

### Friends or exams? Which are more important?

Mo was waiting outside her class. She was feeling sick. She always felt sick in exam week. She had two exams that day. Physics was first and she hated physics, it was her worst subject. But this was the last day of exams! Terry looked back at her from the front of the line, then looked away quickly. Mo thought she looked guilty. She didn't have a problem with physics. She didn't have a problem with anything!

'Hi, Mo, it's your favourite exam today,' said Nima as she arrived. Terry looked back again. 'What's wrong with her?' said Nima. 'I thought you were friends.' 'Yes, so did I,' said Mo, 'but she hasn't spoken to me for two weeks. She promised to help me revise for the physics exam, but then she ignored all my calls and texts. And when I rang her house, her mum told me she was busy. She doesn't remember who her friends are!' said Mo angrily. 'Are you listening, Maureen Quinn?' Mr Reed was talking to the class and the other students were going into the exam room. Mo gave Nima a worried look and followed them.

Mo couldn't answer question number five, it was too difficult. She looked up and saw Terry sitting in the next row. Mo was surprised. Terry was holding her phone under the table and she was reading from it. Mo didn't know what to think. Is that how Terry always got good grades? She felt really angry at Terry but didn't know what to do. She thought about telling the teacher, but what would everyone else think of her? It wasn't fair! Mo never cheated and she failed lots of exams. Terry had already put her phone away when Mo looked up again. She looked back at Mo and smiled sadly. 'Stop writing and put your pens down,' said Mr Reed as he started to collect the exam papers. Oh no, Mo hadn't answered two of the questions. She was going to fail again!

Mo wanted to talk to Terry at lunchtime, but she couldn't find her in the dining hall. The next exam was history. That was Mo's favourite subject but she didn't feel good. She was angry with Terry. Nima went home for lunch every day, so she couldn't talk to her either. Mo went to the library to study. She didn't know what to do about Terry. She thought about telling a teacher, but everyone would hate her if she did that. 'It wasn't fair!' she thought. 'Terry was getting good grades by cheating all that time. And I thought we were friends!' Just then, Mr Reed walked past her table. 'Mr Reed ...'

Mo was sitting behind Terry again in the history exam that afternoon, but Terry didn't take her phone out. Maybe she didn't need to cheat at history. Mo was feeling bad again, but she had no problems with the exam. Why did she tell Mr Reed? But it was too late now. He wanted her to look at him and nod if she saw that Terry had her phone in the exam. She was on the last question, when she saw that Terry had her phone under the table. Without thinking, Mo looked up and nodded to Mr Reed. Terry was looking at her phone and didn't hear him as he walked silently up to her table. He didn't say anything. Terry looked, surprised. He picked up her exam paper and pointed to the door, to tell Terry to go outside. Terry started crying as she walked to the door. Everyone was staring at her and Mo felt really sorry now.

She was leaving school, when she heard footsteps behind her. It was Terry. 'Mo, wait!' she called. 'I want to talk to you.' Mo could see Terry had been crying; her face was pale and her eyes were red. Mo couldn't speak. 'Listen, I'm really sorry I didn't answer your calls, but we're having a terrible time. My dad had a heart attack and he's in hospital. He had a big operation today and I was very worried. I know it was stupid, but I was reading texts from my mum to see how it was going, but Mr Reed caught me. He thought I was cheating. But he believes me now. I'm sorry I didn't tell you what was happening. I know you're a good friend. Will you forgive me?'

Brendan Dunne