

Pen or Pencil

My best friend writes with a pen. I still have to use a pencil. You say that my friend shows “great control over his descenders and ascenders and each one of his letters is perfectly in proportion with the rest”. Whatever that means. You just frown when you look at mine.

The thing is, I know I’m much neater with a pen. I do all my homework in pen, and you don’t seem to mind that. You even complimented me on my “neatness” the other week. Surely, if you need any evidence at all that I’m better off writing with a pen, this is it? What more can I do to prove it to you if you won’t give me a chance in class?

I know that I make quite a lot of mistakes when I’m writing. That’s because the ideas are buzzing around inside my head like butterflies and it’s quite hard to grab hold of one of them: they keep slipping away just when I think I’ve got it. Writing in pencil means that I can rub those mistakes out and keep my book looking neat, but it also means there’s no evidence of what I’ve done. Sometimes, you come over to me at the end of the lesson and moan that I’ve only written one paragraph, but you can’t see the other five I’ve rubbed out. If I wrote in pen, at least you’d know that I’m not wasting time.

On top of this, making mistakes and correcting them is all part of writing. Ask any of the best authors, and they’ll tell you that they are always making mistakes. Spotting them and correcting them is a great way for me to learn. I can even look back over my errors and try not to make them again. If I rub them out, it’s a bit like saying they never existed. I know you’ll understand how disheartening that feels—as though my work wasn’t important enough to keep.

There are other reasons for writing in pen. I bet you can’t guess how many times my friend had to stop writing the other day to sharpen her pen? That’s right, none. She just kept on writing all lesson. I have to sharpen mine every 30 seconds, or so it feels. Then there’s the trip to the bin and picking up the shavings that missed and fell on the floor. This is a great excuse for me to be distracted and start chatting with my friend. We all know how much that winds you up—by giving

me a pen, you could stop all this.

At the end of the day, I know you are a reasonable teacher who only wants what's best for us. I'm sure you will consider the points that I have raised here and make the correct decision, whatever that is.

If it makes any difference, I already have a pen ready to go, so it won't cost the school a penny!

VOCABULARY FOCUS

1. Find and copy a word that tells you the teacher is not happy when they look at the author's writing.
2. Find and copy an example of a simile in the text.
3. If something is "disheartening", how does it make you feel?
4. Find a word or phrase that tells you how the author feels about the teacher.
5. If something is "ascending", what is happening to it?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

I

Why is the author's friend allowed to write with a pen?

R

How often does the author have to sharpen their pencil?

S

What are the main arguments the author gives for wanting to write in pen?

E

Is the use of rhetorical questioning effective? Give a reason.

R

What was good about the homework the child wrote in pen?