By CYNTHIA DAVIES
and STEVEN FENDRICH

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TONGUE TWISTED
A Tongue-Twisting Farce in One Act
By CYNTHIA DAVIES and STEVEN FENDRICH

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(In Order of Appearance)

# of lines

YOUNG MOSES ROSES ....................... teenage boy 4
YOUNG SALLY SEASHELL ................... teenage girl 5
GAME SHOW HOSTESS ...................... seen, but not heard n/a
YOUNG DORA DIMBULB .................. teenage girl 1
WINK HUGHBETT ......................... game show host 30
JOHNNY JAY ................................ game show announcer; 3
a familiar voice heard,
but not seen

YOUNG HAZEL HAZELNUTT .............. teenage girl 2
MR. ROSES
(The grown-up version) .................. English teacher 55
MR. HYGIENE .......................... an elderly school custodian, a very tidy man 18

TWILA ........................................ brainy student 16
TARA .......................................... another 11
TAMARA ....................................... another 9
CHUCKIE ...................................... athletic student 8
CHERRY ....................................... another 19
CHARMAIN .................................. another 8
WALLY ....................................... member of the Pep Club 22

POLLY ........................................ another 22
MOLLY ........................................ another 18
MS. SEASHELL
(The grown-up version) ................. principal 61
MS. DIMBULB ............................ dedicated assistant 30
to the principal

STUDENT ONE ........................ walking home from school 3
STUDENT TWO .......................... another 3

For preview only
STUDENT THREE .................................. another 3
HAZEL HAZELNUTT  
(The grown-up version) .................... Nettie's Knitting School faculty member 14
NEDRA ........................................ student at Nettie's Knitting Night School 1
NORBERT ........................................ another 1
NELLIE ......................................... another 1
PETER PIPER ..................................... jolly farmer and tongue-twisting expert 7
ALICE AXEL ....................................... professor and tongue-twisting expert 7
GRETTA GUMDROP .............................. veteran tongue-twister 7

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES
Scene One: Thirty years ago in Bitter Batter's auditorium
Scene Two: Present day in Mr. Rose's Classroom
Scene Three: A few minutes later in the same classroom
Scene Four: A few days later in a school hallway
Scene Five: Contest day in the auditorium
PLACE: Auditorium of the Bitter Batter School.
TIME: 30 years ago.
SETTING: The twentieth annual tongue-twisting championship, in front of curtain.
LIGHTS UP: YOUNG MOSES ROSES ENTERS RIGHT. YOUNG SALLY SEASHELL ENTERS LEFT. They stand CENTER with their backs almost completely to the audience. A GAME SHOW HOSTESS ENTERS RIGHT, walking across the stage displaying a sign that reads, “Flashback: 30 years earlier.” She EXITS LEFT. YOUNG DORA DIMBULB stands LEFT and acts as cheering section. WINK HUGHBETT ENTERS RIGHT.
WINK: Wink Hughbett, here. Now for our final round of the championship. If little Dora Dimbulb, Sally Seashell and Moses Roses from Bitter Batter School complete these final two twisters in tongue twister form, they will be this year’s Tongue-twisting Tremendous Triumphant Team and continue a streak of wins for Bitter Batter School that has not been broken since the immortal Betty Batter started this tournament 20 years ago. Well, enough pressure. Tell them what they will win, Johnny Jay!
VOICE OF JOHNNY: (FROM OFFSTAGE RIGHT.) You bet, Wink! They will not only win the love and admiration of their peers, but they will also win the fabulous Bahama Mama’s Bikini Beach Bonanza vacation package! This all-expense paid trip gives each winner and his or her family a six-night stay at the swanky Bahama Mama resort and all the bananas they care to eat. And that’s not all! They also will receive the coveted Bitter Batter Banner and Trophy to display in their school’s trophy case—proof to all that they are indeed the undisputed grand champions! (GAME SHOW HOSTESS ENTERS LEFT and crosses the stage displaying a sign to the audience that reads “Applause.” She remains FAR RIGHT.)
WINK: But, wait. What if they tragically fail?
VOICE OF JOHNNY: (FROM OFFSTAGE RIGHT.) Well, Wink, if they fail, their utter humiliation and empty trophy case will hopefully be forgotten when they receive the incredible consolation prize: the Tongue Twister Home Game for Teens!
WINK: Thanks, Johnny. Well, let’s get started. Remember, each twister must be said a minimum of five times. You will be judged on speed, dramatization and, of course, clarity. Sally, are you ready?

YOUNG SALLY: Yes, Wink.

WINK: Here we go. (Enunciates.) Elegant elephants.

YOUNG SALLY: (Takes a deep breath, then proceeds with the tongue twister.) Elegant elephants. Elegant elephants. Elegant elephants. Elegant elephants. Elegant elephants. ([NOTE: It doesn’t matter if the actress does a masterful job on the tongue twister. Much of the humor of this show will come from the actors’ and actresses’ botched attempts at the tongue twisters. No matter how well they do, however, the judges will always give the scores as scripted. See PRODUCTION NOTES for more details.] GAME SHOW HOSTESS CROSSES RIGHT to LEFT with the “Applause” sign. She remains FAR LEFT.)

WINK: Judges? (Pause. Looks OFFSTAGE RIGHT to “see” judges’ scorecards.) A 9.3 out of 10! (GAME SHOW HOSTESS raises “Applause” sign FAR LEFT.) Well done, Sally. Okay, Moses. It’s up to you, now. Is it going to be Bahama Mama’s or our home game along with possible life-long traumas? It’s all up to you, my friend. Ready?

YOUNG MOSES: (Confident.) You bet I am, Wink.

WINK: Okay, Moses. Here is your twister. (Enunciates.) Cinnamon, aluminum, linoleum.


WINK: Judges? (Pause. Looks OFFSTAGE to “see” judges’ scorecards.) We have a score of… 2.5. I’m sorry, Moses. The win, the championship, the trip and the trophy all go to Nettie’s Knitting Night School! (SOUND EFFECT: APPLAUSE.)

YOUNG HAZEL: (ENTERS LEFT. Skips on over to YOUNG SALLY. To YOUNG SALLY.) Sally sold out today!

YOUNG SALLY: (To YOUNG HAZEL.) Be quiet, Hazel.

YOUNG HAZEL: (To YOUNG SALLY.) If you’re really nice, my Nettie’s Knitting Night School teammates and I might send you a postcard from the Bahamas. (She skips OFF LEFT, laughing.)
YOUNG SALLY: It seems she always wins everything.

YOUNG MOSES: (To YOUNG SALLY.) I’m so sorry, Sally. I think I bruised my tongue somehow.

YOUNG SALLY: No excuses, Moses Roses. You’ve made us all laughingstocks. You are a loser. A loser! A loser! (YOUNG SALLY EXITS RIGHT. WINK EXITS LEFT.)

YOUNG MOSES: (To DORA.) Oh, Dora. I am plagued with guilt.

YOUNG DORA DIMBULB: (Crosses RIGHT with YOUNG MOSES.) Hey, Moses, there’s always next year. (They EXIT RIGHT. BLACKOUT.)

End of Scene One

Scene Two

AT RISE: LIGHTS UP to reveal the present day in a classroom of the Bitter Batter School. MR. ROSES is STAGE RIGHT sitting behind his desk. His desk is overflowing with books, papers and files. STAGE LEFT are three rows each of three chairs and desks, angled for audience view. MR. ROSES is deep in thought. SOUND EFFECT: SCHOOL BELL.

MR. ROSES: (Startled.) Arrrrrg! (Tries to read watch.) It’s on backwards again. (Reads time.) Class in five minutes. (Looks for something on messy desk. Finds a variety of wild things, which he tosses aside. [NOTE: The odder the better—rubber chickens, pots and pans, head of lettuce, etc.])

MR. HYGIENE: (ENTERS LEFT, sweeping with a large broom. NOISES OF STUDENTS can be heard in the background.) Good morning, Mr. Roses.

MR. ROSES: Oh, good morning, Mr. Hygiene.

MR. HYGIENE: (Leans on broom.) Looking for something?

MR. ROSES: Yes, yes. I lost— (To himself.) Ohhhh, where… I can’t believe this is happening to me. How is it possible that she, that Sally Theeshell, I mean, Sally Flee-thell… I mean… that woman is now our principal? What could Auntie Betty have been thinking? I finally convinced her that Shakespeare’s artistic text came before that vulgar tongue-twisting. I realize that tongue twisters have always been one of Auntie Betty’s loves, but I want her to appreciate fine literature
even more. But now, Sally has literally come back to haunt me.

MR. HYGIENE: I assume you’re talking about Ms. Seashell. Has a big interest in tongue-twisting. Someone you know, Mr. Roses?

MR. ROSES: (To MR. HYGIENE.) No! No… uh… I… I… I was talking about a third cousin of mine and I can’t even find my copy of Hamlet. (Attempts to cover up.) Well, I don’t know her exactly… I… uh, just think her name is uh… unusual. Yes, very unusual and hard to say. Wouldn’t you agree, Hister Mygiene? I mean, Mr. Hygiene. (Nervous laugh.) Well, I really must find that book. Students will be here any minute. If you will excuse me.

MR. HYGIENE: (Sweeps.) Well, okay, Mr. Roses. Whatever you say. I hope you find what you’re looking for. By the way, Mr. Roses, you know what they say about cleanliness, don’t you?

MR. ROSES: Yes, yes, Mr. Hygiene. “Cleanliness is next to godliness.”

MR. HYGIENE: Nope. They say, “Cleanliness is what you get when you clear away all the crud.” You have a good day, Mr. Roses. (EXITS RIGHT. BELL RINGS and startles MR. ROSES. Books and paper fly off his desk.)

TWILA: (ENTERS RIGHT with TARA and TAMARA. They are brainy and they like to show it. They carry large backpacks or many textbooks.) Good morning, Mr. Roses. (Takes a seat in front row.)

MR. ROSES: Good morning, Twila.

TARA: Good morning, Professor. (Takes seat in front row and visibly mouths “What a mess.” to TWILA.)

MR. ROSES: Good day, Tara. (Fumbles without success to bring desk to order.)

TAMARA: (Stops in front of MR. ROSES’S desk.) Good morning, Mr. Roses. What are you doing?

MR. ROSES: Ah. Oh, yes. Good morning, Tamara. Well, I am, uh… looking for my copy of Hamlet. I can’t seem to find it. My desk, you see, is a tad disorganized and well—William Shakespeare, the bard… wonderful. I wanted to begin our discussion about him today.

TAMARA: (Bends down and picks up a book, which she hands to MR. ROSES.) Is this what you are looking for, sir?

MR. ROSES: Why, yes. Thank you, Tamara. (Mutters to himself and
scratches his head. TAMARA takes her seat in the front row.)

CHUCKIE: (ENTERS RIGHT with CHERRY and CHARMAIN. They are top athletes at the school and are dressed as typical teenage athletes: team shirts, baseball hats, letter jackets, etc. They also have backpacks, but not so “loaded.” They are tossing a “Nerf” style ball back and forth. They spread out in the room and play catch.) Yahoo! Right here, Cherry! Bring it home to Papa!

CHERRY: (Throws the ball to CHUCKIE.) Yes! Way to go, Chuckie! Here’s the test, Charmain! Here’s the throw! (CHUCKIE throws the ball to CHARMAIN.) What a catch! It’s a last second victory! What a play! (CHERRY and CHARMAIN “high five.”)

MR. ROSES: No ball throwing! In your seats now! (The three sit in the second row.)

WALLY: (ENTERS RIGHT with MOLLY and POLLY. They are the peppiest members of the Pep Club, dressed to match in the school colors. They set their books on their desks, then proceed DOWNSTAGE, MOLLY and POLLY with pompons in hand. Yells.) Let’s go! Polly, give me a “B”!

POLLY: “B”!

WALLY: Molly, give me another “B”!

MOLLY: Another “B”!

WALLY: Give me another “B”!

MOLLY/POLLY: Another “B”!

WALLY: What does it spell?

WALLY, MOLLY AND POLLY: (Waddling fingers across lips making the “B” sound.) B-b-b-b-b-b-b-b-b-b-b-b-b-b! (They jump and holler “Go Bitter Batter.”)

MR. ROSES: Wally, Molly, Polly! No cheering! Seats, please. (WALLY, MOLLY and POLLY take their seats in the back row.) Okay. Much better. Let’s get started. Does everyone have—(He is interrupted by MS. SEASHELL and MS. DIMBULB, who suddenly ENTER RIGHT.)

MS. SEASHELL: (Crosses to CENTER STAGE. MS. DIMBULB, the prototype school secretary, follows diligently. She holds a pencil and notepad, taking furious notes. MS. SEASHELL speaks in a sing-song voice.) Good morning, students. I would like to take this
opportunity to introduce myself as the new principal of Betty Batter’s Bitter Batter School. Home of the “Biting Barracudas.” (STUDENTS look at each other surprised. MR. ROSES looks sick.) Mr. Grunthorn decided to retire from his position as principal of this school due to an opportunity to go on a worldwide salmon study. Because of this, I, Sally Seashell, have taken over this honorable position. You may be surprised to know that I, too, was once a student here at Bitter Batter. I took the fine education I received here and used it to open the largest domestic import/export business selling pooka shell necklaces on the coast. But, alas, despite my success, “something” was missing. And that “something,” dear students, was my direct attachment to Bitter Batter. I… (Sniffs.) …I love you. (Wipes away tear.)

MS. DIMBULB: (Comforting MS. SEASHELL. Hands her a hanky.) Well said, Ms. Seashell.

MS. SEASHELL: (Takes hanky and blows loudly. To MS. DIMBULB.) Thank you, Ms. Dimbulb. (Quickly regains composure. Hands hanky back to MS. DIMBULB. Goes back to addressing school.) Now, as the new principal of Bitter Batter School… (Menacing.) some things are going to change. As you know, our school once had a proud history of winning the annual Tongue-twisting Tournament. Unfortunately, for the past (With much emphasis.) 30 years in a row, we have lost. (Pause. MR. ROSES sinks in his chair.) Well, my Bitter Batter buddies, that is going to change. This year we will win. Today, three thuperior thtudents will be chosen. (Laughs at her little joke.) I mean, of course, three superior students who will lead our untwisted battle cry to tongue-twisting glory. We will reclaim our lost past. The Bitter Batter Banner and Trophy will once again grace our fair trophy case. (In an ominous voice.) As the school’s tongue-twisting teacher sponsor, Mr. Roses will be choosing the championship team. (Looks directly at MR. ROSES.) Choose wisely. I will be watching your every move. (With great enthusiasm.) As always, the winning team will go to the Bahamas this year. Bitter Batter will prevail. (STUDENTS CHEER. MS. SEASHELL and MS. DIMBULB EXIT LEFT.)

MR. ROSES: (Quite undone.) Well, yes, class. I guess you heard Ms. Seashell. After we study the brilliant words and plot structure of Shakespeare’s Hamlet, I will be choosing a team for this infernal event. I, uh, mean exciting challenge to compete for that musty old… I mean, marvelous trophy and insip… inspiring vacation. So, let’s begin to study the glory and wonder of William Shakespeare. Who
can tell me at what point in Hamlet the line is crossed from sanity to insanity? (All hands in class shoot up enthusiastically. MR. ROSES is very pleased.) Well, well, well. I see that Shakespeare has captured your hearts and imaginations. (Looks around class.) Well, let’s see. (Points to CHUCKIE.) Yes, Chuckie. Share with us your thoughts and insights. Let your brain reveal what is deep in your heart.

CHUCKIE: (Stands.) Well, Mr. Roses. I wanted to be the first to let you know that Cherry, Charmain and I are totally the right choice to represent Bitter Batter in the Tongue-twisting Tournament. (CHERRY, CHARMAIN and CHUCKIE whoop and “high five” each other.) We are proudly known, of course, as jocks and we have the muscle and strength to outlast any opponent. (They flex muscles.) We all know that the tongue is the largest muscle in the body. We are ready to twist and shout. Check it out! (Sung as a rap. Even if he flubs a line, he continues as if nothing has happened.)
A flea and a fly flew up in a flue
Said the flea, “Let’s fly!”
Said the fly, “Let’s flee!”
So, they flew through a flaw in the flue!
(CHERRY and CHARMAIN clap and dance along. The OTHER STUDENTS plug their ears.)

MR. ROSES: (Tries to interrupt.) Excuse…

CHUCKIE: Take it, Cherry!

CHERRY: How much wood would a woodchuck chuck
If a woodchuck would chuck wood?
He would chuck as much wood as a woodchuck would chuck,
If a woodchuck could chuck wood.

MR. ROSES: (Tries to interrupt again.) Will you please…

CHERRY: Your turn, Charmain!

CHARMAIN: Once a feller met a feller in a field of beans.
Said the feller to the feller,
“Can a feller, tell a feller, what a feller means?”
(The JOCKS laugh and holler. OTHER STUDENTS are not impressed.)

MR. ROSES: (Finally gets their attention.) Cherry, Chuckie, Charmain! We will have no tongue-twisting in my classroom. Sit down, please. (Class comes to order.) Okay, that is much better. Now, let’s see. Where were we?
TARA: (Raises hand.) Insanity, Mr. Roses.

MR. ROSES: Ah, yes, my insanity. I mean, Hamlet’s insanity. Okay, class. When does Hamlet go insane? (All hands shoot up again. MR. ROSES is pleased.) Ah, yes. Much better, much better. You are focused in on Hamlet’s pain. Yes, yes. Let’s see. (To TWILA.) Twila. Share your thoughts with us.

TWILA: (Stands.) Mr. Roses. I am sorry to stray from the subject at hand. However, I feel compelled to inform you that Tara, Tamara and I are far better suited to represent our school in the tongue-twisting competition. Our superior intellectual capacity helps us to successfully execute a tongue-twister properly. Also, when we win, we vow to continue our studies of Shakespeare in our spare time when we visit the Bahamas. (TARA and TAMARA nod in agreement.)

CHERRY: No way, Twila!

TWILA: Ah, yes. An uncivilized attitude. Anyway, we would like to present the following classic. It is entitled (Clears throat.) “Your Bob Owes Our Bob.” (The following twisters are spoken as if giving a great lecture.)
Your Bob owes our Bob a bob,
And if your Bob doesn’t give our Bob the bob,
Our Bob will give your Bob a bob on the knob!

TAMARA: (Stands.) And further more…
There was a young lady named Kate
Who went to dinner at 8:08.
And it would be hard to relate
At this late date
What Kate and her date really ate.

TARA: (Stands.) And we shall never forget the classic…
Good, better, best—
Never let it rest
’Til your good is better
And your better is best!
(TWILA, TARA and TAMARA sit and applaud one another politely, yet smugly.)

MR. ROSES: No more! I am well aware of how loquacious you all are. But we must stay focused. Great literature awaits. Now back to Camlet—I mean Spamlet—arrrg! I mean Hamlet. (He regains composure.) Now, who can tell me about Hamlet? (All hands shoot
up again. MR. ROSES is leery. He covers his eyes with one hand and points to POLLY with the other.) Please, oh please, Polly. What can you tell us about Hamlet?

POLLY: (Stands and pauses.) Hamlet’s insanity…

MR. ROSES: (Encouraged, peeks through his fingers.) Yes… yes… yes… yes…

POLLY: Hamlet’s insanity will be nothing compared to the insanity of choosing them (Points to CHUCKIE’S group.) or them (Points to TWILA’S group.), as opposed to us. (Points to other PEP CLUB MEMBERS.) Only those of us on the Pep Club have the spirit to represent Bitter Batter in the tongue-twisting tournament and win. Am I right, guys?

MOLLY/WALLY: (Cheer.) Right! (MOLLY and POLLY quickly pull out pompons again.)

POLLY: (As a cheer.) Ready, go!  
Who washed Washington’s white woolen underwear  
When Washington’s washer woman went west?

MOLLY: Washington’s wife wouldn’t wash Washington’s  
White woolen underwear when  
Washington’s washerwoman went west.

WALLY: Washington unwillingly washed  
Washington’s white woolen underwear  
When Washington’s washer woman went west.  
(The PEP CLUB MEMBERS jump, kick and shout. The rest of the class stands, and they all start pleading with MR. ROSES.)

STUDENTS: (Ad lib.) We’re better than they are.  
They’re nothing but tongue-twisting twerps!  
Choose us, Mr. Roses!  
Please! Please! Please! (MR. ROSES can only sit and bang his head on the desk. After a few seconds of chaos, he raises a white flag and waves it.)

MR. ROSES: (Abrupt.) Enough, enough… enough! In your seats. I command you! (The STUDENTS quickly and quietly return to their seats.) I surrender! Forget Shakespeare! Forget Hamlet! I give up! Let your brains rot into a twisted pile of gibberish for all I care!

STUDENTS: (Ad lib.) Pick us! Please, oh please.  
We promise we’ll like Hamlet!  
We’ll wash your car.
You’re the best teacher in the world!

MR. ROSES: (Getting frazzled. Points to different students.) Well, maybe you. Or you. Or you. (His discomfort builds.)

STUDENTS: (Ad lib.) Yes us! We’re the best!
   We’ll bring it all back to the school!
   Didn’t you hear how good we are?
   Want to hear me again?

MR. ROSES: (As STUDENTS continue, tension builds until MR. ROSES shouts.) Oh, my gosh! Uh! Recess! (BLACKOUT.)

End of Scene Two

Scene Three

LIGHTS UP: It is a few minutes later in MR. ROSES’S classroom. MR. ROSES is sitting at his desk reading Hamlet. He is alone in the room.

MR. ROSES: (Reading dramatically.) “Whether ’tis nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, or to take arms against a sea of troubles, and by opposing, end them.” Oh, I know about trouble. (Continues reading to himself.)

MR. HYGIENE: (ENTERS RIGHT with broom, sweeping and whistling.) Good afternoon, Mr. Roses.

MR. ROSES: Hello, Mr. Hygiene.

MR. HYGIENE: What are you reading, Mr. Roses?

MR. ROSES: The brilliant words of William Shakespeare’s Hamlet. If I could only inspire my students to have the same passion for the bard that they do for those ridiculous tongue-twisters.

MR. HYGIENE: Oh, tongue-twisters aren’t all that bad. Have to admit, I can’t say that I care that much for Mr. Shakespeare. Not a very tidy fellow. Always using ten words when one would do just fine. (Takes up book and reads.) “They clip us drunkards and with swinish phrase, soil our additions in the pith and marrow of our attribute.” (Shakes his head.) What’s this “swine” stuff? Why not just call a pig a pig?

MR. ROSES: (Obviously irritated.) Mr. Hygiene, you shouldn’t belittle these words. Take note to their poetic beauty.
MR. HYGIENE: Well, I guess it’s a matter of taste. Well, I’m sure you got a class coming in pretty soon. I’ll see you around. (EXITS LEFT. MR. ROSES just waves, somewhat insulted by MR. HYGIENE’S attitude toward Shakespeare.)

MS. SEASHELL: (ENTERS RIGHT with MS. DIMBULB following her like a shadow, writing in her notebook. As MS. SEASHELL stops CENTER, MS. DIMBULB runs into her. To MS. DIMBULB.) My goodness! Could you watch where you are going, Dora?

MS. DIMBULB: (Looks up from notebook.) Oh, would you like me to write that down?

MS. SEASHELL: (To MS. DIMBULB.) No. Write this down: Yield to your principal. (Sees MR. ROSES. Is friendly in a superficial way.) Good afternoon, Moses.

MR. ROSES: (Nervous, remaining formal.) Oh, hello, Ms. Seashell. Hello, Ms. Dimbulb.

MS. SEASHELL: (To MS. DIMBULB.) Mirror, Dora. (MS. DIMBULB pulls a mirror from her pocket. MS. SEASHELL fixes herself up as she speaks.) You don’t have to be so formal, Moses. We have all known each other since… well, you know when.

MR. ROSES: How could I forget? You’ll never stop torturing me about that horrible day.

MS. SEASHELL: I realize I’ve been a bit too rough on you. But just call me Sally. Remember, Sally Seashell. (Mean and nasty.) Just don’t try saying it five times fast.

MR. ROSES: (To MS. DIMBULB.) Dora, will you tell Ms. Seashell that I refuse to speak with her anymore until she apologizes for the way she has been treating me ever since the tongue-twisting tournament 30 years ago.

MS. DIMBULB: (To MS. SEASHELL.) He refuses to speak with you until—

MS. SEASHELL: (Hands mirror back to MS. DIMBULB. Interrupts.) I heard him. (To MR. ROSES.) What’s the matter, Moses? Why can’t you speak to me? Tongue-tied?

MR. ROSES: (To MS. DIMBULB.) Ha! Shakespeare said, “All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand.” Tell Ms. Seashell, her hand will always hold the painful horrible memories of that infamous tongue-twisting day.
MS. DIMBULB: (To MS. SEASHELL.) He said something about painful memories smell like perfume.

MS. SEASHELL: What in the world is bothering you, Moses?

MR. ROSES: (Stares at MS. SEASHELL.) Why have you come back, Sally?

MS. SEASHELL: Why have I come back, Moses? To set things straight, of course. I want to win that tournament. I want to prove that I can be part of a winning team. Somebody I know clouded the reputation of this fine institution.

MR. ROSES: That was 30 years ago, Sally. Can’t we lay things to rest? Before that happened, weren’t we friends? Don’t you remember? We did so many things together. Bowling, miniature golf, the Shakespeare Festival. I even drove. Don’t you remember? And what about your favorites? Remember? (Pause. With authority. Points.) Dora, a tape recorder, please. (MS. DIMBULB looks at MS. SEASHELL. She feels caught in the middle. MR. ROSES crosses to MS. DIMBULB. He gives out an order. ) Dora, a tape recorder…now. (MS. DIMBULB EXITS RIGHT.)

MS. SEASHELL: I don’t know what you are up to, Moses. But you won’t get away with it. (MS. DIMBULB ENTERS RIGHT with a large tape recorder and a cowboy hat. She nervously waits for MR. ROSES to give her a cue.) Dora, you realize you are totally out of order.

MS. DIMBULB: I am terribly sorry, Sally. However, he obviously has a mission that only you can stop.

MR. ROSES: (With anger.) Maybe I can’t twist my tongue, Sally. But you know I can square my dance. (MS. DIMBULB puts on the cowboy hat and turns on the tape. We hear SQUARE DANCE MUSIC.)

MS. SEASHELL: No, Moses. Not square dancing! You know I can’t resist square dancing.

MR. ROSES: Yes, I know, Sally. Ever since third grade gym class. Remember when Mr. Piper paired us up for the Virginia Reel? And who messed up the square dancing? It wasn’t Darcy Plum. It wasn’t Rusty Cork. It was you, Sally! Dora Dimbulb, call the dance.

MS. DIMBULB: (Calls the dance.) Bow to your partner. (MR. ROSES and MS. SEASHELL bow.) Swing your partner.
MS. SEASHELL: (Dancing.) This won’t work, Moses. (She stumbles while dancing.)

MS. DIMBULB: Oh, no! I didn’t know.

MR. ROSES: That’s right, Sally! Two left feet! Hah! You see, we all know feet can get as twisted as a tongue.

MS. SEASHELL: (Angry.) I actually came back to heal our wounds. But now I see that you cannot be trusted. (MR. ROSES winces but keeps his composure.)

MS. DIMBULB: Please! Wouldn’t you both just consider promenading?

MS. SEASHELL/MR. ROSES: No!

MS. SEASHELL: (Formally.) Ms. Dimbulb, as your boss, I order you to turn off that music. (MS. DIMBULB turns the MUSIC OFF. To MR. ROSES.) I am now the principal. And I will not only act as this year’s coach, but I will take over your responsibilities in choosing the team.

MR. ROSES: Ah, but that is where you are wrong, Ms. Seashell.

MS. SEASHELL: What do you mean, Mr. Roses?

MR. ROSES: I’m surprised you’ve forgotten. Betty Batter, my dear, sweet aunt, put me in charge of selecting the team for the tongue-twisting tournament. She apparently trusts me more than anyone else. That includes you. So, Ms. Seashell, the team is of my choosing. In fact, it’s written in the Betty Batter Better Body of Law Book. I would think you, as principal, would have read it by now.

MS. SEASHELL: After reading over 400 pages, I must have skipped over the fine print. But this can’t really be true.

MS. DIMBULB: I think he’s right, Ms. Seashell. (MS. SEASHELL gasps.)

MR. ROSES: And since it is her school and you are her employee and she is my aunt, I think I have the upper hand on this one.

MS. SEASHELL: You can’t do this to me, Mr. Roses.

MR. ROSES: Oh, yes I can and in fact, I just did.

MS. DIMBULB: Wow! Ms. Seashell. I thought Mr. Roses would have gladly given up the responsibility of the tongue twister team.
MR. ROSES: Ha! Not now.

MS. SEASHELL: Aaaaarrrggggg! (Pause.) Well, I guess I shouldn’t be surprised considering it comes from a square dancing pit viper that supposes his “toeses” are roses. (To MS. DIMBULB.) Are you taking notes, Ms. Dimbulb?

MS. DIMBULB: (Takes notebook back out.) I’ll get to it, Ms. Seashell.

MS. SEASHELL: I’ll fix you, Moses. Just you wait. I know that day still haunts you. (She begins to EXIT RIGHT. MS. DIMBULB follows. MS. SEASHELL turns to MS. DIMBULB.) I don’t trust him. Somehow he seems so different from the Moses Roses I knew 30 years ago. Dora, let’s try to watch his every move. I sense a man on an evil mission. (BOTH EXIT RIGHT.)

MR. ROSES: (Sits in his chair. He looks in a book. Talks to himself.) Oh, Mr. Shakespeare. I wanted to come back to this school and prove that I could break through this tongue-twisting charade. I wanted people to get to know you. Have I failed? (Pause.) “When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept: Ambition should be made of sterner stuff.” (He pauses, pounds his fist on desk.) Yes, my friends. Sterner stuff. I, Moses Roses, shall be made of sterner stuff. (BELL RINGS. STUDENTS ENTER, followed by MS. DIMBULB. However, she looks different. Perhaps a pair of glasses or a wig. [NOTE: The humor comes from the fact that it is obvious that it is MS. DIMBULB, yet MR. ROSES doesn’t even notice.] Everyone sits immediately and is attentive. MR. ROSES looks over class.) My, this is better than before our little recess. It looks like all of you are prepared to finally enter into the wonderful world of Shakespeare. (No one answers. STUDENTS are still attentive.) Very nice. Very nice. (Begins.) Let’s continue with the wonderful classic of Hamlet. (Pauses. Still no reaction from STUDENTS.) A ghost tells Hamlet that he is doomed to walk on earth during the nights and suffer. You see—

POLLY: (Interrupts.) Mr. Roses?

MR. ROSES: Yes, Polly?

POLLY: (POLLY stands.) Have you, by any chance, given more thought as to who will be this year’s tongue-twisting team?

MR. ROSES: Polly, this is not the time. (POLLY sits. MR. ROSES continues.) Now, the ghost is aware of—
CHERRY: Sir? If this was the time, whom would you select?

MOLLY: Hey. Our fine teacher said it’s not the time. It seems to me that your group is just too rude to be tongue-twisters.

CHUCKIE: That seems to be a pretty ill mannered statement.

TWILA: Sir? Could you please have them taken out of the room so we can continue learning about this “Hamster” guy.

WALLY: Camelot, you idiot!

TARA: Hey! Don’t call her an idiot, you nut!

POLLY: Nut?

TAMARA: Yeah, nut!

CHARMAIN: I see six nuts. Mr. Roses, I think it’s clear that Chuckie, Cherry and I would have the courtesy to conduct ourselves well in the tongue-twisting competition.

STUDENTS: (Ad lib.) Courtesy? You don’t know what courtesy is. At least we pay attention to Mr. Roses. We’re the ultimate in tongue-twisters and good students. I’ll twist your tongue with my fist! You just want to go to the Bahamas.

MR. ROSES: (Like an army sergeant.) Attention! (STUDENTS become silent.) Line up! (STUDENTS line up DOWNSTAGE facing AUDIENCE. MR. ROSES proceeds to pace back and forth inspecting them. To STUDENT.) Suck in that gut! (To another STUDENT.) Wipe that smile off your face! (Proceeds. He stops and pauses to stare at MS. DIMBULB. It seems as though he recognizes her. Suddenly, he proceeds.) I can see that we are not going to accomplish anything truly meaningful unless we get this tongue-twisting team selected. Hmmmmmm. Whom shall I choose? (To WALLY, POLLY and MOLLY.) This group of impassioned cheerleaders? (To TARA, TWILA and TAMARA.) Or how about some beaming intellectuals? (To CHERRY, CHUCKIE and CHARMAIN.) Or what about these three with unrestrained athletic prowess. (Contemplating.) Whom to choose? Whom to choose? Whom to choose? (Pauses.) What would William Shakespeare do at a time like this? (Thinks.) Ah, yes. “The time is out of joint; —O cursed spite… That ever I was born to set it right.” From Shakespeare’s Hamlet, ladies and gentlemen. I give to you my final decision. Many may call this a comedy of errors or, perhaps, others may even suggest the following decision is a tragedy.
(Pause.) This year’s Bitter Batter tongue-twisting team will be made up of Wally… (WALLY, POLLY and MOLLY cheer. MR. ROSES interrupts.) And Twila. (STUDENTS are stunned. MR. ROSES smiles.) And Cherry. (STUDENTS become unsettled.)

MS. DIMBULB: (Watching.) Oh, my goodness! (Scribbles information in notepad.)

WALLY: You split us up!

TARA: You can’t do that!

CHARMAIN: We can’t win if you split us up. Don’t you want us to win, Mr. Roses?

MR. ROSES: (Shouts.) Attention! (STUDENTS come to attention. Shouts.) At ease! (STUDENTS respond.) Well, well, well. I did do something a bit out of the ordinary. And it is fair. I’m sure you all remember that our dear Shakespeare once said, (In a profound voice.) “I am not in the role of common men.” Well, my friends, to choose a tongue-twisting team is not a common duty. My decision, some day, will possibly be hailed as profound as Shakespeare’s Hamlet or Romeo and Juliet. (To himself.) Ha! And let’s just see what Ms. Seashell has to say about that. (STUDENTS are stunned. MS. DIMBULB is horrified. She scribbles a few more notes as MR. ROSES picks up books and EXITS RIGHT smiling. He passes the startled MS. DIMBULB. He stares and smiles at MS. DIMBULB and walks OUT. MS. DIMBULB looks dumbfounded at the audience, then EXITS RIGHT. BLACKOUT.)

End of Scene Three

Scene Four

LIGHTS UP: It is a few days later in a hallway of the school. The action takes place DOWN CENTER in front of the curtain. If a curtain is not available, dim lighting on classroom to highlight action. STUDENTS ONE, TWO and THREE ENTER RIGHT. They carry books and backpacks.

STUDENT ONE: Can you believe Ms. Seashell? (ALL stop CENTER.)

STUDENT TWO: I know. She really wants to win the tournament.

STUDENT THREE: And poor Wally, Twila and Cherry. She has them running ragged and talking tattered. She won’t let them do anything
but get in shape and work on tongue twisters. Besides that, the three of them don’t even like one another.

STUDENT ONE: I also heard that they’re not even decent at doing tongue twisters. I’m willing to bet we’re going to lose again. That’s a lot of years. We’re laughingstocks when it comes to tongue twisters.

STUDENT TWO: If they’re not good at tongue-twisting and they’re not even having fun, why don’t they all just quit?

STUDENT THREE: Would you give up a possible trip to the Bahamas?

STUDENT ONE: Well, my guess is that we’re probably going to lose again.

STUDENT TWO: Then how come Mr. Roses didn’t pick a better team?

STUDENT THREE: Yesterday in class he said something about, “To be or not to be,” but then I didn’t understand much after that. (They shake heads and EXIT LEFT.)

MS. SEASHELL: (ENTERS RIGHT with MS. DIMBULB, who carries a stopwatch. WALLY, TWILA and CHERRY follow, stumbling in exhaustion. ALL are wearing athletic grey sweatshirts.) Okay, team. Stop! (ALL stop CENTER.) Time for facial stretching.

WALLY: Oh, no! Not again!

TWILA: Ms. Seashell, we did this seven times yesterday.

CHERRY: If we keep on doing this, no one will recognize me.

WALLY: I think that would be a benefit.

CHERRY: Oh, be quiet.

TWILA: Why don’t both of you be quiet?

WALLY/TWILA/CHERRY: (Ad lib.) Stop whining, you’re irritating me.
   How am I going to relax on the beaches with you two?
   Well, we aren’t going to make it with your tongue-twisting talents.
   Be quiet!
   I’m not going to be quiet. I’m supposed to be talking.

MS. SEASHELL: Now, no complaining. We want to win, don’t we?
Remember, Bahama Mama’s is waiting for you. Can’t we show some cohesiveness?

WALLY/TWILA/CHERRY: (Ad lib.) I doubt it.
   I’m beginning to wonder.
   I’ve lost touch with my friends.
   I’ve lost touch with my face.

MS. SEASHELL: That’s it! I’ve had it. All of you go to your corners for a time-out. (WALLY, TWILA and CHERRY immediately separate and sit with their heads down. HAZEL HAZELNUTT ENTERS LEFT. She hasn’t changed much since winning 30 years ago.)

HAZEL HAZELNUTT: So, I heard you were back.

MS. SEASHELL: I didn’t think it would take you long to come by. How does it feel to be Head of Embroidery at Nettie’s Knitting Night School?

HAZEL HAZELNUTT: I’ve found my niche, just like my first place tongue-twisting plaque.

MS. DIMBULB: My, I didn’t realize how important that could be to some people.

HAZEL HAZELNUTT: I’m sure you have also heard that I have been named coach of this year’s tongue-twisting squad at the school.

MS. SEASHELL: Is that so?

HAZEL HAZELNUTT: If I win, rumor has it that I may be given a slight promotion.

MS. SEASHELL: Do I care?

HAZEL HAZELNUTT: If I bring home the trophy, I have been promised both the funds and support to buy the land where your school stands. In other words, Betty and this school would be saying, “Bye, bye.”

MS. DIMBULB: Oh, my! Why are you telling all of this to us?

HAZEL HAZELNUTT: I’m putting together a new staff. (To MS. SEASHELL.) I need to know today if you would be interested in working for me. Though I would be head of the tongue-twisting squad, I certainly feel that your financial talents exhibited in opening the largest pooka shell necklace domestic import/export business would help our school expand to new markets.
MS. SEASHELL: You can’t be serious, Hazel. I would never give up tongue-twisting or this school. Our fine institution will win.

HAZEL HAZELNUTT: (Looks at STUDENTS in time-out. Sarcastic.) I can tell you have a real team spirit.

MS. DIMBULB: You just wait and see, Hazel.

HAZEL HAZELNUTT: Well, I guess you two might as well enjoy your last few days living in a fantasy world. (She EXITS LEFT.)

MS. SEASHELL: Dora, why did Moses create such a miserable team? The school’s destiny rests on my shoulders.

MS. DIMBULB: Maybe we can persuade him to change his mind.

MS. SEASHELL: Are you kidding? After all of the time we’ve invested with this team. (Refers to STUDENTS pouting in time-out.) And I don’t want to hurt their feelings.

MS. DIMBULB: Well, what seems to be holding them together, for some reason, is the idea of a trip to the Bahamas.

MS. SEASHELL: Dora, if that’s the key to their motivation, then that’s what we’ll lock in on. (Loud enough for STUDENTS to hear.) Ms. Dimbulb, did you bring the Bahama Mama Travel Guide?

MS. DIMBULB: Yes, Ms. Seashell.

MS. SEASHELL: I think this fine team will be interested in seeing pictures of the resort after our workout.

WALLY: I thought we just finished our workout?

MS. SEASHELL: Well, I’ve noticed some bickering among the three of you, and I think we should continue to work on friendship building.

TWILA: Ms. Seashell, what about all of my homework?

MS. SEASHELL: Oh, the tournament is only a week away. You’re all doing a great job keeping up. Why don’t we all give Ms. Dimbulb a warm round of applause for her organizational help and fine tutoring. (STUDENTS APPLAUD halfheartedly. MS. SEASHELL APPLAUDS with spirit.)

MS. DIMBULB: (Appreciates notice.) Oh, thank you. Thank you, very much.

MS. SEASHELL: Well, will you all be interested in taking a look at
pictures of those nice, sandy beaches at the end of our communications session? Yes, the Bahamas. I get so excited when I think of the fun of scuba diving in the warm waters. I can just feel those tender, subtle breezes whispering into my ear, “Congratulations! This is for deserving tongue-twisting champions.” Come out of your corners, everyone. (WALLY, TWILA and CHERRY walk over to MS. SEASHELL.)

WALLY: (Sudden change of attitude.) Oh, certainly, Ms. Seashell.

TWILA: Only if I can have another face stretching. (Begins to “stretch” face.)

CHERRY: And maybe another ten-mile jog.

MS. SEASHELL: That’s the enthusiasm! Okay, team. Repeat after me. (Slowly. Stretches face with each syllable.) A bug bit a bold bald bear.

WALLY/TWILA/CHERRY: (In quiet, weak voices they repeat and stretch faces.) A bug bit a bold bald bear.

MS. SEASHELL: (Shouts.) I can’t hear you!

WALLY/TWILA/CHERRY: (Louder. They repeat and stretch faces.) A bug bit a bold bald bear.

MS. SEASHELL: (Shouts.) With Bitter Batter spunk!

WALLY/TWILA/CHERRY: (Louder, with more emotion, they repeat and stretch faces.) A bug bit a bold bald bear.

MS. SEASHELL: (Sotto voce to MS. DIMBULB.) Honestly, Dora. Do you think this group is ready for any kind of fierce tongue-twisting competition?

MS. DIMBULB: (Replies sotto voce.) Honestly? Well, Sally, I don’t think the judges would see much in the way of confidence. They certainly have a long way to go.

MS. SEASHELL: (To MS. DIMBULB.) But I will not give up! That’s why I have returned. (To STUDENTS.) Stretch those mouths. You know we can win it all by being in optimal shape. (STUDENTS stretch mouths. Enunciate.) A bug bit a bold bald bear.

WALLY/TWILA/CHERRY: (Louder.) A bug bit a bold bald bear.

MS. SEASHELL: That’s better! Ms. Dimbulb?

MS. DIMBULB: Yes?
MS. SEASHELL: I want you to play the role of a judge. (To STUDENTS.) Now, let's hear it five times fast.


MS. SEASHELL: (To MS. DMBULB.) Score?

MS. DMBULB: Honestly?

MS. SEASHELL: Honestly.


WALLY/TWILA/CHERRY: (Ad lib.) What?
That's ridiculous!
We're much better than that!
Will we still get to look at the brochures?

MS. SEASHELL: (Interrupts.) Quiet! All of you. It's obvious we still have a lot of work to do. Just remember, Bitter Batter is bound for the Bahamas. Let's go. (ALL EXIT LEFT jogging.)

MR. ROSES: (ENTERS RIGHT. Talking to himself, as if he is confiding in William Shakespeare.) Dear, William. I admit my wrongdoings. You once said, “Such an act that blurs the grace and blush of modesty.” Despite all my anger toward Sally, I think she has good intentions. I hated disappointing her in the tongue-twisting contest those many years ago. I have to admit to you, dear Mr. Shakespeare, that tongue-twisting… (Pauses.) I must admit that, to me, tongue-twisting can be as profound as a sonnet. In its own way, of course. And yes, I shattered so many dreams 30 years ago with my bruised tongue. A tongue that I bruised just moments before the final round. I have tried to forget my failure, brought on by a strange accident, by immersing myself in your literature. Every year I have purposely made our tongue-twisting team a loser so that my blundering abrasion to my organ of speech would be forgotten. But how come I can't shake it? When I seem so close to ridding myself of that horrible remembrance, something seems to trigger my memories to haunt me once again. This year, Sally Seashell is back. Am I wrong to rob her of her own dream? Yet, here is a woman who can't even do-si-do. If only this scenario in my life would end in something other than a tragedy. (He EXITS LEFT.)

POLLY: (ENTERS RIGHT with MOLLY; BOTH carry pompons.) Molly, did you hear that?
MOLLY: You bet! Give me an “O”!
POLLY: “O”!
MOLLY: Give me an “M”!
POLLY: “M”!
MOLLY: Give me a “G”!
POLLY: “G”!
MOLLY: What does it sort of spell?
BOTH: Oh, my gosh!

TARA: (ENTERS LEFT with TAMARA, carrying books and/or backpacks.) I cannot grasp why Mr. Roses divided us all up.

TAMARA: I am having difficulty understanding his decision. In fact, I would never say this to Twila. I mean, she is my very best friend. (TARA, insulted, reacts. TAMARA realizes error.) I mean, one of my best friends. But despite her fine intellect, Twila isn’t an exemplary twister when she is not with us.

CHUCKIE: (ENTERS LEFT with CHARMAIN.) Things aren’t looking too good for the team.

CHARMAIN: Mr. Roses fumbled from the beginning when he chose this year’s tongue-twisting squad. (ALL meet at CENTER STAGE.) Well, here we all are. What’s new?

POLLY: (Carefully.) Rumor has it that Mr. Roses may actually have a secret passion for tongue-twisting.

CHUCKIE: How do you know?
MOLLY: We have our ways.
TARA: We know. Like the way you blew it for everyone this year.
POLLY: I blew it?
TARA: You bet. If you wouldn’t have pushed Mr. Roses so much, he would have seen that Tamara, Twila and I were the best choice to be the tongue-twisters.
CHARMAIN: I don’t see how you ever reached that conclusion.
POLLY: Hey! If you don’t want to listen…
TAMARA: Why should we?
CHARMAIN: Yeah, it seems you guys messed things up for everybody.

POLLY: Oh, yeah. Sure. Come on, Molly. If these nerds don’t want to listen.

ALL: (Ad lib.) Who are you calling nerds?
   You messed up everything!
   We didn’t do anything!
   Be quiet!
   Go and tongue-twist in a desert!

MR. HYGIENE: (ENTERS RIGHT, broom in hand.) Hey, what’s going on here? (STUDENTS continue to argue.) Excuse me. (He is ignored. Shouts.) Attention! (STUDENTS stop immediately. To himself.) Boy, that really does work. (To STUDENTS.) Hey, what in the world is going on here?

MOLLY: Mr. Hygiene, everyone thinks it’s somebody else’s fault that they were not on the tongue-twister team.

MR. HYGIENE: Small bit of finger pointing?

TAMARA: “Small” is definitely a kind word for it.

MR. HYGIENE: Well, so what started all of it?

MOLLY: Well, Polly and I heard that Mr. Roses may have purposely chosen a team that Ms. Seashell would find…

MR. HYGIENE: Uncooperative?

MOLLY: That’s the very word.

POLLY: And guess what. He’s feeling awfully guilty about it.

MR. HYGIENE: Seems to me he’s going to try to set things right.

TARA: Is there anyway we can help?

MR. HYGIENE: Well, arguing isn’t going to help the situation. Just remember. Hamlet once said, “That ever I was born to set it right. Nay, come, let’s go together.”

STUDENTS: Huh?

MR. HYGIENE: In other words, I, Jonathan Jerome Hygiene, believe that we can make sure things turn out right if we all work together. Come on, everyone. We have some work to do. (BLACKOUT.)
End of Scene Four

Scene Five

LIGHTS UP: The day of the contest. We’re at the championship round. The scene has changed to the auditorium set up as a contest arena as in Scene One. STAGE RIGHT there are three rows of benches or chairs angled for audience view. MS. SEASHELL and MS. DIMBULB are seated in the first row DOWN RIGHT. The second row is empty, saved for the Bitter Batter STUDENTS. HAZEL HAZELNUTT, STUDENTS from Nettie’s Knitting Night School and various other fans can be seated in the third row. There is a lot of talking and laughing in the “stands.” A podium with a banner that says “Tongue-twisting Tournament” stands CENTER STAGE. To the RIGHT of CENTER, are three chairs for the judges. On these chairs are several scoring cards and bold black markers. The contestants’ podiums or desks are STAGE LEFT, angled for audience view. The Bitter Batter team is DOWN LEFT, Nettie’s Knitting Night School team, consisting of NEDRA, NORBERT and NELLIE, is UP LEFT.

MS. DIMBULB: (To MS. SEASHELL.) You did a wonderful job with the team, Sally. They actually made it to the finals!

MS. SEASHELL: (Nervous.) Well, we haven’t won yet. As for Cherry, well, I thought she wasn’t going to make it through the last round. If it wasn’t for that last minute injury to the captain of the Otto Hottentot Hopscotch High team, and the fact that her replacement had a frog in her throat, they wouldn’t have lost momentum. We’re lucky to have made it here.

MS. DIMBULB: And to think they are actually holding the contest at our school this year in honor of Betty Batter and the fiftieth year of the tournament. But I hope it isn’t the end of the school. Have you talked to Betty?

MS. SEASHELL: I didn’t have the heart. And speaking of someone who doesn’t have a heart, look who’s coming. (HAZEL HAZELNUTT crosses to MS. SEASHELL and MS. DIMBULB.) Hello, Hazel.

HAZEL HAZELNUTT: My, what a nice opportunity to come to Bitter Batter and get a glimpse at the layout of the building. I didn’t realize there was this much room for tongue-twisting and sewing.

MS. SEASHELL: The championship isn’t over yet.

HAZEL HAZELNUTT: If your team does as well as they did in
the semifinals, you will be packing your bags tonight! (She walks away.)

MS. DIMBULB: I can’t stand her!

MS. SEASHELL: We’ve got to win this tournament. Do you think Moses will come?

MS. DIMBULB: I don’t know.

MS. SEASHELL: I think the team would love to have him here. After all, he did choose them.

MS. DIMBULB: And the two of you were a team 30 years ago. He should know how important it is to stick together.

MOLLY: (ENTERS RIGHT with POLLY. To POLLY.) I hope he’s right.

POLLY: (To MOLLY.) We’ve got to believe. They’ll need all the help they can get.

MOLLY: (To POLLY.) Okay. But, I’ll have my fingers crossed. (POLLY and MOLLY move to sit in second row of “stands,” still chatting quietly.)

TARA: (ENTERS RIGHT with TAMARA. To TAMARA.) Twila is doing great. Don’t you think?

TAMARA: (To TARA.) I’m in total agreement. They actually stand a chance of winning. Especially if it really does work. (They sit in second row.)

CHUCKIE: (ENTERS RIGHT with CHARMAIN. To CHARMAIN.) There have been great upsets in competition before.

CHARMAIN: (To CHUCKIE.) And I can’t think of anyone who would be more upset than Ms. Seashell if she didn’t win this. (They also take their seats in the second row.)

WINK: (ENTERS LEFT. EVERYONE in the stands quiets down. He looks as slick and handsome as he did 30 years ago—some things in the game show business never change. He is followed IN by WALLY, TWILA and CHERRY from Bitter Batter and NEDRA, NORBERT and NELLIE from Nettie’s Knitting Night School. The contestants are stretching faces, warming up for the event. They may also do conventional exercises such as touching the floor with their hands, bending side to side, jumping jacks, etc. CONTESTANTS are dressed nicely, wanting to give a nice impression for judges.
WINK takes his place behind the podium while CONTESTANTS take their places. GAME SHOW HOSTESS takes her position DOWN LEFT. She is holding cue cards. WINK takes over. Welcome back to the championship round of the Tongue-twisting Tournament. (GAME SHOW HOSTESS holds up “Applause” sign. SOUND EFFECT: Applause.) As you know, I am your “host with the most,” Wink Hughbett. What a day this has been! Here in the nostalgic setting of Bitter Batter School, where this very contest began 50 years ago, we have seen the number of teams go from eight down to our two finalists. Johnny Jay, can you tell us what our losing teams are taking home today?

JOHNNY’S VOICE: (From OFFSTAGE LEFT.) It’s the Golden Edition Tongue Twister Home Game For Teens.

WINK: Thank you, Johnny. That’s quite a gift. Now, let’s introduce our two final tongue-twisting teams. (He points to the CONTESTANTS. GAME SHOW HOSTESS holds up the “Applause” sign, and the SPECTATORS go wild. WINK indicates UP LEFT.) Here we have the folks who gave us the flawless “Andy goes to the Indies in his undies” in record time. Let’s hear it for Nettie’s Knitting Night School! (GAME SHOW HOSTESS raises “Applause” sign. The SPECTATORS respond.) And from Bitter Batter School, it’s the trio who “cleaned their copper kettles keenly!” (GAME SHOW HOSTESS raises “Applause” sign. The SPECTATORS respond.) And from Bitter Batter School, it’s the trio who “cleaned their copper kettles keenly!” (GAME SHOW HOSTESS raises “Applause” sign. MS. SEASHELL jumps up and starts whooping, as does MS. DIMBULB. EVERYONE stops clapping and stares at MS. SEASHELL and MS. DIMBULB. MS. SEASHELL stops and looks at MS. DIMBULB, who is still whooping with abandon. MS. SEASHELL smacks MS. DIMBULB with her purse. They both sit.) I would now like to introduce our esteemed panel of judges for the final round. Our first judge hails from Pittsburgh and is famous for his perfectly picked and pickled peppers. Let’s hear it for the one and only Peter Piper! (PETER PIPER ENTERS DOWN RIGHT. He is a jolly farmer. He stops, waves at the audience and then takes his seat. GAME SHOW HOSTESS raises the “Applause” sign.) And who can forget Professor Alice Axel, author of forty-eight books on this very subject and head of the Department of Tongue-twisting of Iceland located in Greenland. Welcome, Professor! (ALICE AXEL ENTERS DOWN RIGHT. She is obviously educated and conservative. She goes straight for her chair and sits promptly. GAME SHOW HOSTESS raises the “Applause” sign.) Finally, we are honored to have a veteran of this art. She is believed to have been the first human being to originate and say without a blunder,
“Mrs. Smith’s Fish Sauce Shop.” Please welcome Gretta Gumdrop! (GRETTA GUMDROP ENTERS DOWN RIGHT. She is cheerful and gives a warm wave to her fans. She takes a bow and sits in her chair. GAME SHOW HOSTESS raises the “Applause” sign.) Okay, contestants. Let’s quickly review the rules. I will read each tongue twister slowly. A member of each team will then take a turn saying the twister five times fast. All will be rated by the judges on clarity, speed and, of course, feeling. Questions? (Pause. Then with great excitement.) It’s tongue-twisting time! (GAME SHOW HOSTESS holds up “Applause” sign.) The first twister will go to the winner of the coin toss, Nettie’s Knitting Night School. Listen carefully. (Said slowly with distinction.) “Lonely lowland llamas are ladylike.” (NOTE: These twisters are, of course, somewhere between difficult and downright impossible. Remember, the comedy will come when your actors struggle with them. A “correct” scoring system is not necessary. The fun is watching WINK and the JUDGES praise contestants, even if they foul up.)

NEDRA: (Stretches mouth. Begins.) Lowly lowland llamas are ladylike. Lowly lowland llamas are ladylike. Lowly lowland llamas are ladylike. Lowly lowland llamas are ladylike. Lowly lowland llamas are ladylike. (GAME SHOW HOSTESS raises “Applause” sign.)

WINK: Judges?

PETER: (Holds up card. Speaks.) Nine.

ALICE: (Holds up card. Speaks.) Six.

GRETTA: (Holds up card. Speaks.) Seven point three.

WINK: For a total score of 22.3 out of a possible 30! (Turns to TWILA, CHERRY and WALLY.) Okay, now we turn to Bitter Batter. Here is your twister: “Nippy Noodle nipped his neighbor’s nutmegs.”

TWILA: (She takes a deep breath.) Nippy Noodle nipped his neighbor’s nutmegs. Nippy Noodle nipped his neighbor’s nutmegs. Nippy Noodle nipped his neighbor’s nutmegs. Nippy Noodle nipped his neighbor’s nutmegs. Nippy Noodle nipped his neighbor’s nutmegs. Nippy Noodle nipped his neighbor’s nutmegs.

WINK: Let’s see what our judges have to say.

PETER: (Holds up card. Speaks.) Seven point five.

ALICE: (Holds up card. Speaks.) Seven point five.

GRETTA: (Holds up card. Speaks.) Eight point zero.
WINK: For a total score of 23! Bitter Batter is in the lead! (Bitter Batter fans go wild. MS. SEASHELL and MS. DIMBULB hug.) Now on to round number two. In this round, both teams will be given the same twister. And I must say, it’s a hard one. Good luck teams. Okay, Nettie’s Knitting Night School. (To NORBERT.) Here it is: (Slowly.) A bug bit a bold bald bear and the bold bald bear bled blood badly.

MS. SEASHELL: (To MS. DIMBULB. Excited.) We know this one, Dora! This was in training camp.

NORBERT: (Same routine as before.) A bug bit a bold bald bear and the bold bald bear bled blood badly. A bug bit a bold bald bear and the bold bald bear bled blood badly. A bug bit a bold bald bear and the bold bald bear bled blood badly. A bug bit a bold bald bear and the bold bald bear bled blood badly. A bug bit a bold bald bear and the bold bald bear bled blood badly. A bug bit a bold bald bear and the bold bald bear bled blood badly.

WINK: What's the verdict, judges?

PETER: (Holds up card. Speaks.) Nine point five.

ALICE: (Holds up card. Speaks.) Nine point zero.

GRETTA: (Holds up card. Speaks.) Nine point five.

WINK: What a score! Twenty-eight out of a possible 30! Bitter Batter, are you ready?

MS. SEASHELL: (Stands and shouts.) We are ready, Wink! (JUDGES hold up red flags. MS. SEASHELL sits immediately, obviously embarrassed.)

WINK: Well, it looks like someone thinks you can do it. (Sternly.) However, I must advise Bitter Batter’s coach that she has officially received a “red flag” warning for speaking out of order. (To MS. SEASHELL.) Ms. Seashell, you may stay in the stands, but you are not allowed any further contact with your team. Any additional communication with them will result in your team forfeiting this event. (MS. SEASHELL nods. Back to CONTESTANTS.) Okay, here it is again. (Slowly.) A bug bit a bold bald bear and the bold bald bear bled blood badly.

WALLY: A bug bit a bold bald bear and the bold bald bear bled blood badly. A bug bit a bold bald bear and the bold bald bear bled blood badly. A bug bit a bold bald bear and the bold bald bear bled blood badly. A bug bit a bold bald bear and the bold bald bear bled blood badly. A bug bit a bold bald bear and the bold bald bear bled blood badly.
badly. A bug bit a bold bald bear and the bold bald bear bled blood badly.

WINK: Judges?

PETER: (Holds up card. Speaks.) Nine point zero.

ALICE: (Holds up card. Speaks.) Nine point five.

GRETTA: (Holds up card. Speaks.) Nine point five.

WINK: For a total score of 28! It’s now Bitter Batter 51, Nettie’s Knitting Night School 50.3 And Bitter Batter is still in the lead! (Bitter Batter fans applaud. MS. SEASHELL has restrained happiness.) We’ll be back for the final twister after a five-minute intermission. (He crosses to JUDGES’ chairs for a silent conference.)

TARA: (In the stands.) Oh, no, Ms. Seashell. We were counting on you to take a special gift down to Cherry.

MOLLY: If you can’t approach the team, how are we going to get our good luck candy down to her?

CHARMAIN: And we all made it together… with the help of Mr. Hygiene.

POLLY: Without even arguing.

MS. SEASHELL: I’m sorry, kids. But I don’t think that candy at a time like this will mean that much to Cherry.

TAMARA: Oh, but it will!

CHUCKIE: Mr. Hygiene gave us a recipe that he said is a tongue lubricant. (Hands MS. SEASHELL a bag.)

MOLLY: He says it works wonders.

MS. SEASHELL: Well, I wouldn’t normally do this, but—

POLLY: It’s allowed. We checked the statutes ourselves.

MS. SEASHELL: Well, I still—

HAZEL HAZELNUTT: (Crosses to MS. SEASHELL.) Problems, Sally?

MS. SEASHELL: Hazel, I never envisioned myself asking a favor from you. However, these kids have a good luck gift they would like to give to Cherry. Would you… ?

HAZEL HAZELNUTT: In the spirit of friendly competition, I’ll be
happy to. (She takes bag from MS. SEASHELL.)

MS. SEASHELL: (Surprised.) Thank you, Hazel. I guess I underestimated your cooperative spirit in the middle of this fierce tongue-twisting final.

HAZEL HAZELNUTT: Competition should never override friendship. (As she walks on over to CHERRY, Bitter Batter fans look on with anxiety.) Cherry? Since Ms. Seashell was unable to come over, I volunteered to bring this to you. (CHERRY looks at Bitter Batter crew. They wave wildly.) Apparently it’s something very special.

CHERRY: (Suspiciously.) Why, thank you, Ms. Hazelnutt. (She opens up package with the candy. Takes out note and reads aloud.) “A special gift for competition. P.S. Okay in the rulebooks.” (She waves at her friends and sticks the piece of taffy in her mouth. It is obvious that it is extremely chewy. [NOTE: Make this scene authentic. It adds to the hilarity.])

WINK: (Goes back to the podium. EVERYONE promptly goes back to his or her places. In a dramatic voice.) We’ve reached the final round. At this time, we now call upon our final Nettie’s Knitting Night School member. (NELLIE crosses to CENTER.) Here we go. (Slowly.) Sam’s shop stocks short spotted socks.

NELLIE: Sam’s shop stocks short spotted socks. Sam’s shop stocks short spotted socks. Sam’s shop stocks short spotted socks. Sam’s shop stocks short spotted socks. Sam’s shop stocks short spotted socks.

WINK: Judges?

PETER: (Holds up card. Speaks.) Nine point nine.

ALICE: (Holds up card. Speaks.) Nine point eight.

GRETTA: (Holds up card. Speaks.) Nine point eight.

WINK: What a score! A total of 29.5! That puts Nettie’s Knitting Night School in the lead! It will take an incredible twist by Bitter Batter. (CHERRY crosses to CENTER. She is still chewing on the candy.) Okay, Cherry. Again, listen carefully to your twister. (Slowly.) Sam’s shop stocks short spotted socks.

CHERRY: (Very poorly, with her mouth full.) Sam’s shop stocks short spotted socks. Sam’s shop stocks short spotted socks. Sam’s shop stocks short spotted socks. Sam’s shop stocks short spotted socks. Sam’s shop stocks short spotted socks.
WINK: Judges?
PETER: (Holds up card. Speaks.) One point one.
ALICE: (Holds up card. Speaks.) Point two.
GRETTA: (Holds up card. Speaks.) Two point five.
CHERRY: (Still with a full mouth.) But I bruised my tongue!
WINK: I’m sorry. Those are the risks. You have a total of three point eight. Ladies and gentlemen, this year’s champion is—
MR. ROSES: (ENTERS LEFT holding MR. HYGIENE by the collar. Shouts.) We have a scandal! (ALL gasp.)
WINK: What’s going on here?
MS. SEASHELL: Mr. Hygiene?
WINK: Johnny Jay?
HAZEL HAZELNUTT: Uncle John? (Suddenly defensive.) It was Uncle John’s idea!
MR. ROSES: (Moves to CENTER STAGE.) Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, I, Moses Roses, present the evil Johnny Jay Hygiene! A man with a double identity and a secret past.
MS. DIMBULB: Double identity?
MR. ROSES: That’s right. You know him as school custodian Mr. Hygiene, but others here know him as game show announcer Johnny Jay. (Audible gasps from ALL, except HAZEL HAZELNUTT and of course, JOHNNY JAY.)
WINK: What do you mean about a secret past?
MR. ROSES: Johnny Jay Hygiene was a contestant in the first tongue-twisting tournament 50 years ago. His team made it to the finals, but when Johnny here bit his tongue during the final round, his team was defeated by Bitter Batter School, starting their reign that continued until I lost it for them 30 years ago.
MR. HYGIENE: How did you find out about me?
MR. ROSES: (Sweeping across the stage like a detective in a second-rate movie revealing how he solved the crime.) I became suspicious of this man when he continuously came into my classroom, sweeping before the students had even come in for classes. He was like a spy, constantly asking questions about the tongue-twisting tournament.
Then, this morning, I woke up in a sweat. You see, I had finally put two and two together. The voice of Mr. Hygiene and Johnny Jay were the same. (Profound.) And then I realized who it was that handed Hazel the bag of candy that she gave me 30 years ago right before the final round. I always blamed Hazel Hazelnutt for bruising my tongue, as well as my reputation and ego. But now I realize that it was her Uncle John who set her up to the task. (To CHERRY.) I’m only sorry I didn’t make it here in time, Cherry, to save you from the same fate I suffered many years ago. (JUDGES put their heads together for a meeting.)

MR. HYGIENE: Losing this tournament 50 years ago has tortured me ever since. Even becoming a successful game show announcer has offered me little solace. I just could not bear to watch Bitter Batter School win the tournament year after year. Thirty years ago, when my niece Hazel was competing against Bitter Batter, I sabotaged the competition by giving candy to Moses Roses. If I couldn’t win, at least I could live vicariously through Hazel’s victories. (Holding back the tears. To MR. ROSES.) Can you ever forgive me? (The JUDGES’ meeting breaks up. PETER PIPER hands a slip of paper to WINK, who reads it quickly to himself.)

WINK: Everyone, I have an announcement. The judges feel justice would not be served to completely disqualify Nettie’s Knitting Night School team because of the horrible dishonesty of their coach and her uncle. (Points to MR. HYGIENE and HAZEL HAZELNUTT.) Though these two will be brought before the Tongue-twisting Ethics Committee for a hearing, a more immediate resolution is to give Bitter Batter School a second chance. (The Bitter Batter STUDENTS cheer.)

MS. SEASHELL: But the final member of our team is injured. And our other two members are literally suffering from tongue exhaustion.

MR. ROSES: (Steps forward.) I would like to do the tongue twister. (EVERYONE is shocked.) Please, everyone. Years ago, these two unscrupulous people pulled the same rotten scandal on me. As a proud part of the fine institution, Bitter Batter School, it is now time to let me redeem myself.

WINK: Judges? (JUDGES quickly meet again. PETER PIPER hands another slip of paper to WINK.) The judges have decided to allow Mr. Roses to do the final twister for his school. (Cheers. MR. ROSES crosses to CENTER STAGE.) Mr. Roses, are you ready? (MR. ROSES nods. WINK recites slowly.) Sam’s shop stocks short
spotted socks.

MR. ROSES: (Pause. Tension is in the air as EVERYONE is showing the signs of competitive stress: crossing fingers, holding hands, covering ears, etc.) Sam’s shop stocks short spotted socks. Sam’s shop stocks short spotted socks. Sam’s shop stocks short spotted socks. Sam’s shop stocks short spotted socks. Sam’s shop stocks short spotted socks. (NOTE: We can’t emphasize this enough. It just doesn’t matter how well the actor says the tongue-twister, as long as he has sincerity.)

WINK: Judges?

PETER: (Holds up card. Speaks.) Ten.

ALICE: (Holds up card. Speaks.) Ten.

GRETTA: (Holds up card. Speaks.) Ten!

WINK: (Crowd erupts into applause and cheers.) A perfect score! And Bitter Batter breaks their losing streak and takes the championship, the trophy and the trip! Congratulations, Bitter Batter! (The GAME SHOW HOSTESS hands MR. ROSES a trophy.)

MS. SEASHELL: (Announces.) Bitter Batter School, this is a great moment. I’m taking the whole school to the Bahamas! (Bitter Batter STUDENTS cheer.)

ALL: (Ad lib.) Oh, thank you, Ms. Seashell!
Bahama Mama’s, here we come!
Thank you, Ms. Seashell!
What a moment in my life!
I’m going to read Hamlet when I get there!

MS. SEASHELL: (To MR. ROSES.) You did it, Moses.

MR. ROSES: No, Sally. You did it. (Hands her the trophy.) You trained the team. You believed in the team. You inspired the team. You should be proud. I’m just finishing what I should have done 30 years ago. You know what William Shakespeare would want me to do right now? (MS. DIMBULB EXITS RIGHT and returns immediately with a large tape recorder and her cowboy hat.)

MS. SEASHELL: What?
MS. DIMBULB: (Yells out. As if speaking for MR. ROSES.) Okay, everyone—grab your partner!

MR. ROSES: I think Shakespeare would want me to celebrate. And if I can win a tongue-twister tournament, then you, Sally Seashell, can learn to dance. (Shouts.) It’s time to do-si-do! (MS. DIMBULB begins music. EVERYONE cheers and joins in the dance. BLACKOUT.)

END OF SPOOF
PRODUCTION NOTES

PROPERTIES

ON STAGE: Scenes Two and Three: MR. ROSES’S chair and desk, littered with books, papers, files, rubber chicken, head of lettuce, white flag, other odd items. Nine chairs and nine desks for students.

ON STAGE: Scene Five: Podium with banner reading, “Tongue-twisting Tournament.” Three rows of benches or chairs. Three additional chairs for the judges with blank scoring cards and black markers. Two podiums or desks for the contestants.

BROUGHT ON, Scene One: Signs reading “Flashback: 30 years earlier” and “Applause” (GAME SHOW HOSTESS).

BROUGHT ON, Scene Two: Broom (MR. HYGIENE); hanky, pencil, notepad (MS. DIMBULB); “Nerf” ball (CHERRY); pompons, (MOLLY and POLLY); backpacks or books (ALL STUDENTS).

BROUGHT ON, Scene Three: Pencil, notepad, glasses or wig, hand mirror, tape recorder, cowboy hat (MS. DIMBULB).

BROUGHT ON, Scene Four: Books/backpacks (STUDENT ONE, STUDENT TWO, STUDENT THREE); stopwatch (MS. DIMBULB); books/backpacks (TAMARA and TWILA).

BROUGHT ON, Scene Five: Applause sign, trophy (GAME SHOW HOSTESS); tape recorder, cowboy hat (MS. DIMBULB); purse (MS. SEASHELL); bag of candy containing a note and taffy (CHUCKIE); red flags (JUDGES); two pieces of paper (PETER PIPER).

SOUND EFFECTS

Applause, school bell, square dancing music.

FLEXIBLE CASTING
Make adjustments as/if needed. For example, WALLY could be DOLLY, NELLIE could be NICK, ALICE could become AL, etc. EXTRAS could be easily added in classroom scenes and the Tongue-twisting Tournament as additional students. Doubling can be utilized by having YOUNG SALLY SEASHELL and YOUNG DORA DIMBULB play the roles of MS. SALLY SEASHELL and MS. DIMBULB. Or YOUNG SALLY SEASHELL, YOUNG DORA DIMBULB and YOUNG MOSES ROSES can appear as the judges with costume changes.

**COSTUMES**

Costuming is simple. Dress the part. For example, WINK HUGHBETT should appear in “flashy” game show suit. The athletic students might wear letter jackets, pep squad in same school colors and the brainy students may dress conservatively. MR. ROSES, MS. DIMBULB, MS. SEASHELL and MS. HAZELNUTT will want to look “older.” Just use your resources.

**DOING THE TONGUE TWISTERS**

Much of the absurd humor of this show comes from the fact that your actors have to perform these tough tongue-twisters on cue, and they obviously won’t do them perfectly. There are several ways you can handle this. The easiest is simply to go ahead with the play, no matter how well or poorly each actor performs the tongue-twisting task. Your audience will hoot when an actor flubs a tongue-twister but the judges still give him a great score. If you are not comfortable with this, however, the options are limited only by your creativity. For instance, every time a tongue-twister is about to be recited, the game show hostess could hold up a sign that reads “Slow-Mo” so that the tongue-twister is presented in slow motion. Or, if an actor badly flubs a tongue-twister, the game show hostess can have a clapboard and suddenly shout out, “Take two!” Choose whatever will be the most fun for your audience… and your cast.

If it helps your actors’ sanity, some tongue-twisters can be printed on poster board so that the person reciting it need only to read it. If you choose this option, make sure you use it consistently in the tournament scenes.

**GET YOUR AUDIENCE WARMED UP!**

Have fun by putting a number of tongue twisters in your production program. Ask your audience to say these classics three times as quickly
as they can.
A box of biscuits, a batch of mixed biscuits.
The sixth sick sheik’s sixth sheep’s sick.
Three free throws.
Knapsack straps.
Which wristwatches are Swiss wristwatches?
Lesser leather never weathered wetter weather better.
Inchworms itching.
A noisy noise annoys an oyster.
The myth of Miss Muffet.
Friendly Frank flips fine flapjacks.
Vincent vowed vengeance very vehemently.
Cheap ship trip.
Lovely lemon liniment.
Gertie’s great-grandma grew aghast at Gertie’s grammar.
Tim, the thin twin tinsmith.
Fat frogs flying past fast.
Flee from fog to fight flu fast.
Greek grapes.
The boot black bought the black boot back.
Surely the sunshine shall shine soon.
Moose noshing much mush.
Ruby Rugby’s brother bought and brought her
back some rubber baby- buggy bumpers.
Sly Sam slurps Sally’s soup.
Six short slow shepherds.
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