

# Eddie, The Sophomore Year

## Superfluous or Verbose?

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Walking into chemistry class, Paula asks Kathy, “I wonder what we’re doing today.” Kathy replies, “I think we’re running relay time trials so Mr. Frazier can assign the relay teams.” Paula interrupts, and tells Kathy, “no. I mean in chemistry class.” Kathy replies, “sleeping.” Paula replies, “really? What’s gotten into you?” Kathy replies, “I want to be all rested for track practice today. So, I’m going to sleep.” Paula informs Kathy, “you know that you’re not getting away with that.” Kathy replies, “yeah. I know. But, it’s a nice thought.” Excited that she made the track team, Kathy is apparently not too excited with chemistry class today.

Kathy and Paula take their seat, wondering what’s up as Mr. Madre, the chemistry teacher, brings out some interesting looking glassware from the storage room. Paula asks Kathy, “I wonder what all that stuff is for.” With quite a serious tone, Kathy replies, “Mr. Madre is going to demonstrate how to make earthquake seeds.” Paula exclaims, “he is not! There’s no such thing as earthquake seeds!” Kathy replies, “sure there is. Wile E. Coyote on Road Runner orders earthquake seeds from Acme all the time.” Paula rolls her eyes, knowing that today will be an interesting day.

Mr. Madre tells one of the students, “Leslie, will you please hand these out for me. One to each student, please.” Mr. Madre hands Leslie a stack of handouts, and she begins passing them out to the students. Kathy and Paula receive their handouts, not at all happy with what

they see. Kathy whispers to Paula, “oh, wonderful. We’re having lab today.” A chemistry lab experiment means that a lab report will be due tomorrow. Writing a lab report is not exactly on the top of Kathy’s list. Kathy has much more important things to do after school other than doing homework, such as securing a spot on a relay team.

Mr. Madre announces, “today, I will demonstrate the procedure to titrate a hydrochloric acid solution with a sodium hydroxide solution. I will be using a pH sensor to monitor the changes in the pH as I add the sodium hydroxide solution to the hydrochloric acid solution. While I am performing the titration, I will plot a graph of pH versus the volume of sodium hydroxide added. I will then use the graph to determine the equivalence point of the titration and use these results to calculate the concentration of the hydrochloric acid solution. After my demonstration, all of you will be doing the same experiment at your lab stations.”

As Mr. Madre is discussing the experiment, Kathy points to a line on the lab handout that reads, “credit will be deducted for both superfluous information and verbose detail”. Kathy whispers to Paula, “there’s a serious problem with this sentence. The word ‘both’ is completely unneeded, and doesn’t really add any unique and useful information. So, that makes the word ‘both’ superfluous.” Paula looks at the sentence, and replies, “I totally disagree. I think the word ‘both’ makes the sentence wordy, so it’s verbose.” Kathy whispers, “seriously? I still say it’s superfluous.” Paula whispers back, “nope. It’s verbose because there’s too many words.”

Interrupting Kathy and Paula’s comical debate, Mr. Madre announces, “Kathy and Paula. I presume you are discussing today’s experiment among yourselves. Would you care to enlighten myself and the class with whatever it is that you are discussing?” Kathy replies, “sure,” as Paula kicks Kathy’s foot under the table. Kathy explains, “on the lab handout, there’s a sentence that reads, ‘credit will be deducted for both superfluous information and verbose detail.’ The word ‘both’ in that sentence is completely unnecessary. So, me and Paula were discussing whether

the word 'both' is superfluous or verbose. I think the word 'both' is superfluous because it is totally unneeded, and doesn't convey any valuable information. Paula says that extra word in there makes the sentence wordy, and so the word makes the sentence verbose." The class laughs hysterically, as Mr. Madre is at a loss of how to respond.

Mr. Madre, annoyed that the class finds Kathy and Paula's interpretation of the lab handout comical, tells Kathy and Paula, "this is chemistry class, not English class. So, let's move on to today's experiment, and leave English to the grammarians. And, if there is any more talking in class, both of you will be looking at detention. Am I understood?" Kathy replies, "yes." Mr. Madre then looks at Paula, waiting for her answer. Paula replies, "yeah." Mr. Madre informs Paula, "proper use of English would require the word 'yes', not the word 'yeah.'" Not wanting detention, Paula replies, "yes, sir."

As Mr. Madre is demonstrating the experiment, Kathy whispers to Paula, "when he called us out, he said, 'I presume you are discussing today's experiment among yourselves.' The proper phrase is 'between yourselves' since there are only two of us. The word 'among' refers to three or more people." Paula whispers back, "girl, you're going to get us in more trouble. We can't afford to miss track practice today." Quickly realizing that Paula is right, Kathy is immediately on her best behavior.

The lab experiment goes rather well. The bell rings, and Kathy and Paula escape without any disciplinary action. As they are walking out of the classroom, Kathy mentions to Paula, "I still think the word 'both' is superfluous." Paula quickly replies, "nope. You got it all wrong, girl. It's verbose." Kathy replies, "superfluous." Paula returns the volley, stating, "verbose." As they walk down the hall, Kathy suggests, "we'll get Miss Starr to settle this."