

Dearly beloved...

We are gathered here today to mourn the loss of you, and the loss of your poor companions sitting here with you today. Welcome to Room 163. In many religious texts, this room is referred to as **████**, where you will be cast into a lake of sulfur and suffer eternally...or, at least for 18 weeks (if someone upstairs **REALLY** has it out for you, then they probably have changed the 18 weeks to the entire year—in that case, I give you my blessing, because I doubt *anyone* has survived the 36 straight weeks of 163).

Do a little looking around the room, would you? First, let's start with the students themselves. Look around the class. You will see some people just reading their own letters with wide eyes. Others will be talking nervously, waiting for the bell to ring. A few may be sitting straight up in their chair, confident, with a pencil and paper out and sporting a huge calculator. These cocky, confident few will learn, just as will the rest of you—that you don't just strut into 163 like it's Pathfinder—this class is the real deal. These cocky, confident few might very well be the ones that break down into tears in the coming weeks.

In the far left of the room you can see a row of filing cabinets, where every couple of weeks or so, you will watch the front row prisoners trudge slowly down the aisle as if they were walking down the Green Mile to pass out folders to the rest of their row. Beware these folders. They bring tears and anguish to many. If you are sitting in the front row, move—now. Your seats are already pre-determined, but you don't want to look like you are eager to be a folder-distributor. I was one of those few—making that slow trudge to the bins every few weeks was definitely not fun. But enough of that. Behind that you will see a row of windows. Look carefully—this might be all you'll see of that vague world they call “the outside” over the next 18 weeks. Glance toward the back of the room and you will see a desk with a computer. This will probably be the only time you ever see that. Take your eyes off the front of the room again and before you know it, you've missed the most important thing you will ever learn in your life—**EVER**, and now it's time to take an exam on it. But oh, make

sure to at least glance at the closet near the door. If She goes in there, it's *very, very* bad. This is Her spice cabinet, where She keeps horrible torture devices, as well as very, very hard quizzes. *Spicy* quizzes. Beware!

She, though? Who is "She?" She has made geniuses fail and grown men cry. Her hunger for F's is insatiable. Her pace of instruction is unbearable. Her class itself is unmanageable. She is probably standing at the front of the room now, with the cold, calculating stare at each and every one of you poor, unfortunate souls. It's been said that if you look closely enough, you can see the horns under that jet black hair. She is Ms. Chan, and you are sitting in her Geometry (let's hope not Honors) class. You played the Russian Roulette, but this time the bullet was in the chamber. Welcome to your Doom.

Drama aside (as in, the past page and a half—although it's very much true) welcome to Ms Chan's Geometry (really, let's hope not Honors) class. You obviously need to start carrying around a rabbit's foot or something for good luck from now on—when it comes to classes, you'd probably be hard-pressed to find a harder Geometry (I'm serious, let's pray you're not in Honors) class. So now what? You're sitting in this class, with AT LEAST 18 more weeks to go before you're free. What do you do?

See, you're lucky. I wish I had some kid from Ms. Chan's class telling me what to do. Before I got into her class, all I ever heard were horror stories. So here's to hoping this letter is a horror story with a little bit of advice mixed in for good measure.

Since you and I both know that 18 weeks is a long time, I've made a nice little checklist for you to keep up on. Just rip it off and throw the way the rest of this garbage if you want. Just make sure to keep the checklist! It's 100% effective if you want to pass (no guarantee though). In fact, step one, before doing anything else, is to get a good binder. Don't get a ½ inch or inch binder—you need at least 1½ inches of pure Mathematics. Don't worry about looking like a nerd—for the next

18 weeks, you're going to be completely nerd-ified. Get one with the clear fronts that you can slide papers in—and slide this list in on the back one. Okay, let's get down to the nitty-gritty.

I have made an AWESOME binder.

Very important. Your goal for your binder is that you should be able to publish it and it would be accepted as a religious manuscript for the new religion you're starting, Geometricism. My suggestion is that you have 5 sections. Now, you can do whatever you please with your binder as long as it's organized, but this is just my suggestion. **Notes, Homework, Theorems, Definitions, Journals.** Notes should be where you keep (most importantly) your all-powerful conjectures. This is the stuff you'll have to teach yourself, and let's be generous and give a page for each section, okay? It keeps everything nice and organized. Throw in the occasional notes in there as well (we don't do too much of that in this class). **KEEP EVERYTHING IN THERE AND IN ORDER!** Now for Homework, another very large section. Keep all your homework on looseleaf and in order by section. Write out the question and answer. If you're lazy like I was, you can just use a scanner (if you have one) to scan the page(s) of the book, and copy them onto Microsoft Word. Then go to Print> Properties>Print Color Images in black and white. Load looseleaf in your printer the correct way (depending on your printer) and print. Voila! My homework is all like this and it really makes everything neat and trim.

The final three are optional but I recommend them. #3 is Theorems, a.k.a. "Conjectures." After you finish a chapter, go onto Word or whatever you use, and type up conjectures. Print them out on a chapter by chapter basis. I found the easiest way was to name them if they are not already named, give the section and investigation title, and type up the conjecture. Here's an example.

Chapter

Chapter 4

Investigation

4.1.1

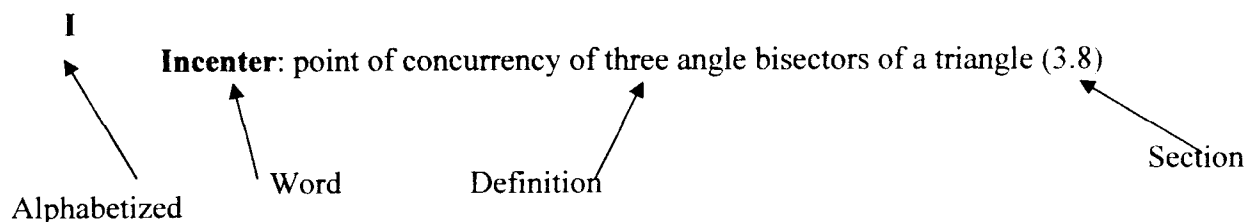
C-1: Vertical Angles Conjecture
Vertical angles are congruent.

Title

Conjecture

This is just a suggestion. Do it however it works for you. And by the way, I'm totally giving you something you'll need to know. Wow, I forgot how nice I could be!

Next up is Definitions. Label these in alphabetical order (yes, I DO know how much work that is, doing it myself and all) and make sure to tack on the section at the end for reference. Here's a good example.



Finally, there's Journals. This is kind of the lonely section that doesn't get used too often. However, it's still good to have in the back. At the very least, the few papers you get will be kept out of the rest of the binder.

Make sure to keep everything in order. Another thing I never mentioned was color. Use **OLOR** c. That is one thing I never took advantage of (being a guy and all) but I still recommend it to you. Go out and buy a pack of multicolored highlighters. Use them often—oh, and most importantly, be consistent. If you're going to make the conjectures in **blue**, keep them **blue** for the whole year. Using all these techniques, you'll have an awesome binder—one that will come in handy for the dreaded NOTEBOOK CHECKS.

Notebook checks rock. Trust me. If you have an awesome binder, they are really just 15 minutes of listening to good music as you leisurely copy problems from your notebook paper. The Chan requires conjectures and homework problems, but you're all set—your notebook is pristine. Start today. Don't put it off till tomorrow.

It's Armageddon outside and I'm still sitting in my chair, ready to learn.

Don't leave the Chan's class. Ever. Even if you feel like crap, just come for her hour wrapped in a blanket (if you're really, really ill...come in a bubble.)

Seriously, you don't want to make it a habit of missing the Chan's class. You can be sick other days—right now, you don't have time. Schedule appointments around her class. If you absolutely have to miss a day (like, you have two broken legs and you can't make it to the phone to call 911 and ask them to take you to the class because the roof happened to cave in and the electricity is down and your phone is an antique and it doesn't work and you got into an accident and forgot how to speak English an—) then make sure to get the info from one of your groupmates. Which brings me to my next point...

I know my group members like the back of my hand (sometimes even better).

Your group members are the basis for your learning experience in the Chan's class. When you find out who they are, open that fancy new agenda that you have gotten (or you better get soon) and write every single one of them down. Write their numbers, their e-mail addresses, their house addresses, their social security numbers—just kidding...that might technically be illegal. Don't stalk them or anything (which is also illegal), but become friends with them. If you already know them (as I did) then you're one step ahead of the game. The group setting is where you'll be doing the majority of your math fun in this classroom—get to know those faces. If you EVER HAAAAVE to be absent, call these kids and get detailed information as to what you have done the day(s—I really hope you didn't take off TWO days of the Chan!) Why am I being so adamant in telling you to never come to class unprepared? You can blame it on this man.

BEWARE



I fear and despise Michael Serra.

Michael Serra is the cause for all your pain and suffering in the Geometric world. He is the author of your new Geometry book, *Discovering Geometry*, and apparently he hasn't quite discovered what Geometry is, since he leaves all these discoveries for you in the form of "Investigations" rather than just wasting less ink to come out and tell you what the theorems are. (You'll notice that the book is in black and white, and all of his artists are high school students save for a few...a great way to save money wasted on typing up thousands of investigations). Fearing and despising Michael Serra is key in your study of Geometry. Whenever you can't figure out something in his book, just pull out this letter and stare at the man—his lifeless smile, his soulless eyes. It is his fault. A burning hatred of Michael Serra will come naturally—and if you imagine that your goal is to beat Michael Serra, to call that man up when you get an A in Ms. Chan's class and laugh at him, saying "Haha! You couldn't fail me!"—that, my friend, will make it all worth it.

I make sure to bring flowers and candies for the substitute.

No joke, kid. Butter that sub up all you want. On the very few days that the Chan is absent, a sub will be given the authority to grade you based on your behavior. It's really a 1 of 2 chance—either you get a stupendous, fantastic, amazing "grade," or a horrible, terrible, appalling, vomit-inducing "grade." No middle ground, my friend, no middle ground. That's why you need to butter your sub up as much as possible—otherwise, they get on a power trip and start the threats. I had a sub in her class once that actually went up to the board and started playing with our minds—pretending to circle the worse of the two grades, snidely chuckling to himself as he put the marker back. By the way, he looked like Kevin Bacon—but that isn't important. What is important is that you butter the sub up—oh, and be good, would

you? For your sake and mine. If your class starts to act like idiots, then you reserve the liberty to shut them all up. Because if you get a bad grade...you may end up with...A SPICY QUIZ!!! Remember that closet I was talking about? I'm serious. *fear that closet.* The spice cabinet is where the Chan keeps her most diabolical of demonic exams. I've never had the misfortune of getting one of these things myself, but I've heard the horror stories. Whole classes have failed, even those cocky, confident kids that I mentioned a while back. I doubt the Chan even has the answer key, because the problems are probably so hard that she can't even figure them out. And even if she could, she knows that none of you can, so she probably just takes the stack and chucks it into the fire that she has out back (after giving everyone a -1/100). I here she also burns little children in there too—hearsay and rumors, no doubt—an—oh wait, I'm getting back to the drama. Let's move on. Really, just don't anger the subs, because you DON'T want spicy quizzes. Really. No. Spicy=bad.

I make sure to deflate my head (and ego) before entering the Domain of the Chan every day.

You've just passed your first test, and you even got the highest grade! Congratulations, I'm proud of you. You should be proud of you too. But don't get too proud. If you get too proud, you get cocky, and getting cocky in the Chan's class is a no-no. Cockiness means you don't do your homework and don't study for your tests, and it means you stop paying attention. Really, in the domain of the Chan, you are constantly being humbled. And it's ok. You'll be wrong sometimes. You'll be right sometimes. And if you're right more than wrong, don't get too full of yourself. I've seen it happen—trust me. I've been through it all, remember?

I have set a goal for myself, but that goal doesn't translate into murder.

No, I'm really not kidding. If it's still up on the board, take a gander at “Ms Chan's Top Five Divas.” If you're a skilled Geometrician, you'll see your name on there one

day. And it's cool to be up there, you know? A bit of bragging rights (not too much, remember...). Just don't get preoccupied with the board. Set a goal for yourself in the Chan's class, but make it something other than "getting to #1 on the Divas." Make it more along the lines of, "I'll get an A." If you get preoccupied with the Board, you'll begin to dislike the person(s) above you. Disliking is never good, especially in a class like this. Don't forget to **deflate your ego** and realize that some people are better than you. When you do that, you won't have to worry about the board—a nice addition to the classroom thanks to the Chan, but nothing too serious. Base your goals on you, not anyone else. This will make for a nicer, more pleasant Geometry experience.

I've kissed my family and friends goodbye for the next 18 weeks.


This class requires determination. Having said that, please don't start crying that you won't be able to hang out with any kids your age until that beautiful day 18 weeks away. It's a joke. All I'm going to say is that this class demands determination. How ever much you give is proportional (more math) to how much you get back.

I practice, practice, practice.

Finally, just remember those three words. Not just practice. *Practice, practice practice.* You'll need all three. The Chan is nice enough to give you pretests. Do them. More than once. Review and fix your homework. Practice doesn't make perfect, but it will get you pretty damn close.

I hope this checklist will help you in your Geometric study (that is, if you took the time to read it). Remember to keep at least the checklist—it should come in handy. I wish I had something like this when I came into the Chan's class, so take advantage of it!

Good Luck.



TIM BISHOP

Chan's Checklist

A GUIDE FOR PASSING GEOMETRY WITH MS. CHAN

- I have made an AWESOME binder.
- It's Armageddon outside and I'm still sitting in my chair, ready to learn.
- I know my group members like the back of my hand (sometimes even better).
- I fear and despise Michael Serra.
- I make sure to bring flowers and candies for the substitute.
- I make sure to deflate my head (and ego) before entering the Domain of the Chan every day.
- I have set a goal for myself, but that goal doesn't translate into murder.
- I've kissed my family and friends goodbye for the next 18 weeks.
- I practice, practice, practice.

And, if you're in Geometry Honors like I was...remember all of the above—you also get this special good-luck charm.

