

# FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE

THE WAY I SEE IT, A TEACHER HAS TO BE AN ENTERTAINER. YOU GOTTA HAVE EXPRESSION, BE EXCITED ABOUT YOUR SUBJECT- I MEAN, IF YOU SOUND BORED, THEY'LL BE BORED, SAVVY?

MOVE AROUND THE ROOM! EXPLAIN STUFF CLEARLY, IMAGINATIVELY, AN' WITH A SENSE OF HUMOR!

I LOVE THE GUYS WHO ARE KEEN AN' EXPRESSIVE, MAN, LIKE- I STAY AWAKE, I GET PUMPED! I GET INTO IT, AN' I REALLY WANNA **LEARN!**

I HAD A PROF LIKE THAT, ONCE.



10-2 www.fborfw.com



©2002 Lyng-Johnson Productions Inc. Dist. by United Feature Syndicate, Inc.

A spiral-bound notebook with a light beige, textured cover. The metal spiral binding is visible on the left side. The text is centered on the page in a dark brown, serif font.


# Teaching and the Big Five:

Or, What I've Learned from a Dozen  
Years on Teaching Award Committees

# The Question:

---


Why are attitudes toward teaching and education often so negative?



---

“Universities are full of knowledge; the freshmen bring a little in and the seniors take none away, and knowledge accumulates.”


- Abbott Lawrence Lowell



---

Education is “one of the chief  
obstacles to intelligence and  
freedom of thought.”

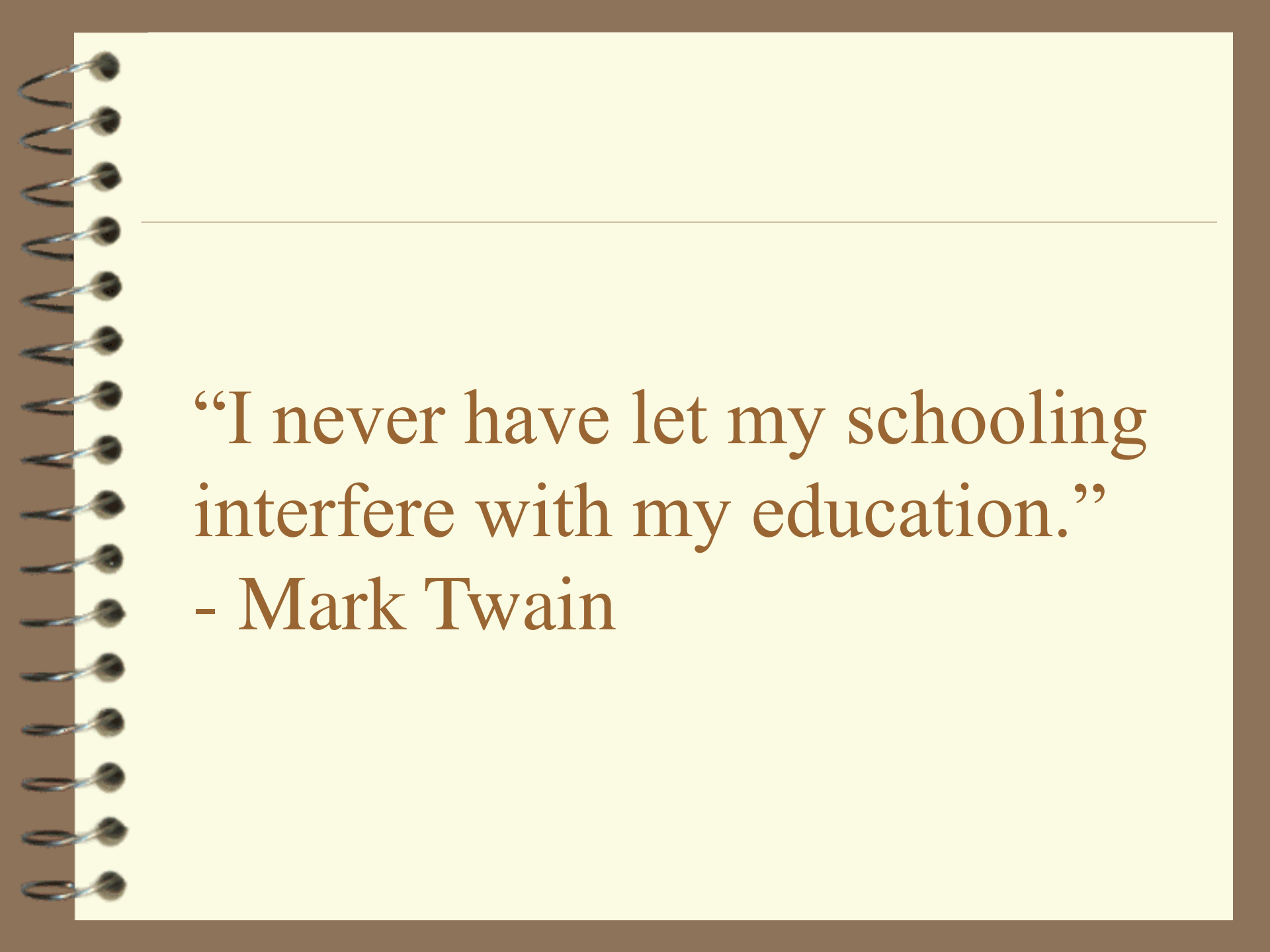
- Bertrand Russell



---


Colleges are “places where  
pebbles are polished and  
diamonds are dimmed.”

- Robert G. Ingersoll

A graphic of a spiral-bound notebook with a cream-colored page and a dark brown cover. The spiral binding is on the left side. A thin horizontal line is drawn across the page, just above the text.

“I never have let my schooling  
interfere with my education.”

- Mark Twain




---

“He who can, does. He who cannot, teaches.”

- George Bernard Shaw





---

☞ Yet these complaints are not totally justified

☞ There are university teachers who make positive contributions to the education of their students

☞ But what are they like?

☞ How about a theory based on the Big Five personality factors!

# The Big Five Personality Factors

---


📄 I: Extraversion (Surgency, Power)

📄 II: Agreeableness (Likeability, Love)

📄 III: Conscientiousness (Task Interest/Work)

📄 IV: Neuroticism (Emotional Instability, Affect)

📄 V: Openness to Experience (Culture, Intellect)



---

# Corresponding ACL Adjectives (John, 1990):

# Factor I: Extraversion

---

☰ Talkative, Assertive, Active, Energetic, Outgoing, Outspoken, Dominant, Forceful, Enthusiastic, Show-off, Sociable, Spunky, Adventurous, Noisy, Bossy

☰ versus Quiet, Reserved, Shy, Silent, Withdrawn, Retiring

# Factor II: Agreeableness

---

☰ Sympathetic, Kind, Appreciative, Affectionate, Soft-hearted, Warm, Generous, Trusting, Helpful, Forgiving, Pleasant, Good-natured, Friendly, Cooperative, Gentle, Unselfish, Praising, Sensitive

☰ versus Fault-finding, Cold, Unfriendly, Quarrelsome, Hard-hearted, Unkind, Cruel, Thankless

# Factor III: Conscientiousness

---

Organized, Thorough, Planful, Efficient, Responsible, Reliable, Dependable, Conscientious, Precise, Practical, Deliberate, Painstaking

versus Careless, Disorderly, Frivolous, Irresponsible, Slipshod, Undependable, Forgetful

# Factor IV: Neuroticism

---

- ☞ Tense, Anxious, Nervous, Moody, Worrying, Touchy, Fearful, High-strung, Self-pitying, Temperamental, Unstable, Self-punishing, Despondent, Emotional
- ☞ versus [Emotional stability, Emotional control, Ego strength]

# Factor V: Openness to Experience

---

Wide interests, Imaginative, Intelligent, Original, Insightful, Curious, Sophisticated, Artistic, Clever, Inventive, Sharp-witted, Ingenious, Wise

versus Commonplace, Narrow interests, Simple, Shallow, Unintelligent



# The Hypothesis:

---

 Teaching Excellence Associated with

- High Extraversion,
- High Agreeableness,
- High Conscientiousness, and
- High Openness, but
- Low Neuroticism

# Testing the Hypothesis

---

 Psychometric

 Observational

# Psychometric

---

☞ Correlate personality and student ratings

☞ e.g., Rushton, Murray, & Paunonen (1983):


☞ The effective teacher is

☞ liberal, sociable (I), showing leadership (I), extraverted (I), non-anxious (III), objective, supporting (II), non-authoritarian, non-defensive (III), intelligent (V), and aesthetically sensitive (V)

# Observational

---

- ☞ Infer the traits from prototypical behaviors observed in highly successful (award winning) teachers
- ☞ However, because the Big Five consists of bipolar personality dimensions
- ☞ The inversion of the hypothesis can be tested by looking at notably unsuccessful teachers



---

In other words, the traditional  
methodological and didactic  
strategy of ...

# GOOFUS and GALLANT



Goofus roughhouses indoors, which causes him to hyperventilate.



Gallant practices Vedic shallow breathing to conserve his family's oxygen allotment.

# Philosophical Question:

---

- ☞ Is Evil the absence of Good, like shadows in the light?
- ☞ Or, is Evil an active negative force?
- ☞ If the latter, then the average teacher might occupy the mean between extremes, i.e.,
- ☞ bad teachers have to do something to be considered bad,
- ☞ something like the Darwin Awards

# The Three Teaching Types:

---

📄 *Professor Magnificent* (Outstanding, Excellent, Superb): Positive Teaching

📄 *Professor Ignominious* (Outrageous, Scandalous, Horrid, Horrible, Appalling, Terrible): Negative Teaching

📄 *Professor Quotidian* (Ordinary, Commonplace, Mediocre): Neutral Teaching



# Data Sources:

---

 Positive Behaviors

 Negative Behaviors

# Positive Behaviors: Committees

---

- 📄 Distinguished Teaching Award
- 📄 UC Davis Prize
- 📄 TEAM (Teaching Excellence and Merit)
- 📄 Chancellor's Teaching Fellowship
- 📄 Teaching Awards for Outstanding Graduate Students
- 📄 Academic Federation Distinguished Teaching Awards

# Negative Behaviors:

---

## Committees

- College Personnel
- Academic Personnel
- UCAP
- Ad Hoc Promotion

 Research: Perlman and McCann (1998)  
study of “Student Pet Peeves about Teaching”

# Will Emphasize the Positive

## Why? Because ...

---

- 📄 Teaching excellence is what we all *should* aspire to (whether we do or not)
- 📄 The talk would become a real downer, causing depression or anger
- 📄 The really bad teachers form a more heterogeneous group: “All happy families resemble each other, each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way” (Leo Tolstoy)

# Disclaimer:

---

📄 To preserve the anonymity of the more infamous of my university colleagues, I will randomly change

- gender
- discipline

📄 whether they deserve it or not!

# Factor I: Extraversion

---

## The Best Teachers


- Initiate and maintain communication at every possible opportunity (e.g., before-class chats)
- Project a forceful, enthusiastic, persuasive style (e.g., “pep talks”)
- Stimulate active interaction during the lecture hour (e.g., “show of hands”)
- Display involvement in extracurricular activities on behalf of the students

# Factor I: Extraversion

---

## The Worst Teachers

- Minimize social interaction as much as possible (e.g., habitually arriving late and leaving early)
- Speak in a nearly inaudible monotone: “A professor is one who talks in someone else’s sleep” (W. H. Auden)
- Avoid eye-contact as much as possible
- Reduce the amount of in-class instruction by delivering abbreviated lectures or by “putting the lectures on the web”



---

Problem: High extraversion can be negative if it means that the professor is confrontational and domineering - the “in your face” instructor. Hence the need to couple it with the next factor:



# Factor II: Agreeableness

---

## The Best Teachers

- Develop welcoming course websites with an attractive look and interesting links
- Introduce themselves before the first day of class by sending a “warm and fuzzy” to everyone enrolled
- Learn students’ names and use them at every opportunity
- Hold liberal and flexible office hours, even adopting the “open door” policy

# Factor II: Agreeableness

---

## The Worst Teachers


- Make it known early how much they hate teaching and would rather be making more constructive use of their valuable time
- Hold minimal office hours at inconvenient times that are often canceled without notice
- Respond to questions in a hostile, intimidating manner, both in class and during office hours (“What’s *your* problem? “Didn’t get it the first time?””)


# Many “pet peeves” of this type (Perlman & McCann, 1998):

---

## Representative complaints

- “Intellectual arrogance/talk down”
- “Don’t respect students”
- “Not approachable, unhelpful”
- “Intolerant of questions”
- “Forced class participation”
- “Insensitive to student’s time constraints”
- “Too much work”

 Hence, they can’t apply the “Golden” or “Silver” Rule



---

Problem: Agreeable extraversion not sufficient either; the “nice guy/gal, but can’t teach” phenomenon because he or she violates the students’ expectations about the instructor’s responsibilities

# Factor III: Conscientiousness

---

## The Best Teachers

- Prepare the course well before the onset of classes (textbook, syllabus, website, etc.)
- Extensively plan and rehearse for each lecture (including audiovisuals)
- Are careful and methodical in the preparation of examination materials, even when using textbook-prepared questions

# Factor III: Conscientiousness

---

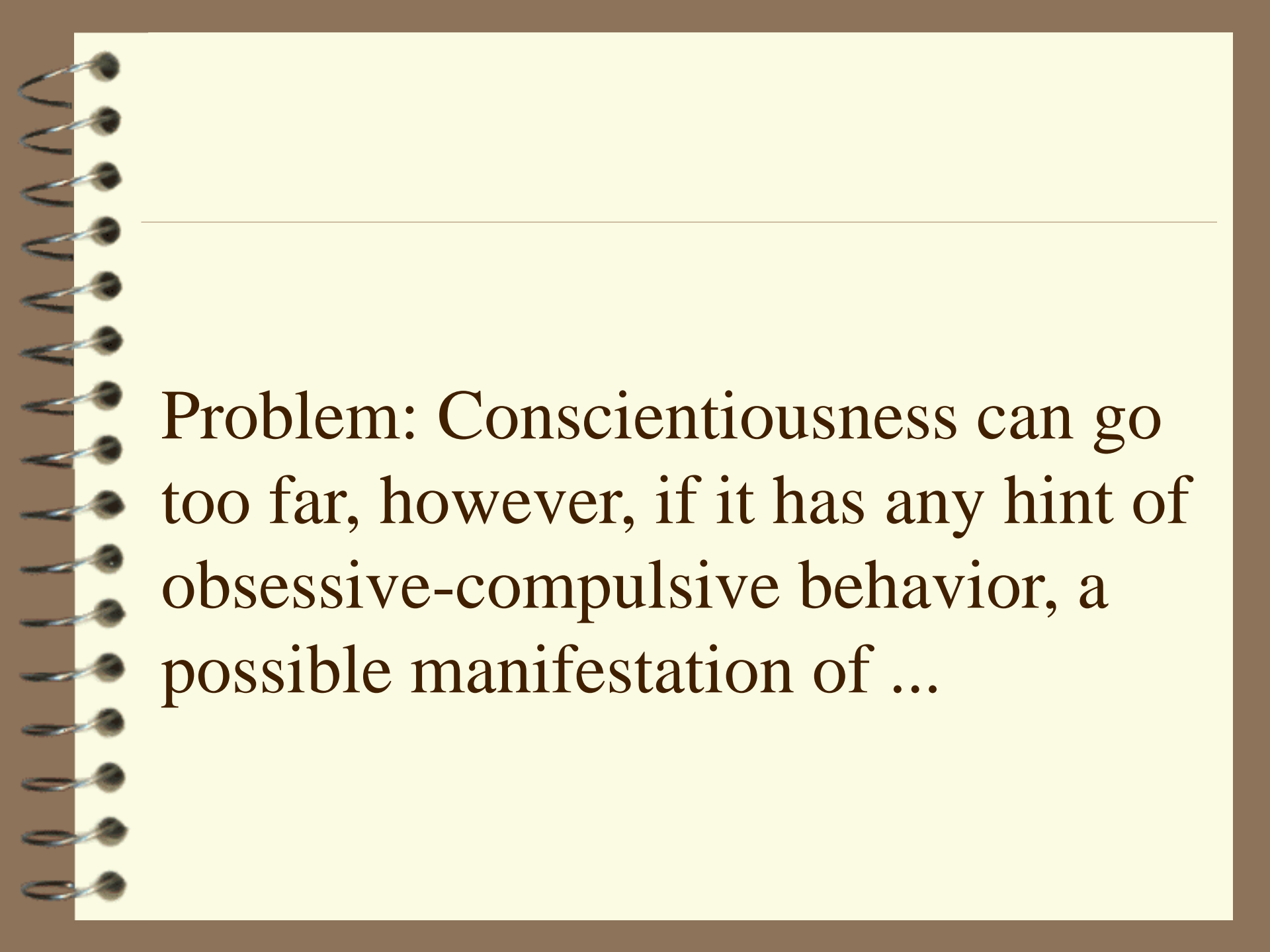
## The Worst Teachers

- Make woefully incompetent textbook choices
- Prepare horribly inadequate syllabi, if they do so at all
- Come totally unprepared for lectures
- Display the most minimal regard for test construction or the evaluation of test performance

# Other “pet peeves” of this type (Perlman & McCann, 1998):

---

- ☞ “Poor organization/planning”
- ☞ “Poor testing procedures/exams”
- ☞ “Poor use of class time (coming late, stopping early)”
- ☞ “Poor syllabus”

A graphic of a spiral-bound notebook with a brown cover and a cream-colored page. The spiral binding is on the left side. A horizontal line is drawn across the page, approximately one-third of the way down from the top. The text is written in a dark brown, serif font on the page below the line.

Problem: Conscientiousness can go too far, however, if it has any hint of obsessive-compulsive behavior, a possible manifestation of ...



# Factor IV: Neuroticism

---

## The Worst Teachers


- May display extreme anxiety, even to the point of incapacitating panic attacks
- May display hypochondria or various other obsessive complaints
- May display extreme ego-defensiveness so that the smallest question becomes a major personal challenge that must be nipped in the bud
- May display extremely inflexible and black-and-white attitudes and behavior

# Factor IV: Neuroticism

---

## The Best Teachers

- Relaxed, easy-going even under unexpected surprises or mistakes
- Not defensive, even in response to deliberately hostile students
- Flexible, within the limits of instructor responsibilities



---

Teachers who are extraverted, agreeable, conscientious, and non-neurotic are very good teachers, but to be a truly *great* teacher requires one thing more

...

# Factor V: Openness to Experience

---

## The Worst Teachers

- Insist on an extremely narrow treatment of the subject with respect to the choice of textbook and lecture topics
- Respond negatively to student questions that try to make connections to the outside world

# Another Pet Peeve (Perlman & McCann, 1998):

---

📄 “Don’t relate material to real life”

📄 “Control/impose views”

# Factor V: Openness to Experience

---

## The Best Teachers

- Make constant connections between course topics and ideas in other courses and disciplines
- Make ample use of cartoons, newspaper clippings, websites, movies, TV shows, songs, T-shirts, and ties to make connections to the world outside the classroom

A spiral-bound notebook with a cream-colored page and a dark brown cover. The spiral binding is on the left side. A thin horizontal line is drawn across the page, about one-third of the way down. The text "Q.E.D." is centered on the page in a brown, serif font.

Q.E.D.

# Final Issues

---

- How are these conclusions influenced by course type?
- How are these conclusions affected by the instructor's age?
- How are these conclusions affected by the instructor's research productivity?
- How are these conclusions influenced by the instructor's personal disposition?



# How are these conclusions influenced by course type?

---

- 📄 Substantive versus methodological courses
- 📄 Large lecture versus seminar courses
- 📄 Graduate versus undergraduate courses

# How are these conclusions affected by age?

---

📄 Age and teaching evaluations

📄 Age and administrative responsibilities

📄 Age and personal disposition

# How are these conclusions affected by productivity?

---

📄 Although teaching and research are antithetical in terms of

- Attitude
- Time

📄 They are orthogonal with respect to

- Performance
- Personality

# How are these conclusions influenced by disposition?

---

- 📄 Dispositional attributions
- 📄 Behavior > personality
- 📄 Conscientiousness as the key

# FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE

THE WAY I SEE IT, A TEACHER HAS TO BE AN ENTERTAINER. YOU GOTTA HAVE EXPRESSION, BE EXCITED ABOUT YOUR SUBJECT- I MEAN, IF YOU SOUND BORED, THEY'LL BE BORED, SAVVY?



10-2 www.fborfw.com

MOVE AROUND THE ROOM! EXPLAIN STUFF CLEARLY, IMAGINATIVELY, AN' WITH A SENSE OF HUMOR!



I LOVE THE GUYS WHO ARE KEEN AN' EXPRESSIVE, MAN, LIKE- I STAY AWAKE, I GET PUMPED! I GET INTO IT, AN' I REALLY WANNA **LEARN!**



I HAD A PROF LIKE THAT, ONCE.



©2002 Lyng-Johnson Productions Inc. (Dist. by United Feature Syndicate, Inc.)

Lawson



And so the bartender says,  
"Hey! That's not a duck!"  
(Wait for laughter)  
Four score and sev-  
ago our forefat-  
a new nation  
Liberty  
tha