A Change of Course

***The group discussion of Kurt Vonnegut's "The Lie" was successful, as the group demonstrated qualities of a great discussion and worked together well to analyze key aspects of the story accurately. Group members were very open to each others' ideas.*** **Group members listened to ideas that were different than their own carefully and politely disagreed with each other but then worked with the ideas they disagreed with, arriving at a group analysis that was more accurate than the analysis of any one group member had been.** This process occurred repeatedly. It was seen in the group's identification of the main character and the conflict. Some group members had originally identified the son as the main character and disagreed with the father being the main character. They did not simply dismiss the idea of the father as a main character, though, and move on, instead they sought to develop the belief that this was wrong by examining the initial incident to show the father was not introduced. They found, however, that he was introduced. **They then attentively listened, all eyes turned to a speaker, nodding as she said that she didn't see the father as the focus of the rising action**. After listening, one member reasserted the possibility that the father was the main character by referring to the passage when Dr. Remenzel reacted to the news that Eli had not gotten into the school. All opened to the passage and read along while the student read. Again showing listening by bouncing off this idea, a member suggested they examine the resolution. **They examined the resolution independently and silently, with no one charging in to disturb the thinking of others.** Having allowed each other this time to think, the group shifted, and changed their identification of the conflict to be the father's putting his family pride before the needs of his son instead of the son's having destroyed the letter from the school. This spiraled out into a correct identification of climax, resolution and theme, with many members, not just a few participating. ***The path of this Socratic Circle showed how effective discussion can be in discovering a solution no single person knew before the discussion started.***