class in the first week before there are any discipline problems. The kids find the whole sad tale amusing and horrifying, but in the end, I can make two points: (1) I wasted an incredible amount of time—mine and my classmates'—and (2) if Mrs. Smith had responded to my challenge with humor and kindness, and if she had put a little effort into trying to get to know me, she could have defused the whole situation. I doubt she ever would have been my favorite teacher—most of her students disliked her, and she quit the profession after two years—but Mrs. Smith forgot the cardinal rule of teaching: Model the behavior you would like your students to display.

One of the most difficult aspects of teaching is that it's a performance art and the kids are watching. They will learn patience, kindness, and good manners not by following rules, but by observing how we teachers react to infractions of those rules. Last year, a frustrated new math teacher reported to me that she had just told a rather obnoxious group of kids, "I'll show you the same respect you show me!" I told her that she was wrong—she needed to show them far more respect because she was their role model. These are skills to be demonstrated and practiced, just like multiplication and division. For some kids, the classroom may be the only place where they will see an adult acting in a grown-up manner.

I often tell the story of my misspent youth when I'm asked to give inservice presentations on classroom management techniques. It's become a greatest hit because it shocks and amuses the young teachers, many of whom are just a few years older than their students, and it also has the ring of truth. I ask for a show of hands to determine how many of them earned straight A's in high school—usually around 20% of the participants will raise their hands. Then I ask the "mostly A's and B's" students to raise their hands as well. With the occasional exception of one or two people, the entire group will have their hands in the air. I point out that this is why it is so difficult for them to deal with students who hate school and who cannot be threatened with bad

grades. In junior high school, I used to wear my string of F's like notches on my belt. I was labeled a troublemaker early on, kind of liked the image, and didn't know how to break the stereotype. Luckily for me, my family moved when I was 15, and I had the chance to reinvent myself in the new school.

❧ **Demonstrating That Rules Are Necessary** ❧

With a Rebel, it's important to have a few logical rules that are clearly explained. I find the "why" behind the rules to be the most important part of the explanation. I tell the kids that I resent being told to do something (or not do something) when I don't see the point. I make them laugh by saying that it used to drive me nuts as a teenager when I'd ask a teacher, "Why do we have to learn this stuff?" The response was invariably, "Don't get smart with me!" to which I would respond, "I thought I was in school to get smart!" and the whole exchange would go downhill from there. We teachers should have a valid answer to that question. If you are spending a great deal of time mastering and delivering lessons in a particular subject, you should be able to demonstrate why these skills are useful. If you can't, you won't be able to sell your curriculum to the kids. In fact, when designing the syllabus for a class, that should be the starting place—why is it important and/or useful to learn this stuff?

The same goes for your classroom rules. A few years ago, a student walked into my class dressed in a Russian soldier's overcoat with various communist insignias on his collar and sleeves. This caused a bit of unease among his peers, but I just smiled at Carl and made a note when he asked to be called "Commie" instead of his given name. In introducing the curriculum, I made it very clear that I appreciated students who cared enough about their own education to ask why, prompting Commie to smile at me for the first time. I gave the students a sheet of paper that listed the five rules and the consequences of breaking the rules (a copy of this contract is printed at the end of this chapter). I very carefully explained

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the rules, acted out any vague phrases—for example, what it means to “disturb the class”—and offered the reasoning behind the rules. For the majority of the students, this was familiar territory, and they happily signed the contract stating that they had read and understood the rules. Commie wouldn't sign until I pointed out that signing the contract did not mean that he agreed with the rules, just that he understood them—kind of a reading comprehension clause. Before the end of class, he handed me the signed contract but muttered something about fascist dictators as he left my room.

A few weeks later, I was walking down the hallway when I noticed a leaflet taped to the front of Commie's locker. I chuckled as I read his manifesto demanding the immediate banishment of all school rules—“Is this not the land of the free!? Rules are the establishment's petty attempt to control the masses!” and so on. The boy was a writer, all right, but like poor Mrs. Smith from my ninth-grade year, he didn't really understand what he was asking. When I ran into him later that day, I told Commie that I very much enjoyed reading his manifesto. He looked surprised because he clearly saw me as part of the establishment. He asked if I'd read the whole thing, and I assured him that not only had I read it, I was delighted to have been given the invitation. He asked me hesitantly, “What invitation?”

“Well, since you don't believe in rules, I took something from your locker—no rule against that. Thanks.” He just stared at me in disbelief, so I quickly reassured him, “Oh, don't worry, it's just a little thing, you won't really miss it, but it just caught my fancy—I've always wanted one. Again, thanks. Oops, there's the bell, you'd better run to your next class so you won't be late.” A look of complete confusion passed over his face, and he hurried away. At the end of the day, he burst into my classroom and said that he had searched his entire locker as well as his backpack and could not find anything missing. I smiled sweetly and told him it was just something little, and he shot back, “You can't just go in my locker and take stuff!” I nodded and answered calmly, “So you do believe in rules. I didn't take anything. I just wanted to test out the manifesto because I have a bit

of trouble with rules myself—interesting idea, though.” This was all handled with a sense of humor and an appreciation for his intelligence.

We ended up becoming great friends in his remaining four years at the high school, and he was wise enough to appreciate the irony of the situation. I was wise enough to spot his sense of humor and intelligence from the first day he entered my class. I would never try to teach such a life lesson until the student and I had developed a positive relationship—Commie knew that I fully accepted him as he was and understood his desire to “rage against the machine.”

This has become one of my favorite stories to tell as I introduce to my classes the hard fact that rules are necessary in any social interaction. I repeat this story with Commie’s full permission, and it delights the emerging Rebels in my class. They see not only that I am unafraid of their unique view of the world but that I embrace their spirit. I also let them know that I have an agenda, I have rules for a reason, and I am willing to protect the agenda by applying consequences if necessary.

Rebels come in all shapes and sizes—some harder to spot than others. They can be the sweet straight-A student who gets along with her teachers as long as she is in control of the class. Others enter your room pierced and tattooed, with their angst emblazoned across their chests. Regardless, they must be handled with care. In my mind, the trick is to embrace their rebellious nature rather than fear it. Like every human trait, rebelliousness has a positive as well as a negative side. A frustrated teacher might view these students as disrespectful, cruel, misguided, annoying, egocentric little twits. But with a slight shift of the prism through which you gaze at your class, these kids can be courageous, insightful, brazenly honest, challenging—and if they feel you understand and respect them, some of your most protective devotees.

The Ten Students You'll Meet in Your Classroom **Classroom Management Tips** 

- Model the behavior you would like your students to display in your classroom.
- Visualize the way you want to organize your class and anticipate the behaviors that would inhibit learning.
- Physically set up your classroom to avoid problems before they get there. Spread students out as much as you can and allow for unobtrusive movement in the room.
- Generate a few logical rules that can be easily explained (see example on the next page).
- Make sure that whatever consequence you choose for breaking a rule makes sense and make sure you're willing to enforce it. Avoid empty threats.
- The students should definitely have the idea that you have rules in your class, not to achieve some false sense of power, but to simplify things and to eliminate chaos. The rules will help them as much as they help you.

❧ **Ms. Gill—English** ❧

Expectations for Classroom Behavior

<i>Rules:</i>	<i>Consequences:</i>
1. Be on time	1. One demerit (two free passes per semester)
2. Come prepared to work	2. Verbal warning, then Reflective Essay
3. Follow directions	3. Verbal warning, then Reflective Essay
4. No food or drinks in the classroom	4. Verbal warning, then Reflective Essay
5. Don't disturb other students	5. Verbal warning, then Reflective Essay

The Reflective Essay: A student who is having problems remembering the rules of the class will write a 250-word essay reflecting on the causes and effects of the infraction, as well as a plan of action for avoiding the problem in the future. The essay must be turned in at the beginning of the next class meeting.

If the essay is one day late, it will expand to 500 words. If the expanded essay is not turned in at the beginning of the next class meeting, the student will be sent to the office to meet with an administrator. The student may return to class when the essay is completed.

I have read and understand the rules and the consequences for breaking the rules in Ms. Gill's class:

Name (print) _____

Signature _____

Date _____

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Name _____

Period _____

Expectations and Organization Quiz

1. How many times may you be tardy in a semester before you receive a demerit?
2. When is it OK to stand by the door to wait for the bell to ring or to sleep in class?
3. What should you bring to class every day? (three things)
4. What happens if you are more than 10 minutes late to class?
5. What happens the first time you disturb another student or the group at the Board?
6. What happens the second time you disturb another student within the same class period?
7. What should you do if you have a problem at your seat or on the computers?
8. What happens if you forget to bring in your Reflective Essay the day after it is assigned?
9. When may you have food or drinks (other than bottled water) in the classroom?
10. What should you do if you need to use the restroom during class?