

Name:

Date:

The Hidden Problem

Reading Comprehension + Ethical Thinking Worksheet

Directions: Read the passage. Then answer the questions that follow using complete sentences.

“The Notebook Slam”

Jada walked into class already feeling tired. Her little brother had been sick all night, and she barely slept. At breakfast, she didn't have time to eat because her family was rushing. When she finally got to school, her stomach growled, and her head felt heavy.

During math, Mr. Diaz asked Jada to explain how she solved the problem. Jada froze. She knew the answer earlier, but now her brain felt foggy. A few students turned to look at her. Jada felt her face get hot.

Mr. Diaz waited patiently and said, “Take your time.”

But Jada was embarrassed. She didn't want anyone to think she was dumb. She grabbed her notebook and slammed it on the desk.

“I don't care,” she said. “Whatever.”

The room got quiet.

Mr. Diaz didn't yell. He took a breath and calmly said, “Jada, I can tell something's bothering you. Do you need a minute?”

Jada looked down. She didn't answer, but her eyes filled with tears.

After class, Mr. Diaz quietly asked Jada to stay behind. He offered her a granola bar from his desk and said, “You don't have to explain everything, but I'm here to help.”

Jada finally whispered, “I'm just tired. Everything feels hard today.”

Mr. Diaz nodded. “Thank you for telling me. We'll get through today together.”



Part 1: Reading Comprehension Questions

Answer in complete sentences.

- 1. Why was Jada tired when she arrived at school?**

- 2. How did Jada feel when Mr. Diaz asked her to explain her answer?**

- 3. What did Jada do when she felt embarrassed?**

- 4. How did Mr. Diaz respond when Jada said, “Whatever”?**

- 5. What did Mr. Diaz do after class to support Jada?**

Part 2: Ethical Thinking Questions (Right vs. Wrong vs. Understanding)

Answer thoughtfully. There may be more than one “good” answer.

- 6. Was Jada’s behavior wrong, or was it understandable? Explain your thinking.**

- 7. If you were a student in the room, what would be the kindest thing to do in that moment? Why?**

- 8. Why do you think Mr. Diaz chose not to yell or punish Jada right away?**

9. Sometimes people act rude when they are actually stressed or embarrassed. Does that excuse the behavior, or does it explain it? What's the difference?

10. Imagine if Mr. Diaz had embarrassed Jada in front of the class. What could that have changed about Jada's feelings and behavior?

Part 3: "Hidden Reasons" (Perspective & Empathy)

11. List 3 possible hidden reasons a person might act upset or rude at school.

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

12. Write one sentence that a teacher or friend could say to help someone who is upset. (Example: "Do you want a minute?")

Part 4: Real-Life Choices (What Would You Do?)

13. You are Jada. What is a better choice you could make in the moment instead of slamming the notebook?

14. You are Mr. Diaz. What is one more helpful thing you could do that is still fair to the class rules?

15. You are a classmate. What could you do later that day to support Jada without embarrassing her?

Exit Ticket (Quick Reflection)

16. One thing I learned about empathy today is:

17. One way I can stay respectful when I feel stressed is:

Answer Sheet (Teacher Key)

The Hidden Problem — “The Notebook Slam”

Part 1: Reading Comprehension Answers

1. Why was Jada tired when she arrived at school?

Jada was tired because her little brother was sick all night and she barely slept.

2. How did Jada feel when Mr. Diaz asked her to explain her answer?

She felt nervous and embarrassed because she froze and other students looked at her.

3. What did Jada do when she felt embarrassed?

She slammed her notebook on the desk and said, “I don’t care” and “Whatever.”

4. How did Mr. Diaz respond when Jada said, “Whatever”?

He stayed calm, didn’t yell, and asked if she needed a minute because he could tell something was bothering her.

5. What did Mr. Diaz do after class to support Jada?

He asked her to stay behind, offered her a granola bar, listened, and told her he was there to help.

Part 2: Ethical Thinking Answers

(Answers will vary — accept reasonable responses. Below are strong examples.)

6. Was Jada’s behavior wrong, or was it understandable? Explain your thinking.

Example answer: Jada’s behavior was not respectful, but it was understandable because she was tired, hungry, and embarrassed. Stress made her react emotionally.

7. If you were a student in the room, what would be the kindest thing to do in that moment? Why?

Example answer: The kindest thing would be to stay quiet and not laugh or stare, because that would protect Jada’s feelings and keep her from feeling more embarrassed.

8. Why do you think Mr. Diaz chose not to yell or punish Jada right away?

Example answer: He probably realized she was overwhelmed and needed support, not more pressure. Staying calm helped keep the situation from getting worse.

9. Does that excuse the behavior, or does it explain it? What's the difference?

Example answer: It explains the behavior because it helps us understand why it happened. It does not excuse it because the person still needs to be responsible and make a better choice next time.

10. If Mr. Diaz embarrassed Jada in front of the class, what could that have changed?

Example answer: Jada might have shut down more, felt worse, cried, gotten angry, or refused to participate. She may not have trusted the teacher afterward.

Part 3: "Hidden Reasons" (Perspective & Empathy)

11. List 3 possible hidden reasons a person might act upset or rude at school.

Possible answers include:

- a) Lack of sleep / tired
- b) Hunger
- c) Stress at home

Other acceptable answers: anxiety, feeling embarrassed, being bullied, friendship problems, family argument, illness, feeling behind in class, bad morning, etc.

12. Write one sentence that could help someone upset.

Example answers:

- "Are you okay? Do you need a minute?"
 - "I'm here if you want to talk."
 - "It's okay—take a breath."
 - "Do you want help or space right now?"
-

Part 4: Real-Life Choices (What Would You Do?)

13. You are Jada. What is a better choice you could make instead of slamming the notebook?

Example answers:

- Take a deep breath and ask for a minute
- Say, "I'm not ready yet"
- Ask to go get water
- Ask for help quietly after class

14. You are Mr. Diaz. What is one more helpful thing you could do that is still fair to the class rules?

Example answers:

- Let Jada take a short break and rejoin when ready
- Check in privately later
- Offer a chance to answer in writing
- Give a calm reminder about respectful behavior while still being supportive

15. You are a classmate. How could you support Jada later without embarrassing her?

Example answers:

- Ask quietly, "Are you okay?"
 - Offer help with classwork
 - Sit near her and be friendly
 - Include her at recess / group work
 - Give her space but be kind
-

Exit Ticket (Quick Reflection)

(Answers will vary. Look for understanding + self-awareness.)

16. One thing I learned about empathy today is:

Example answers:

- People may act angry when they're actually stressed
- You don't always know what someone is dealing with
- Kindness can help someone calm down

17. One way I can stay respectful when I feel stressed is:

Example answers:

- Take deep breaths
- Ask for a break
- Use a calm voice
- Think before reacting
- Talk to a teacher instead of yelling



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