Mrs. Garrison teaches a high school business class. Several weeks before the end of the semester, she assigns a vocabulary assignment. Mrs. Garrison gives each student the same list of vocabulary terms, and written directions. Each student is supposed to define each term in his/her own words.

Mrs. Garrison collects the assignment a week before the end of the semester. When she starts scoring the assignment, she suspects that many students have cheated. Not only are some definitions the same on different papers, but they include the same typing and spelling errors. Mrs. Garrison carefully examines all the assignments. Whenever she finds two or more that match, she makes a note.

Since a significant number of students seem to have cheated, Mrs. Garrison is nervous about how to proceed. She talks with her mentor, and also with her associate principal. She explains that she plans to give a 0 to any student she can prove cheated. They both approve of this plan, and the associate principal will back her up if needed.

There is an additional complication. Two of the students suspected of cheating are Trevor and Stewart. Each boy’s mother works in the school: Trevor’s mom is an academic support specialist, and Stewart’s mom is a classroom teacher. Mrs. Garrison talks privately with Trevor’s mom. Trevor's mom is dismayed to hear that Trevor may have cheated, and suggests that Mrs. Garrison pull Trevor out of class. She says if Trevor cheated, he will admit it. Mrs. Garrison follows her advice, and Trevor admits to cheating, and seems very remorseful. Mrs. Garrison doesn't have a chance to speak with Stewart’s mom, since they have different prep periods.

On the day Mrs. Garrison announces scores, she also expresses disappointment at the significant amount of cheating. She refuses to discuss the matter in class, but says she’ll stay after school as long as necessary, if any students want to talk.

After school, many students come to Mrs. Garrison’s classroom. She calmly and firmly talks with each student. Some students protest that the directions weren’t clear enough. Some students protest that they were collaborating, not cheating. Some students protest that they have many assignments due in many classes at the end of the semester, and the vocabulary assignment was too big, too late in the semester.

Many students are still waiting, when Stewart’s mom storms into the classroom. Standing over Mrs. Garrison, she angrily asks questions about the accusation that Stewart cheated. In front of the waiting students, Stewart’s mom yells at Mrs. Garrison. She criticizes Mrs. Garrison’s teaching and classroom management abilities, using professional language and terms. Mrs. Garrison tries to respond to all this calmly, but Stewart’s mom eventually storms out. Mrs. Garrison is shaken, but focuses on talking with the remaining students.
Mrs. Garrison never discusses the confrontation with her mentor, colleagues, or associate principal. Mrs. Garrison and Stewart’s mom avoid each other at faculty meetings. Stewart’s mom never denies that Stewart cheated.

**Suggested Questions**

1. As she dealt with the possible cheating, describe at least 2 things Mrs. Garrison did well. Describe at least 1 thing you might have done differently, and why.
2. Should Mrs. Garrison have made an exception for any of the students? Why/not? For example, some students claimed they collaborated.
3. Some educators might say that the nature of the vocabulary assignment made it more likely that students would cheat. Describe why they would say this.
4. The power of vicarious experience means that a student doesn’t need to experience something directly to be affected by it. Assuming that they heard about it, how do you think this incident affected other students’ interactions with Mrs. Garrison in future classes?
5. Mrs. Garrison didn’t discuss the confrontation with anyone. Do you agree with this choice? Why/not?