



Case Study #4: Writing in a Rush

Jose glanced at the clock in the library and said to himself, “Finished! With ten minutes to spare.” He smiled at his accomplishment and began putting his finished essay into his history folder. The last thing he wanted to do was mess it up before getting to class. Just as Jose was about to pack up completely, Michael came running into the library and slammed his backpack down next to Jose.

“Hey!” Jose said, “Watch out! You almost ran right into me. What’s the big rush?”

Michael ripped open his backpack and said, “Man, I didn’t get my essay done for history class. If I don’t get it finished, I’ll be in deep trouble. I’ve only got ten minutes. I need to get on the Internet and find some stuff on the American Revolution. Do you know any sites?”

Jose opened his folder and handed Michael a paper. “Here is a list of sites I found last night. They have some good stuff and a lot of cool pictures.”

“Great!” Michael exclaimed. “I can definitely get this done in time for class.”

This statement puzzled Jose. “What do you mean, Michael? It took me a couple of hours to read the information on the sites and write my essay. How are you planning on doing all of that before class?”

“Easy. Just watch.” And with that, Jose watched as Michael opened a new word processing document, typed in his name, and the first line of his essay: “I think the American Revolution was important for many reasons. For example....” Next, Michael quickly linked to several sites, copied the text, and pasted it onto his document. In a matter of minutes, he had several strong reasons that completed his essay. He fixed some of the grammatical errors, saved, and printed his essay.

As the printer began, Michael grinned at Jose and said, “That’s how you get it done. See, I didn’t have to waste all of my time doing it last night.”

Jose couldn’t believe it. “Michael, you can’t do that. That’s the same as copying someone else’s paper. We were supposed to write our own opinions in this essay.”

Michael stopped smiling and quickly replied, “What’s the difference between what you did and what I did? We both used the Internet.”

“The difference,” replied Jose, “is that I read the sites, took notes, and then wrote my open opinion. I even listed the sites as resources at the end of my essay. I learned from the sites, but I didn’t copy them directly.”

“What I did was fine.” Michael argued. “It just so happened that I agreed with the opinions I put in. That makes it all ok.”

“No, it doesn’t, Michael.” Just as Jose said this, the bell rang.

Michael grabbed his paper out of the printer and said, “Hurry up! Let’s get to history class. I have a feeling that I am going to get a good grade on this one.”

Discussion Questions:

- What is the issue involved in this case?
- Which student is correct? Why / Why not?
- Would you consider what Michael did to be stealing? Why / Why not?
- Would you consider what Michael did to be lying? Why / Why not?