

## **The Story of Babbs: A Modern-Day Parable on the Ethics of Persuasion**

Babbs is in a jam. She is a freshman at Texas Tech. It is Sunday night, and she has just remembered she has a paper due in her Ethics 101 class on Monday morning.

Desperate, she calls up an acquaintance, Biff, whom she knows to be a very bright fellow with a high GPA. After buttering him up a bit by telling him how smart he is, Babbs asks Biff if he has a paper she can turn in. Biff says that, as a matter of fact, he does have an old "A" paper lying around, but that in exchange for the paper Babbs must sleep with him. Babbs says no paper is worth that and hangs up on him.

Undaunted, Babbs calls up another friend of hers, Rex, who is a senior and captain of the debate team. She asks Rex if he has a paper he would be willing to sell her. Rex says that, conveniently, he does have a paper that received an "A." He tells Babbs she can take a look at it, and if she likes it, he'll sell it to her. Babbs stops by his apartment and checks out the paper. She offers Rex \$25. He says he wants \$50 because, after all, it is an "A" paper. Babbs pays him the \$50 and, after she leaves, Rex chuckles to himself because he knows the paper only received a "C."

Babbs retypes the paper and submits it to her professor, Dr. Windplenty, the next morning. Upon returning to her dorm room that afternoon she recounts the entire episode to her roommate Muffin. Muffin, who is deeply religious, is shocked and offended by Babbs' conduct. She tells Babbs in no uncertain terms that she is a sinner and that the only way to redeem herself is to confess her guilt to her teacher. Babbs refuses to do this, but promises she will never, ever cheat again. Muffin, however, feels morally compelled to turn Babbs in and calls Dr. Windplenty on the phone.

After corroborating Muffin's accusation, Dr. Windplenty decides to give Babbs an "F" for the entire semester. An "F" on the paper, alone, he reasons, would be too lenient since her offense was far worse than a student who simply failed to turn in the assignment. During the final exam, Dr. Windplenty suspects a physically disabled student of looking at another student's answer sheet. He makes eye contact with the disabled student and scowls at her, but does nothing more.

**WHO IS THE MOST UNETHICAL PERSUADER IN THE STORY? WHY?**