

LITTLE PAPER

How Did These People Get Into This Dispute?

The purpose of this Little Paper is to write about how each of the parties to a dispute got to the position in which we find them.

You may use any dispute you wish to choose, but please pick one with sharply differing points of view. Students sometimes pick topics like smoking/no smoking disputes, a dispute about academic credit, or rights within the family, or sharp conflicts in the workplace. If you have no better idea you are welcome to use "Joe and Josephine".

If you choose a different dispute than "Joe and Josephine", please first tell me briefly the presenting situation, as a manager or other third party might perceive it. For example, "I came into the office and found Ashley and Jody yelling at each other about...." Wherever you come from, please feel free to describe a dispute that could occur in your own country. If you write up your own dispute, please choose one with two (or more) quite different points of view.

Now, your mission. Your mission, if you are willing to undertake it, is to write a page or two about how each character got where he or she is. What is each thinking? What are the values and feelings and perceptions of each of these people? How did this situation arise? Your characters do not need to be people you would personally respect, but most people most of the time are doing the best they can, so tell me if you will, how these people see their own situation, in their own terms.

The purpose of this paper is more practice in being able to "be" another person than yourself, briefly — to be able to understand the interests of the Other in order to be able to predict what the Other will want and do next.