

RECESS!
A Musical Joke-Filled Spoof

By KEITH JACKSON
Music By GERALD V. CASTLE
Lyrics By MICHAEL C. VIGILANT

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RECESS!

A Musical Joke-Filled Spoof

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(In Order of Appearance)

		<u># of lines</u>
MISS CRABAPPLE	principal	61
MISS QUACKENBUSH	substitute teacher	152
JACK	pupil	12
FRED	another	23
DOROTHY	another	11
PATSY	another	19
SKIPPY	another	11
LITTLE MARY	another	16
GEORGE	another	18
PEGGY	another	18
ADDITIONAL PUPIL(S)	one or more	61
SHIRLEY	new pupil	11

PLACE: A classroom in a little red schoolhouse.

TIME: Anytime.

SEQUENCE OF MUSICAL NUMBERS

MC 1	Overture	Instrumental
MC 2	To Be a Teacher	Miss Quackenbush, Miss Crabapple
MC 3	We're a Dunce	Jack, Fred, George, Skippy, Dorothy, Peggy, Patsy, Little Mary
MC 4	Recess	Jack, George, Mary, Skippy, Patsy, Peggy, Shirley, Dorothy
MC 5	If I was the Teacher	Peggy, Little Mary, Patsy, Jack, Fred, Skippy, George
MC 6	We're a Dunce—(Reprise)	All

ACT ONE
Scene One

SETTING: A classroom. A teacher's desk and chair are **STAGE RIGHT**, with a small wastebasket next to the desk. There is an optional, movable blackboard **UPSTAGE**. A high stool or chair with a conical dunce cap on it is **UP LEFT** of teacher's desk. Ideally, there are at least twelve small desks and chairs in the classroom. Four rows of three desks and chairs each face the teacher's desk and are angled for good audience view. However, student desks aren't really required. Chairs with arms for writing will do. Even ordinary folding chairs will work. [SEE PRODUCTION NOTES for various staging suggestions.]

ENTRANCE/EXIT STAGE LEFT.

MUSIC CUE 1: "Overture."

AT RISE: On the teacher's desk in an orderly arrangement are a roll book, a lesson plan, a wooden pointer, a seating chart and a handbell. Before **LIGHTS UP** we hear the off-key singing voices of young **PUPILS OFFSTAGE**. (NOTE: They sing accapella to the tune of **MUSIC CUE 3**.)

BOYS: The Dean's List is for teacher's pets.
Detention is for us.

GIRLS: We don't go for tete-a-tetes.
Instead we trash the bus.

BOYS: Each one of us has brains like sieves.

GIRLS: We love to use double negatives.

BOYS: Shout it all at once-

ALL: We're a dunce!

GIRLS: Shout it all at once-

ALL: We're a dunce!

LIGHTS UP: **MISS CRABAPPLE**, the eccentric school principal, **ENTERS LEFT**. Behind her is a substitute teacher, **MISS QUACKENBUSH**, young and eager. **MISS CRABAPPLE** holds a manila folder. She walks down an aisle heading for teacher's desk, with **MISS QUACKENBUSH** following.

MISS CRABAPPLE: I realize this must all seem last minute, Miss

Quackenbush.

MISS QUACKENBUSH: Not at all, Miss Crabapple. What are substitute teachers for?

MISS CRABAPPLE: Poor Miss Topeka. The doctor said she'll need plenty of rest and quiet. I'm afraid she won't be herself for quite some time.

MISS QUACKENBUSH: The nervous breakdown came on rather suddenly, didn't it?

MISS CRABAPPLE: Overnight. She almost made it to the end of the year. Just one day short. *(Pause.)* I don't know, there's just something about her class this year that drove her crazy... literally. *(By now they've reached the teacher's desk. MISS CRABAPPLE steps behind it. MISS QUACKENBUSH stands in front.)*

MISS QUACKENBUSH: I must remember to have the class sign a get-well card and wish her a good summer.

MISS CRABAPPLE: No, I wouldn't do that.

MISS QUACKENBUSH: Oh?

MISS CRABAPPLE: Might upset her. Like I said, there's something about this class that really got to her.

MISS QUACKENBUSH: *(Confused.)* If you say so, Miss Crabapple.

MISS CRABAPPLE: I think it best.

MISS QUACKENBUSH: You're the principal.

MISS CRABAPPLE: I'm sorry to tell you this class is not one I'm proud of.

MISS QUACKENBUSH: Oh?

MISS CRABAPPLE: This class gives failure a bad name. A class like this turns up every once in a while... like a toothache. There's little a teacher can do except make the best of it. Miss Topeka tried.

MISS QUACKENBUSH: I'll do my best, Miss Crabapple.

MISS CRABAPPLE: I'm sure you will. You know what they say. When you have lemons, make orange juice.

MISS QUACKENBUSH: I'll squeeze what I can out of them. I have a great deal of patience.

MISS CRABAPPLE: You'll need it. *(Holds up manila folder.)* Most of the pupils in this class are failing. I've made a list of simple exam questions they should all know by now. If they answer correctly, they'll pass and go to the next grade. Since you're the one who will see how they do with the test, I shall rely on your opinion entirely. I suggest a brief warm-up to stimulate their little gray brain cells.

MISS QUACKENBUSH: Excellent idea.

MISS CRABAPPLE: This might be your big chance, Miss Quackenbush. A general under fire. Do well and you could become a full-time member of the faculty here at the Little Red Schoolhouse. I seriously doubt that Miss Topeka will be returning.

MISS QUACKENBUSH: A full-time member of the faculty!
(*Gushing.*) Oh, my! Oh, my goodness! Oh, my stars! It's what I've always wanted! (*MUSIC CUE 2: "To Be A Teacher."*
Sings.)

To be a teacher,
The leader of the class,
The one who says
Who does and does not pass.
When kids need help
I'm here to give a push
For the torch of education
Has passed to Quackenbush.

A full-fledged teacher
Not one who substitutes.
That's been my dream
Since I wore birthday suits.
These kids will learn
The facts from A to Z.

MISS CRABAPPLE: (*Sings.*) Don't forget their P's and Q's, dear,
But skip the birds and bees.

MISS QUACKENBUSH: (*Sings.*) Let the bell ring.
Let the day begin.
Let me walk through the halls
With that "Happy to be here" grin.

MISS CRABAPPLE: (*Sings.*) Hey, there, how ya doin'?

MISS QUACKENBUSH: (*Sings.*) Up goes my thumb.
The future's looking bright.
Tenure, here I come!

To be a teacher,
The leader of the class,
The one who says
who does and does not pass.

MISS CRABAPPLE: (*Sings.*) She'll give these kids
A swift kick in the tush.

MISS QUACKENBUSH: (*Sings.*) For the torch of education
Has passed to Quackenbush.

MISS CRABAPPLE: *(At end of song. Checking desk top.)*
Everything's here. Miss Topeka was a stickler for having everything in its place. Too bad this class made her flip her wig. *(Indicates.)* Roll book. Pointer. Seat assignment chart. *(Checks wristwatch.)* Almost time for class. You do the honors, Miss Topeka.

MISS QUACKENBUSH: Quackenbush.

MISS CRABAPPLE: How's that?

MISS QUACKENBUSH: My name. Quackenbush.

MISS CRABAPPLE: Yes. Quackenbush. I know that.

MISS QUACKENBUSH: You called me "Miss Topeka."

MISS CRABAPPLE: I did? Hmmmmmmm. This room even has a strange effect on me. I've noticed it before. Time for class, Miss -- *(Almost says "Topeka," but catches herself. Smiles.)* Quackenbush. *(Steps aside and gestures to desk. MISS QUACKENBUSH steps behind the desk and picks up a hand bell.)* Shake hard, Miss Quackenbush! Shake hard! Build up your strength. *(MISS QUACKENBUSH vigorously rings the hand bell. We hear a loud yell from OFFSTAGE LEFT.)*

PUPILS' VOICES: Yeaaaaaah!

MISS QUACKENBUSH: *(Stops ringing the bell and reacts to yell.)*
Gracious!

MISS CRABAPPLE: Courage, Miss Quackenbush. Courage. *(Looks LEFT.)* Here they come. *(As if for protection, MISS CRABAPPLE steps behind MISS QUACKENBUSH and peeks over her shoulder. Students ENTER singing over MISS CRABAPPLE'S pleas.)* Boys and girls, settle down, please! *(As singing continues, pupils take their seats. Some look out into the audience, smiling and waving. Some carry schoolbooks. PATSY is licking a large, fake lollipop. [SEE PRODUCTION NOTES.] SKIPPY carries a horn of some kind--French , trombone, trumpet, tuba, whatever. [NOTE: Supposedly the actors are portraying children approximately 9 or 10 years old. However, the actors themselves can be any age at all, even adults. Much of the farcical humor will come from pre-teens, teenagers and/or adults dressing and acting much like younger kids.] PEGGY holds a red balloon on a string. LITTLE MARY has large spots all over her face like big freckles. ADDITIONAL PUPILS ENTER LEFT. You can have one additional pupil or as many as you wish. MUSIC CUE 3: "We're A Dunce.")*

JACK: *(Sings.)* The Dean's List is for teacher's pets.
Detention is for us.

FRED: (*Sings.*) We don't go for tête-à-têtes.

Instead we trash the bus.

DOROTHY: (*Sings.*) Each one of us has brains like sieves.

PATSY: (*Sings.*) We love to use double negatives.

SKIPPY: (*Sings.*) Shout it all at once-

ALL: We're a dunce!

LITTLE MARY: (*Sings.*) We never fail to miss P.E.

'Cause we think it's PU.

GEORGE: (*Sings.*) We can't solve life's mysteries

'Cause we don't have a clue.

PEGGY: (*Sings.*) Our grades of late ain't been so hot.

PATSY: (*Sings.*) We don't think therefore we are not.

SKIPPY: (*Sings.*) Call us mental runts.

ALL: (*Sing.*) We're a dunce!

JACK: (*Sings.*) Sit me in the corner.

I won't be demeaned.

I prefer to spend my day

Intellectually quarantined!

FRED: (*Sings.*) The golden rule is not for me.

I think it's for the dogs.

DOROTHY: (*Sings.*) We don't go for chasing dreams

FRED: (*Sings.*) But we chase girls with frogs.

PATSY: (*Sings.*) When I'm in class my ears go deaf.

PEGGY: (*Sings.*) This bunch deserves to get an F.

SKIPPY: (*Sings.*) We don't put on fronts.

ALL: (*Sing.*) We're a dunce! Tag out.

MISS CRABAPPLE: (*At end of song.*) That's enough of that! No more singing. Take your places and be quiet. This is your principal speaking! (*When the singing ends and PUPILS sit, MISS CRABAPPLE continues on. She doesn't realize the classroom has quieted.*) No more singing, I said. Quiet! I don't want to hear another note. No talking, no singing. Quiet! Stop that singing! (*Produces a whistle and gives a blast.*)

MISS QUACKENBUSH: Miss Crabapple.

MISS CRABAPPLE: (*Irritated.*) Yes, what is it? Can't you see I'm trying to quiet the class?

MISS QUACKENBUSH: It is quiet.

MISS CRABAPPLE: What's quiet?

MISS QUACKENBUSH: The class. (*Gestures to the PUPILS.*)

Aren't they little angels? (*PUPILS smile, fold their hands and look heavenward.*)

MISS CRABAPPLE: Hm m m m m m m. Looks can be deceiving.

MISS QUACKENBUSH: I'm sure I'll get along famously with these

pupils. Won't I, children?

PUPILS: Yes, Miss Substitute!

MISS CRABAPPLE: Your new teacher's name is not Miss Substitute. It's Miss Tapioca. (*PUPILS laugh.*) I mean Miss Topeka.

MISS QUACKENBUSH: You did it again, Miss Crabapple.

MISS CRABAPPLE: Did what?

MISS QUACKENBUSH: (*Stage whisper.*) You called me Miss Topeka.

MISS CRABAPPLE: Why not? It's your name, isn't it?

MISS QUACKENBUSH: No, my name is Miss Quackenbush.

MISS CRABAPPLE: It is? Where's Miss Topeka?

MISS QUACKENBUSH: (*Stage whisper.*) She had a nervous breakdown.

MISS CRABAPPLE: Nervous breakdown? (*Embarrassed.*) Yes, yes. How silly of me. It's this class. I told you this class gave me the jitters. Small wonder. (*PUPILS have remained perfectly still with little smiles on their innocent faces as they watch and listen to MISS CRABAPPLE and MISS QUACKENBUSH.*)

MISS QUACKENBUSH: Perhaps I should introduce myself to the class.

MISS CRABAPPLE: No, no. Leave that to me. (*Clears her throat and speaks with a loud voice.*) Boils and ghouls, I want to introduce your teacher for today, Miss Quackenbush. Say hello.

PUPILS: Hello!

MISS CRABAPPLE: Say hello to Miss Quackenbush.

PUPILS: Hello to Miss Quackenbush.

LITTLE MARY: (*Raises hand.*) Miss Crabapple! Miss Crabapple!

MISS CRABAPPLE: (*To MISS QUACKENBUSH.*) That's Little Mary Mackintosh. She's always so polite.

MISS QUACKENBUSH: What is it, Little Mary Mackintosh?

LITTLE MARY: (*Stands, curtsies.*) Before you ask me, the dog ate my homework. (*She curtsies again, sits.*)

FRED: Miss Crabapple! (*Raises hand.*) Miss Crabapple!

MISS CRABAPPLE: What is it, Freddie?

FRED: (*Stands.*) Aw, don't call me Freddie, Miss Crabapple. That's a kid's name. Call me Fred.

MISS CRABAPPLE: Well, Fred?

FRED: What happened to Miss Topeka?

PUPILS: (*Suddenly lively, ad lib.*) Yeah, that's right. What happened to Miss Topeka?

Where's Miss Topeka?

Miss Topeka! Miss Topeka!

We wanna know!

MISS CRABAPPLE: Calm down, boys and girls. Nothing to worry yourselves about. Miss Topeka had a breakdown.

FRED: Is that anything like a breakup? (*Sits.*)

PEGGY: My big sister had a breakup. With her boyfriend. I didn't know Miss Topeka had a boyfriend.

MISS CRABAPPLE: She doesn't.

GEORGE: Then how can she have a breakup?

MISS CRABAPPLE: She didn't have a breakup. She had a breakdown.

PUPILS: Ooooooh. That's sooooooo confusing.

SKIPPY: Miss Crabapple! (*Waves hands.*) Miss Crabapple!

MISS CRABAPPLE: What is it, Skippy?

SKIPPY: (*Stands.*) This is the last day of school. We're not going to have a lesson, are we?

MISS CRABAPPLE: No. (*Great sigh of relief from PUPILS. SKIPPY sits.*)

PUPILS: (*Ad lib.*) All right!

That's good.

That's a relief.

Hooray!

MISS CRABAPPLE: You're not going to have a lesson. You're going to have something else instead.

PUPILS: What?

DOROTHY: Ice cream and cake?

LITTLE MARY: A trip to the zoo?

MISS CRABAPPLE: An exam.

PUPILS: (*Horried.*) An exam!

FRED: That don't sound like ice cream and cake.

GEORGE: Looks like it's boo to the zoo.

MISS CRABAPPLE: Those of you who pass the exam go on to the next grade. Think of it as being promoted.

DOROTHY: What happens to those who don't get promoted?

JACK: They get de-moted, stupid. (*Laughter.*)

MISS CRABAPPLE: Stop that laughter! I won't have it. Stop it! (*Gives another blast of the whistle. Immediate silence.*) I'm going to have a word in private with Miss Tapioca.

PUPILS: Topeka!

MISS QUACKENBUSH: Quackenbush.

MISS CRABAPPLE: Pupils, I want you to be on your best behavior. (*To herself.*) Although I realize that isn't saying

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much. *(Manila folder in hand, she starts to EXIT. To MISS QUACKENBUSH.)* In the hallway, Miss Tornado.

PUPILS: Quack-Quack-Quackenbush!

MISS QUACKENBUSH: I'll only be a moment, boys and girls.
(EXITS with MISS CRABAPPLE.)

PUPILS: Yes, Miss Quackenbush.

ADDITIONAL: *(Stands.)* How do you like that?! On the last day of school we get an exam!

WALTER: There oughta be a law.

LITTLE MARY: What happened to ice cream and cake?

PATSY: *(Stands.)* It's not fair! It's not right!

GEORGE: What are we going to do?

PEGGY: *(Stands.)* Easy. *(Bellows out. Like a cheerleader.)* "Rooty, toot, toot!"

PUPILS: "Rooty, toot, toot! Rooty, toot, toot!"

Let's get rid of the substitute!"

(With that, PUPILS dash to the teacher's desk and grab the lesson plan, hand bell, pointer, seat arrangement chart, roll book. As they do this, they sing, fast, "Rooty, toot, toot!" etc. Once the articles have been seized, PUPILS dash back to their chairs and sit. The lesson plan, roll book, seat arrangement chart, hand bell and pointer are dropped to the floor, out of sight. If the movable blackboard is being utilized, a student can draw a derogatory picture on it. Again, like the little angels they're not, PUPILS sit quietly with the "innocent" smiles glued to their faces.)

MISS QUACKENBUSH: *(ENTERS RIGHT and steps behind teacher's desk holding a manila folder.)* I want everyone seated in his assigned place. I'll read the roll. *(She searches for the roll book atop the desk. Puts down the folder.)* That's odd. The roll book was here a moment ago. *(PUPILS begin to snicker. MISS QUACKENBUSH continues to search, opening desk drawers, etc.)* Where's the wooden pointer? Where's the lesson plan for today? *(Snickering grows louder. Some PUPILS cover their mouths to stop from laughing out loud. MISS QUACKENBUSH'S search becomes more and more frantic.)* Where's the hand bell? Where's the blackboard? Where's the seat assignment chart? *(JACK is laughing so hard he topples from his chair and lands on the floor. This causes the classroom to erupt in loud laughter.)*

MISS QUACKENBUSH: *(Catching on.)* I see I have a classroom of comedians. However, you'll notice I am not laughing. *(To JACK.)* You there, on the floor. What was your name?

End of Script Sample

PRODUCTION NOTES

ON STAGE: Teacher's desk and chair. On teacher's desk: roll book, lesson plan, wooden pointer, seating chart, hand bell. Wastebasket. Optional blackboard. Stool with dunce cap. Twelve or more small desks and chairs, or chairs with arms for writing, or folding chairs with no desks.

BROUGHT ON: Manila folder, whistle, sheets of paper, watch (MISS CRABAPPLE); lunch box with sandwich (DOROTHY); lunch box with toy mouse, can of cranberry sauce (FRED); books, pencils (PUPILS); large lollipop (PATSY); horn (SKIPPY); balloon (PEGGY); stick pin (PUPIL); manila folder (MISS QUACKENBUSH).

MISCELLANEOUS: You can use one ADDITIONAL PUPIL or as many as you wish, dividing up the lines. For program purposes, give ADDITIONAL(S) a name (e.g., PETE, JUDY, HORACE, JANE, etc.). The dunce cap is a cone-shaped hat, usually made out of cardboard and coming to a point. You can dispense with the conical cap, if you wish, and substitute something else such as a Mickey Mouse hat.

The costumes can be modern or dated to any era. At any rate, all students should dress traditionally, with JACK and FRED being noticeably grimmer and more unkempt than the others. If desired, you can set the spoof back in the days of the original Little Red Schoolhouse, using long dresses for the girls and short pants for the boys. Some pupils could carry writing slates. Remember, much fun will come from watching older actors portray youngsters.

The lollipop isn't real. Make a big one out of cardboard. It's a nice effect to have two-sided Velcro on it. This way it will be easy to "stick on" someone's hair.

The spoof has to move. Don't allow the pacing to falter. Keep the jokes and gags, the good and the bad, coming. Don't wait for laughter (it might not come). Don't be afraid to add or cut a joke.

If your cast requirements are special, don't be afraid to change some male roles to female and female roles to male. For a smaller cast, you can combine characters.

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