

Introduction to “Ode to a Desolate Desk”

“If a cluttered desk is a sign of a cluttered mind, of what, then, is an empty desk a sign?” — Laurence J. Peter

I am constantly filling my work desk at school with sets of papers of exercises, poems, and stories that I plan to use with my students --- as well as books and envelopes of materials that I need to access in order to individualize my instruction in my unique situation of working to improve the skills of specific students. There are times that I clash with the teacher who shares my desk, and who prefers a “neat” surface with limited papers. I was inspired by this minor conflict of views to write this poem, to express my views on the matter, with a bit of a paraphrase from Robert Frost’s poem “Mending Wall” --- but I am, after all, an English teacher.

Should you need some kind of physical evidence to support my view regarding the cluttered desk versus the neat one with a visible surface, I offer you the following visuals:

