

Problematic Situation for  
*Nothing but the Truth*

by Avi  
Teacher Instructions

**Purpose:**

A Problematic Situation is meant to help the students understand what the characters in the novel are feeling, or at least to get into the head of one of the characters. This way, the students can better identify with the novel and the situations therein.

**When to use:**

This is to be used either before reading the novel or after completing it (definitely after the anticipation guide)—maybe use it both times to see how opinions have changed over the course of the discussion of the novel. It is very flexible; it can also be used anywhere during the novel, at a point where you want to do a small group activity or discussion.

**Directions:**

\*Make an overhead of the “Rules for Coming to Consensus” sheet to be posted during the group discussion.

\*First, explain the assignment to the students.

“This is an exercise in problem solving to see what you would do in the situation. In your group, read through the problem and then decide what you would do in the given situation.

On the overhead (or board) there are the guidelines for coming to a common consensus about the situation.”

\*Divide the room in to groups of four, and then let them work on their activity.

\*After about fifteen-twenty minutes in their groups, bring the class back together and discuss their ideas as a whole.

**The scenario:**

You are a high school freshman who doesn't like school very much—especially your English class. All you want to do is be on the High School track team where you know you can really shine. However, because of a school rule, you can't even try out for the team because you are failing your English class. This makes you really mad, and you want to find a way to get back at the teacher. The track coach suggested going to your teacher and asking her if you could do some make-up work to raise your grade so you could be on the team. What do you decide to do?

Things to keep in mind:

You don't like the teacher.

You don't want to look like a wimp in front of your friends.

You hate English Class.

You think the rule about having to pass every class to be on the track team is stupid.

**The Discussion:**

Begin the class discussion by asking each group, one at a time, to offer a solution.

The students should warm up to the discussion and begin offering their own ideas. The goal is to come up with one idea of a plan of action for the entire class—one that everyone will agree with.

Be sure to continue using the Rules for Coming to a Consensus as you discuss in the larger group.

\*Bring the idea back to the novel by explaining that this is what is going on for Philip Malloy, and he wants to save face in front of everyone and that is why he is doing what he is doing. He is just a kid and doesn't really understand the repercussions of his actions, and what his peers think is very important to him—he is just a normal kid, maybe he has a bad attitude, but he's normal.

# Rules for Coming to a Consensus

In the Problematic Situation for *Nothing but the Truth* by Avi

In your groups, there are some things to keep in mind while reaching consensus about your decisions to resolve the scenario on your handouts.

- 1) Do not raise your voice above normal talking level. This will help everyone be able to hear each other in the group and allow all groups to work peaceably at the same time.
- 2) Everyone must be in agreement before you make your final decision. Do not vote or use any other democratic method you can devise. The decision must be unanimous.
- 3) Write down all of the valid suggestions (the ones you seriously consider) and then either rewrite or circle your final decision on a piece of paper with the names of all group members on it.
- 4) If there is a group leader have him/her choose who the scribe is.
- 5) Take turns talking, and make sure that everyone has a chance to say what he/she wants to say.
- 6) Don't shoot down anyone's opinion, no matter what you personally think of it. Give the group member a chance to explain the idea and then discuss it.
- 7) Once a consensus is made and everyone agrees completely with the decision, have the group leader, or a group member, bring the paper to the front of the room and put it on the overhead or give it to me.

Student Group Worksheet

# Problematic Situation Task

For *Nothing but the Truth* by Avi

Once you are assembled in your groups, have one student get out a piece of paper and write down the group members names. This will be the paper on which you write down all of your ideas for the resolution of the scenario. You will have about 15 minutes to decide what to do in your groups. After that, we'll come to a consensus as a class about what we should do, following the guidelines that are on the board.

\*Remember to follow all of the guidelines for coming to consensus on the overhead\*

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