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Up The Down Staircase

By Tad Mosel

Make way for the lady, man.

-Hey, lady, watch it.

-How about that?

-Try the other door, Teach.

-Hey, try the windows, Teach.

-Maybe this door, Teach.

-Try 'Open Sesame.'

-Hey, go ahead, Teach.

-Try everything.

All right, how do we get in?

Can't get in till somebody comes out.

Yeah, like a toilet, baby.

-Hey! The door.

-Yeah!

New students report to 121,

old students to 123,

transfer students, 127.

New students report to 121,

old students to 123,

transfer students, 127.

New students report to 121,

old students to 123,

transfer students, 127.

Disregard all bells.

Disregard all bells.

Keep all circulars in alphabetical order.

Keep all directives in numerical order.

File before 3:

Delaney cards and absentee plans,

teachings, students...

Program cards from yellow...

From master program, card blue,

-teachers program card...

-Excuse me. Morning.

Morning, Miss Finch.

It asks here how many basketballs I need.

-Do you have your key?

-Key.

-What's your room number?

-322.

Keys, keys, pick up your keys.

Sign for your keys.

Teachers must not punch each other in.

Teachers must keep their letter boxes empty at all times.

All cases of assault and attempted assault suffered by teachers in connection with their employment must be reported at once.

Disregard the bell.

You're Miss Barrett?

And I'm Ella FriedenberG,
Guidance Counselor.

You'll receive a directive on it, of course, but with new teachers I like to warn them personally to watch for latent maladjustments and send them to me on alternate Tuesdays for depth coverage.

Teachers only.

But I... I am a teacher.

Miss Barrett, do you realize you're going up the down staircase?

I'm sorry, Dr. Bester...

Dr. Bester!

Dr. Bester,
what do I want with basketballs?

Hey, that's the teach that we saw this morning.

Oh, that's right. Ain't she cute, man?

She's gotta be my teacher.

-Hope so, man.

-Please, she gotta be my teach.

Shades up there.

Windows down four inches from the top.

Mr. McHabe,
I could only find one piece of chalk.

-Our supplies are running low.

-On the first day?

Rubber bands, desk blotters, board erasers and paper clips are expected next week.

We have blue pencils, no red.

You mean that I can have basketballs but no chalk?

Well, what do you want with basketballs, Miss Barrett?

They asked me to fill out this requisition.

Well, it was obviously meant
for the Phys. Ed. teacher.
Shades up there.
Windows down four inches from the top.
Mr. McHabe...
There he is.
Good morning, Mr. Barringer.
I'm Alice Blake.
I had you last term in English.
You mean you were in my class.
This is my friend, Carole Blanca.
She had you, too.
I would have said
your name was Carmelita.
I changed it over the summer.
We wish to express our gratitude
for the way you gave
so unstingily of yourself to us.
Well, I'm glad I taught you
to express yourself so... So well.
Mr. Barringer, I wanted to be in your class,
but they put me in Miss Barrett's.
And I don't even know Miss Barrett,
and I thought maybe I could switch.
Why would you want to switch?
Think of the poetic heritage
of the name 'Barrett.'
Remember, Alice,
it was a Miss Barrett who wrote,
'How do I love thee?
Let me count the ways.'
Now, someone once said
that first impressions...
Please don't block the doorway.
Please come in.
Hey, Lou, no wonder, she's a dame.
I got a dame for homeroom.
Why do I always get stuck with dames?
You want I should slug him, Teach?
Boys!
Please sit down. Yes, it is.
Please, sit down. Sit.
Take your seats, please. Everybody. Yes.
I'm sorry. What?

Would you please tell me
what room this is?

Yes. This is room 322. My name
is on the blackboard. Miss Barrett.
I will have you in homeroom all term,
and I hope to see some of you
in my English class.

-English.

-Now, someone once said
that first impressions are very important.

Miss Barrett, you want me to
get the stuff from your mailbox?

Yes, all right. That would be nice.

Thank you very much.

-Someone once said that first...

-Can I fetch a drink of water?

-Are you a regular or a substitute?

-Is this 322?

Yes. You're late.

I'm not late. I'm absent.

Class, please.

-You are?

-I was absent all last term.

-Well... Why don't you sit down?

-I can't sit down.

I'm dropping out.

You're supposed to sign
my book clearance from last term.

Hey, there's glass all over my desk
from this broken window.

I know. Just don't touch the broken glass,
and don't touch the broken window.

It should be reported to the janitor.

Custodian! Custodian.

This is a very classy school.

-I'll go. Let me go.

-Does anybody know where the janitor is?

I'll go, Teach.

-I'm going.

-Let me go, man.

Class, please.

I'm afraid there won't be time
for the discussion that I had planned
on first impressions.

I am passing out...

-She's passing out!

-Give her air.

Fresh air.

I am passing out Delaney cards,
and I would like you to fill them out
as quickly as possible
while I take attendance.

-Sorry I'm late. I was in the Late Room.

-What is the Late Room?

The Late Room. Where they make you sit
to make up for your latenesses
when you're late.

Otherwise I would have been on time.

For parents' name, can I use my aunt?

Yes, if you...

Yes, of course you may.

-Amdur, Janet.

-Present.

-You, young man, why are you late?

-I'm not even here.

I'm with Mr. Loomis.

My uncle's in this class,
and he forgot his lunch.

-Hey, Tony! Catch.

-Please don't throw...

-Are you hurt?

-Just my head.

Hey, you gotta
make out an accident report,
three copies and send it in to the nurse.
Perhaps... Perhaps you had
better go to the nurse
and ask for accident report blanks.

-Apolikanos, Michael.

-Yeah.

-Blake, Alice.

-I'm present, Miss Barrett.

Janitor says nobody's down there.

How can he say there's no one down there
when he's down there?

Yes? Can I help you?

The stuff from your letter-box.

You sent me.

Yes, but I took it all out
when I punched in...
You're supposed to read this to the class.
It's from the library.
Thank you. You may sit down now.
'Library. Attention class.
-'The school library is your library...'
-You're supposed to read this first.
-Change of assembly schedule.
-Thank you.
'Change in assembly schedule.
'All X-2 sections
are to report to assembly
'the second half of the second period.
'Tomorrow, all Y-2...' Class, please.
Class, 'Tomorrow all Y-two sections
will follow today's program
'for X-two sections,
while all X-two sections
'will follow today's program
for Y-two sections.'
Do we go to assembly today?
Blanca, Carmelita.
That's Carole.
I changed it over the summer.
Miss Barrett, Miss Barrett, you forgot
to appoint an early dismissal monitor.
All right, all right.
I appoint you early dismissal monitor.
-Class dismissed!
-Class, we have to finish.
Class, I want you all back in your seats.
Class, please.
Sit down. Sit down. We have to finish.
Class, please, sit down.
-Class...
-Disregard all bells.
Repeat. Disregard all bells.
This boy's late and on probation.
Where's your class, Miss Barrett?
I'm afraid that they have all gone.
You're off to a good start.
Now, listen, since I'm only
readmitting you on probation,

I guess you know
that I know that you're no prize.
One false step... Suspension.
Your name, please?
Won't you tell me your name?
You've got it there.
There are 40 pupils in my homeroom.
Call the roll.
All right.
Let's see, where did I leave off?
Davidson?
Dubinski, Ehrlick, Gloria.
Well, surely you're not
Gloria Ehrlick, are you?
Escalera? Esposite? Essner?
Really, it would be so much simpler
if you would just tell me your name.
Evans?
-Farber, Farreli, Ferone...
-Present.
Joseph Ferone. Do they call you Joe?
I see you're to be
in my English class as well.
Tell me, do you like English?
Well.
I think there's time for you
to fill out a Delaney card now.
If you will just fill in the blanks, please.
I don't know why
they call it a Delaney card.
Maybe because a man named Delaney
thought it up.
You can just take any seat.
Do you have a pencil?
Get out of here. I want to sit down.
You hear me? I ain't playing with you.
Come on, man. Get out of here.
I'm Beatrice Schacter.
We're in the same department.
How do you do?
-Hello there, how are you?
-I'm fine, thank you.
I'm Henrietta Pastorfield. Thanks.
How did you make out

with the program list?
I got through it.
I got through 16 of the 20.
And I've been here 16 years.
Four years more
and I expect to have a perfect record.
If I last.
I've only got 12 this year.
Eight for me.
As usual, the white kids don't trust me.
Negro kids think
I've sold out to the whites.
I've managed 18.
Eleven.
Two and a half.
I had planned a little talk
on first impressions,
and from that
I would make a good case for diction,
correct usage and self expression
and from that it would just be one step
to the limitless realm of creativity.
And then to communication
between student and teacher.
And finally, mutual respect and even love.
I like the part about limitless realm.
Kid them along, make it a game.
I have a new one this year.
Hospital spelling.
Misspelled words are the patients
and the kids are the doctors
and the nurses.
Why aren't you eating your lunch?
Well, I just can't seem to face
mashed potatoes at 10:17 in the morning.
In future, try Jell-O.
It gives you energy,
but it doesn't require an appetite.
Ever tried Punctuation Sex, Henrietta?
Hyphens are kisses,
commas are ''maybe's''
and a period is a definite ''no.''
And then, of course,
there's the limitless realm

of semicolons and apostrophes.
I shudder to think
what an exclamation point might mean.
I don't care. It keeps them off the streets,
and you give them a bit of fun
and you've earned your keep.
Have you met Paul Barringer?
The glamour boy
of the English Department.
Unpublished writer.
Dangerous. You're on your own.
Your education
has been planned and geared
to arm you and prepare you
to function as mature
and thinking citizens,
capable of shouldering
the burdens and responsibilities
which a thriving democracy imposes.
It is through you
and others like you...
We have no doubt
that our aims and efforts in this direction
will bear fruit
and achieve the goals and objectives
set forth,
for in the miniature democracy
of our school,
you are proving yourselves
worthy and deserving of our trust
and expectations.
Any announcements, Mr. McHabe?
A blue Pontiac parked
in front of the school has been overturned.
Anybody having knowledge
of the perpetrators,
please report to me
directly after assembly.
Hey!
Silence while exiting!
Silence while exiting!
Well, she...
Mr. Edmund Green
comes to our Science Department

after 10 years at South Park High School,
extensive experience in the so-called
problem-area schools
such as Calvin Coolidge,
and an impressive war record
in the military police.
He could use that.

I'm sure he'll be a valuable addition
to our faculty.

-Yeah.

-Mr. Green.

Miss Sylvia Barrett
comes to our English Department
with a B.A. from Lyons Hall
and an M.A. from Hutchins.
She's to be commended for her courage.

Miss Barrett.

Thank you. I...

I can't say how happy I am to be here.

Thank you.

-The first item on the agenda...

-Dr. Bester.

Dr. Bester, there were certain
urgent problems left over from last term.
Agreed. The teaching load,
facilities, drop-outs,
and the new building, Dr. Bester.

What about the new building?

Well, I brought along
all the blueprints again.

-To give us heart.

-We're tired of blueprints.

It's been six years now. We're losing heart.

Hear, hear!

I didn't see who said that.

-Oh, yes, Miss Pastorfield.

-Yeah.

Well, if you'll stop by
at the end of this meeting,
I'll gladly accept your check for \$7,500,000.

Miss Gordon and Mr. Osborne
have the floor.

Who'll speak first?

Mr. Osborne and I, being floaters,

share Room 441 .

Mr. Osborne insists on putting his things
in the left-hand drawer of the desk,
-which is my drawer and l...

-I beg to differ with Miss Gordon.

The left-hand desk drawer is my drawer.

-Since when?

-Since four years ago!

All right. All right. May I suggest
that the Grievance Committee
on Rotation of Teachers
to More Equitable Room Assignments
appoint a sub-committee
to look into the matter.

-You're next on the agenda, Mrs. Wolf.

-Thank you.

When returning books to the library,
students must put them back
on the shelf straight.

I want those books in their right places
with their edges even.

-I think it's very important...

-Thank you. Thank you, Mrs. Wolf.

Dr. Bester, now that
reading from the Bible
has been declared unconstitutional,
is there any objection
to a moment of silent prayer?

It's all right, I understand,
if the word 'prayer' is not used
and if the lips don't move.

Dr. Bester, by law a faculty conference
only has to last 60 minutes
which are now up.

Now, I suggest
in view of the subway rush...

Yes. I'm afraid a discussion
of cafeteria conditions
will have to be jettisoned until next week.

-Will someone move for adjournment?

-So moved.

Meeting is adjourned.

Morning, Miss Finch.

Here are my daily attendance sheets,

my absentee cards,
my transcripts for transfers,
my transportation cards,
and my H-level report.
Since we are unable to begin the term
with the assigned books,
I thought we might spend this first class
in an open discussion about books.
Why we read them
and what they mean to us.
Herbert Henry.
I didn't know we was gonna have a quiz.
-I didn't study for it.
-Well, this is not a quiz.
Well, whatever it is, I didn't study up.
Well, I'm not asking you to study up,
I'm asking you to think.
-Miss Barrett.
-Yes. Your name, please.
Harry A. Kagan,
newly-nominated candidate
-for President of General Organization.
-Sit down.
In answer to your
very interesting question,
last term, for example,
we studied myths and their meanings
to comprehend in a superb fashion
the origins of many of the idiosyncrasies
of our present language.
Throughout the decades, constant
references to mythological occurrences
have spawned such sparkling gems
as ''By Jove'' and ''Jumping Jupiter.''
-Jumping Jupiter.
-Settle down. Thank you, Harry.
You're doing a very good job, Miss Barrett.
Keep it up.
Class, please.
Jose Rodriguez.
Where is Jose?
Do you have anything
you want to say to the class, Jose?
-Miss Barrett! Miss Barrett!

-Yes.

I think Alice Blake

has the one true answer.

Well, will you tell the class, Alice?

Because just about all books

are based on love, that's why.

All right, class, please. Class.

Is that the only reason that we read?

For instance, what about this? Algebra.

There is no love in that.

Well, Alice?

You're wearing contact lenses?

Suppose we turn

to one of our country's most famous poets

and see how she expresses herself

about books.

Emily

Dickinson,

-Right here.

-All right. That's it. Please!

In eight short lines she sums up

all the beauty

and adventure that can be found

in reading books,

'...to take us lands away

'This traverse may the poorest take

Without oppress of toil''

Now, do you begin to see

the trend of her thoughts?

Yeah. Yeah.

All right.

Let's examine the poem line by line.

It begins,

'There is no frigate...''

Class. Class! Please.

Next time try,

'There is no steamship like a book.''

I guess everybody's heard

about that by now, haven't they?

Sorry, just trying to,

in quotes, ''Cheer up Miss Barrett.''

Thank you.

You know, if you take

your first failure so badly,

just think what your hundredth
is going to do to you.
I came here to teach, or I thought I did.
I thought that was what I spent
the last six years preparing for.
Back home,
I used to like to stay after school.
That teacher up there
was giving me something.
Sharing something
she had learned, felt. Teaching.
And what's the first thing I find
when I come to a school of my own?
There is no time for teaching.
There's only time for memos,
directives, circulars,
letters, notices, forms, records, blanks.
And keys. Look what they've given me.
Room key, lavatory key, locker key.
Book room.
Well, at least there are such things,
but this.
This one is for my desk drawer,
and there is no desk drawer.
You know, I bet you did
you master's essay on Chaucer.
How did you guess?
You and the Clerk of Oxenford,
'Gladly would he learn and gladly teach.'
When I finally get the chance,
my first few precious minutes
to talk to them about something
I want them to understand,
and I find I am some kind of an enemy.
The butt of some enormous joke.
The ammunition that they have.
In my first English class, many years ago,
I quoted from Channing,
'It is chiefly through books that we enjoy
intercourse with superior minds.'
What kind of thing do you write?
Well, I've just finished the first chapter
of a novel
about a nuclear physicist marooned

on a peninsula, Kamchatka.
That's a far cry from Calvin Coolidge.
I know, a far, far cry.
There's no keys in Kamchatka.
No lockers. No book rooms
and probably no lavatories.
Well, but you and I are here.
Yeah, and there'll come a time
when you'll need a drink
for more cheering up.
Or dinner, sometime?
All right. I would like that.
Good.
Hello, Paul. Hello, Sylvia.
Miss Barrett, step in here, please.
You wait. I'll see you next.
Was this boy in your English class today?
I don't know.
I would have to check my attendance...
Don't bother. He wasn't.
During that period
he was found loitering near 408
where a wallet has been reported missing.
You should have sent in
a cutting slip at once.
Well, there wasn't time.
Mrs. Wolf sent for the library blacklist
and the nurse sent
for the dental blacklist...
Has he given you any trouble
of any other kind?
I don't know what you mean by trouble.
-Trouble. Foul language. Violence.
-No, sir.
Don't be scared of him, Miss Barrett.
I'm just trying to stick to the truth.
There has been no violence
and no foul language.
I hope you haven't got any ideas
about communicating with him,
or understanding him,
or getting through to him.
Did he steal the wallet?
You can go.

Then he didn't steal the wallet.
It has also come to my attention
that you neglected to fill out form B-221 .
Accident report
of a fall incurred by a student
in your home room yesterday,
and you neglected to turn in a report
on the physical condition of your room
and a summary of your pupil load.
My pupil load is 44 and two-fifths.
Three-fifths students per class.
I believe the directive
says it should be 33, and let me...
Let me see, I just couldn't seem to find
any accidents forms B-221 .
I have a broken window
in the back of my classroom,
and I need two more chairs. Three.
And the custodian simply answers,
'There is no one down here.'
Well, my pupil load, Miss Barrett,
is 3000 students,
An upset neighborhood,
an angry police department
and the entire board of education.
-Let it be a challenge to you, huh?
-Thank you.
Hey, Teach. Hey.
Come on, lady.
-I like you.
-Yeah.
Don't walk this block alone, Teach.
Will the person or persons
who took my desk blotter please return it?
There will be no questions asked.
I just want my desk blotter back.
Now, for our first oral book report
of the term,
we will begin with Danny, Danny Harrigan.
I'm not prepared, Miss Barrett.
Why aren't you prepared, Danny?
What's your excuse?
I had to get married.
See, I got this girl in trouble,

and we're both Catholics.

-The things is, I didn't even like her.

-Well, I...

I accept your excuse, Danny.

So you see, I didn't have very much time to read any of those books.

Well, will you please return to your seat?

Who did prepare a book report?

Lou Martin to your rescue.

Linda, Linda, Linda.

Do you have a late pass?

Oh, yeah.

What's the bruise over your eye?

Just received it this morning.

That's why I'm late.

Well, will you go directly to the nurse and have her treat it?

Lou, you can begin your report while I make out the pass.

-My book is...

-The book you read.

Yeah. The title is called Macbeth, by Shakespeare.

-The title is.

-Macbeth.

Isn't Macbeth required reading for last English term?

-I ain't never read it before.

-I've never read it.

Me neither.

In this book, the author depicts...

Depicts.

-Depicts how this guy, he wants to...

-Who?

Him.

-He.

-Yeah.

All right, Lou,

what is the theme of Macbeth?

Well, the author narrates this murder.

Now, Lou, we don't need you to show us how. All right, Lou.

Lou. All right, class.

The theme of Macbeth is that too much

ambition can become ruthless ambition
and end up in disaster.

That's what words are for.

To be used.

What does ruthless mean?

Joe?

Eddie.

Steps all over.

Use it in a sentence.

Steps all over like white people.

I know because I'm colored.

-Rusty.

-Mrs. Macbeth nudges them.

-You mean, ''Nudges.''

-''Nudges.''

Being a female, she spurns him on.

Spurs.

He wouldn't have done it,
except she spurned him on.

-Then she's the ruthless one.

-Yeah.

Alice.

I think everyone has missed
the whole point.

It's a play about love.

Mr. Macbeth loves Mrs. Macbeth so much
that he'll do anything to please her,
even kill.

Jerry.

Can't some people love and hate
at the same time, Miss Barrett?

Aside from ambition, isn't that
how Macbeth and Lady Macbeth
destroyed themselves and each other?

Jerry.

That was a very interesting point
you made,
and we'll talk more about it next time.

You whitey-loving plow boy.

Linda, Linda.

Did Miss... Did Miss Eagen
put something on that bruise?

Oh, no, she gave me a cup of tea.

Is that all?

I think she uses used tea bags.
Well, come with me. I will... I'll talk to her.
And it's a very bad bruise.
Linda has a rough time with her father.
Well, what good will tea do? Why tea?
Read that.
'The school nurse
may not touch wounds...'
'...give medication, remove foreign
particles from the eye...'
Can't you talk to somebody?
Like who?
Dr. Bester, the Welfare Administration,
social agencies, parents,
I don't know.
Oh, I'll do that
I'll just do that.
While you're here, Miss Barrett,
it's come to my attention
that there are matters of form
which you've neglected to fill out.
Now, students
delinquent in obtaining gym suits
should be alphabetized
and sent to me at once.
And please, above all,
discourage excessive dieting
in your home room.
All right, I'll... I'll remember that.
Gym suits and excessive dieting.
I will remember that. Thank you.
I give them tea.
At least that's something.
Linda.
Linda, you can go on to class now.
-You can't still see it, can you?
-No.
So long as you can't see it.
Linda.
Is there anything that I can do for you?
Oh, yeah, you could get us dancing
in the cafeteria.
Other schools do it and they put on things.
Why not? You only live once.

Miss Friedenbergr.

Miss Barrett.

I would like to have you tell me all you can about Linda Rosen and Lou Martin, Eddie Williams, Rusty O'Brien and Joe Ferone.

I need some ammunition.

Sit down, Miss Barrett.

It's a wise teacher who teaches not just the subject but the whole pupil.

Well, right now,

I just need some ammunition.

Now, first let me explain my counseling system.

These cabinets contain the PRCs.

The PRC is, of course, the permanent record card kept for each student.

Now in the PRC is the PPP.

It almost sings, doesn't it?

The PPP is the pupil personality profile.

I invented it myself, and I write it up from my interviews in depth.

Now, that's Miss Barrett, room 3...

Three twenty-two, now...

-That was Edward Williams.

-Edward Williams.

Edward Williams.

Edward... Edward Williams.

'Must curb tendency to paranoia due to socioeconomic environmental factors.'

Lou Martin, was it?

Louis Martin.

'Exhibits inverted hostility in manic behavior patterns.'

Now, who else was that?

Rusty O'Brien.

Richard, Richard...

'Show signs of latent homosexuality induced by narcissistic mother and permissive self-abusive practices.'

Am I going too fast for you, Miss Barrett?

No, no, I think that I understand.

Eddie Williams hates white people,

Lou Martin is a cut-up

and Rusty O'Brien hates women.
It's a wise teacher who translates
such complexities
into the environmental vernacular.
-What about Joe Ferone?
-Joe Ferone?
Ferone.
'Should channel
his libidino-aggressive impulses
'into socially acceptable attitudes.'
I suggest you wear a smock.
On the...
On the blue line,
to the right of the blue line on the PRC
is the CC. Capsule characterization.
Now, at the end of each term,
each teacher
writes a succinct phrase for each student.
A summing up.
You should start thinking
about your CC's now.
For example, Linda Rosen.
What would you say so far?
Marry her off fast.
You don't quite get the idea, Miss Barrett.
Her home room teacher last term
wrote, 'Works to capacity.'
That's true.
Now, other exemplary CC's would be,
'Latent leader.'
'Needs encouragement.'
'Fine boy.' 'Should try harder.'
My CC's go back 23 years,
since I first came to Calvin Coolidge.
Before that, unfortunately, there's a void.
You have devoted a whole generation
of time to this work, haven't you,
Miss Friedenberg?
Why, that's very kind of you, Miss Barrett.
No one has ever thought
to comment on it before.
Thank you.
It says here Joe Ferone has an IQ of 133.
That's very high, isn't it?

But his marks are very low.
Yes, but there's a 94 in Social Studies.
But a 22 in English.
What kind of an English teacher
would give a 22?
She must have sat up all night
deciding between 21 and 23.
He's volunteered various home addresses,
all of them nonexistent.
So if he doesn't show up at school,
the truant officers won't know where
-to find him.
-They've given up trying.
Yes, but he keeps coming back.
Now and then.
Oh, I'm late.
But may I keep this?
All right, but bring it back to me.
Oh, yes, of course. Thank you very much.
Thank you.
Please, please may I have your attention.
If you don't quiet... Please. Thank you.
Would the person or persons who took
my desk blotter please return it?
Lou, please.
There will be no questions asked.
Joe Ferone,
will you stay after the bell rings?
I just want my desk blotter back
by tomorrow.
Joe, I got your PRC
from Miss Friedenberg this morning,
and I've been going over it very carefully.
The thing that interests me most
are the contradictions.
The low grades, absences...
This long list of infractions
and disciplinary measures.
And then suddenly, out of nowhere,
a high mark
and perfect attendance.
You gonna report me, Teach,
for not staying after?
I never reported you for anything.

You will.
You act as if you wanted me to.
I've just seen your type before, that's all.
There's one every year.
'Not living up to your potential,' they say.
Is that what you were gonna say, Teach?
'Just want to help you, Joe.
Just wanna be your friend.'
Then they get to feeling very sorry
about your environmental factors
and your low socioeconomic level
till you just have to tell them,
'Get your nose out
of my environmental factors, will you?'
'Keep your damn hands off my potential.'
Then they turn you in.
I'm not going to turn you in.
You know, you're better at it than most.
Standing there, looking down at you,
I might almost think you give a damn.
-I do.
-Prove it.
Give me time.
-You trying to make a deal of some kind?
-Are you?
All right, Teach.
Let's have that talk about my potential.
You know...
You could be suspended
for carrying that knife.
Not unless someone turns me in.
Give it to me.
Sure.
Would you come with me, please?
Aren't you gonna say how sorry
you are you have to do this?
All right, everybody out, out, out.
Let's go. Let's go.
Well, 'Suggestions', Miss Barrett, eh?
I must say, you've got guts.
Oh, it's just an idea, Mr. McHabe.
It seems to me if the students
have a chance to speak freely,
without constant fear of punishment...

Listen, you try running this school
with ideas, you'll have riots in the rooms.

Fear, that's all they understand.

You, you. Come here.

Miss Barrett,

may I see you for a minute, please?

Miss Barrett, the name of Joe Ferone
is being removed from your Delaney book
and will be carried under your
register under temporary suspension.

Sign these, please.

What good is it going to do
to suspend that boy?

Turn him loose on the street
with all the gangs and drop-outs...

Say what you like about Mr. McHabe.

This place was chaos before he came.

I wasn't just blaming him.

Is there always one that gets you
more than the others?

And is it always the one that wants you
to prove something you can't prove
and thinks life is made up of deals?

I wonder if he'll come back
this time or just stay away.

Miss Barrett. Miss Barrett? This...

This boy is one of your students, I believe.

-Yes.

-He was discovered asleep
in the auditorium this morning
before the school doors were unlocked.

He refuses to say how he got there.

I'll send him back to you
just as soon as I've finished.

Come on, let's go.

I thought you might be ready
for that drink and dinner.

-Maybe Thursday?

-All right, maybe Thursday.

'Dear Teach. Nerts to you.'

You shouldn't be reading those.

'Don't try so hard, you'll live longer.'

'How about a date?

I'll fix you up like you never had it before.

'Signed, Loverboy.'

'Can you make the chalk stop from squeaking?'

'Is it possible for you to teach creative writing next term?'

'You showed me that writing clearly means thinking clearly.'

You see that? They are not all jokes.

'Scram ! Hit the road. Leave town if you know what's good for you.'

'A Well-Wisher.'

You shouldn't make fun of them. Sometimes a sense of humor is the only thing that keeps you going. It's not the same thing.

'It is my considerable opinion that you are very well qualified.'

'No matter how boring the lesson, you always make it interesting.'

-Harry Kagan.

-Harry A. Kagan.

Imagine electing that apple-polishing, stuffed-shirt president of the GO.

Do they actually think he's better than they are? They see through him for what he is. A fake.

But then they think everything's a fake, including the GO, so it doesn't matter who's the president. It doesn't matter to them who the president of the United States is. What's it to them? That's why your suggestion box is a frost. What suggestions can they make? What opinions can they have? This is the only one that makes sense.

'Don't try so hard, you'll live longer.'

Mrs. Coolidge.

Come on, I'll walk you to the corner.

'I am not a good penman, but I must tell someone.'

'I put this in the suggestion box for the record.'

' 'Today is my birthday.
' 'Happy birthday to me. Signed, Me.' '
I just want to do something for that child.
The nurse says wounds
must not be touched.
I can't even find the wounds.
I don't know where they are.
Tomorrow I go into the hospital
-for a week...
-A Hospital?
Routine. I'm at the age.
The doctor took my pulse and said,
' 'My God, what line of work are you in?' '
The sad thing is it's so early
in the semester.
A week is so important.
I don't know who my substitute will be,
but if you're passing my room
and the door is open, would you just stop
and listen for a moment?
And see if she's doing all right?
-Do you trust me to judge?
-Yes.
All ready?
Don't ever hurry down this block.
Just walk slowly.
Even if you're frightened
or late, or it's raining, just walk slowly.
And look. Don't seem to, but look.
This is where they spend 18 hours a day.
We have them for six.
Almost insurmountable odds.
Eighteen to six.
You noticed I said almost?
Because you can't give up,
or you can't give them up.
They've been given up
by too many already.
We're their last chance.
And maybe they're our last chance.
Just walk slowly and think of the odds,
Oh, you dance very well, Miss Barrett.
Thank you, Harry. So do you.
Well, my family has always made sure

that I be trained in the social amenities.
These affairs are rather childish, I think.
But they're for the good of the GO.
Where are we going, Harry?
Well, a gentleman should always return
his partner to the place he originally
picked her up at.
-Thank you, Miss Barrett.
-Thank you, Harry.
Sylvia, have you been dancing?
Not much.
I've been having an amenity
with Harry Kagan.
Look, they're doing the Boogaloo.
The Jerk is out, you know.
All right, you two out there, you two.
Off the floor.
You two, all right, all right, all right.
Out, out, off the floor.
No writhing on the floor.
No writhing. All dancers will remain
in a vertical position at all times.
There's Bob Whiteside.
Dance, Miss Pastorfield?
Now, Bob, why would you wanna dance
with an old witch like me
when a pretty young teacher
like Miss Barrett is standing right here.
Oh, Henrietta, now, you go ahead.
I'll watch the punch bowl.
Me, do the Boogaloo?
Why, you're pretty hip, Miss Pastorfield.
Well, if you say so, Bob.
If you say so. Thanks, Syl.
Good evening, Miss Barrett.
Good evening, Alice.
Do you want some punch?
-Thank you.
-Thank you.
Go on, you know what you wanna say.
Go ahead and say it.
I just wanted to say
that at the beginning of the term
I wanted to be in Mr. Barringer's class.

But they made me stay in yours.
I just wanted to say that I'm glad,
although I'd rather be in Mr. Barringer's.
Thank you very much, Alice.
When you taught us that poem
by Edna Vincent Millay,
and the part, "Take your...
Take her head upon your knee
"And say to her, my dear, my dear
"Is it is not so dreadful here" ?
And you asked who was speaking?
I wanted to say, "Maybe a teacher."
I don't recite well.
Carole has to help me.
-No, no, you recite very well, Alice.
-Thank you.
I even tried to get more of Edna Vincent
Millay and Emily Dickinson.
-You went to the library?
-It was closed.
Will you excuse us a minute, Carole?
You know, it was rehearsed
for her to say that.
She knows everything.
But there are some things when you just
have to talk to an older woman.
Not a mother or an aunt.
Even if it hasn't anything
to do with English.
Good evening, Alice.
Excuse me, Miss Barrett.
There was a choked, unspoken
"I love you" on the end of that sentence.
"She who had no need of me
Is a little lonely child lost in hell"
Is that all you want them to say?
"Miss Barrett, I love you."
It's easy to say.
Miss Barrett, I love you.
As a matter of fact, it's you that she loves.
Is that all you found out
for all your trouble?
Why don't you go dance with her?
She's over there watching.

Well, maybe later.
Why do you always say, 'Maybe later'?'
Maybe sometime, maybe Thursday,
and there never is a Thursday.
Wasn't this to be our dance?
No.
Not that I know of.
Do you know, you...
You thought that up just this minute,
just now, to avoid dancing with Alice.
Is Miss Barrett refusing me?
I... I have to stay with the punch
till Henrietta comes back.
I think Miss Barrett is avoiding me.
No. I have a telephone.
But it only rings once a week on Sunday
when my mother calls long distance
to remind me of all the recent murders
in the city.
And I have a doorbell, and it works.
I write most evenings, you know that.
And you're always
hunched over your suggestion box.
Do you know what I think?
I think if you actually lived in Kamchatka,
and had never seen
Calvin Coolidge High School,
you would write about
Calvin Coolidge High School.
If Miss Barrett will excuse me.
Well, did you do it?
Good morning, Alice.
Would you come to my classroom
for a minute at the end of the day?
Where are you supposed to be?
Come in, Alice.
No, come up here. Close the door.
Come closer, Alice.
First of all, thank you for your note.
Suppose... Suppose we go
through it together.
'Dear Mr. Barringer...'
There's nothing wrong
in using circles to dot 'i's',

but it's considered an affectation.

'Last Sunday,

I took the subway to your stop

'having looked up where you live

on your time card...'

There should be a comma after 'stop'

and a period at the end of the sentence,

and no series of dots.

'I hope you don't mind the presumption...'

Look up the spelling of presumption,

and no dots.

'I walked back...and forth...

Across the street from your house.'

'Back...and forth...'

Oh, Alice, these dots.

Do you know, I think you use them...

I think you use them because it's easier.

It's easier

than learning correct punctuation.

That's pretty lazy, Alice.

'I thought I saw you in the window,

and my heart was throbbing with this love

'I bear for you...'

No dots, please

and 'throbbing' is pretty cheap.

And omit 'this'. 'Love' will be enough.

'I think of you all the time...'

Dot, dot, dot, '...at night, darkling.'

Now, there is a word, 'darkling',

but you've misused it here.

And even if you'd used it correctly,

it'd be, literally, pretentious.

'I pray to be worthy of you

and all you stand for.'

Now, the phrase 'all you stand for'

isn't very clear.

What... What do I stand for?

'If you ever need me to die for you,

I would gladly do so

'like the Lady of Shalott,

only Lancelot didn't know of her love

'and only said, 'She has a lovely face,' and

you do know...' Dot, dot, dot, '...now.'

Run-on sentences are pretty popular

just now,
but I can't begin to cope with this one.
I would suggest
that you try to keep away from clichs,
and look up the spelling
of the Lady in Tennyson's
ldylls of the King.
'I didn't think I'd ever have the courage
to write this letter...' Dot, dot, dot,
'...but when you danced with me,
I knew I had to tell the truth.
'The Beautiful Truth.'
Well, there's no need to capitalize 'Truth',
nor is there any need
to capitalize 'Beautiful.'
Morning, Alice. Books for us at last.
Miss Barrett, can I talk to you a minute
before homeroom?
I came early especially.
Of course, Alice. What is it?
Syl. Syl!
The ghost walks.
What does that mean?
Dr. Bester is going to observe you
this morning.
But I thought only the department
chairman observed...
Well, sometimes Dr. Bester
likes to drop in himself.
Look, give them a composition to write.
'My Favorite Sport.' That's a good one.
He'll get bored, and he'll go away.
Okay, thank you.
Alice, do you mind if we have our talk
this afternoon, right after school?
-All right, Miss Barrett.
-Now that we have the new books
I have to have a few minutes
to revise my lesson plan for the day.
All right, class. Class!
In your seats, please.
Let's fill out these book receipts
as quickly as possible
so we can get on to a story

that's been a favorite of hundreds
of thousands of people for years.

Morning, Dr. Bester.

Do you mind if I observe
for a while, Miss Barrett?

Not at all. I'm sorry, Dr. Bester,
but the extra chairs that I requisitioned
in September still haven't arrived.

Roy, would you give Dr. Bester
your chair, please,
and stand in the back of the room, please?
I'll stand at the back
of the room, Miss Barrett.

Thank you.

Who would like to help me
distribute the books?

Where is Alice Blake? Where is Alice?

I don't know, Miss Barrett.

Well, it's not like Alice to cut.

All right, girls, you help me, please.

A Tale of Two Cities by Charles
Dickens. 1812, 1870.

We are not going to talk about this book.

We are going to begin by reading it
on page one.

Jerry. Jerry, will you read
the first paragraph aloud, please?

'It was the best of times,
it was the worst of times,
'it was the age of wisdom,
it was the age of foolishness,
'it was the epoch of belief,
it was the epoch of incredulity,
'it was the season of Light,
it was the season of Darkness,
'it was the spring of hope,
it was the winter of despair,
'we had everything before us,
we had nothing before us,
'we were all going directly to Heaven,
'we were all going
directly the other way...'

Thank you, Jerry. That's enough for now.
All right class,

what strikes you immediately?

The different things.

-The yes and no's.

-The opposites.

Yes. Dickens was saying

something very simple,

by the use of contrasts or opposites.

We call this...

Antithesis.

Instead of saying,

'It was a crazy, mixed-up period,'

he says, 'It was the best of times,

it was the worst of times'.

But the most interesting part

of the paragraph

is still to come.

Merle, would you read

the next phrase aloud, please?

'...in short, the period was so far

like the present period...'

Stop. That's enough. Thank you.

Dickens wrote that

more than 100 years ago,

referring to a time almost 200 years ago.

'It was so far like the present period.'

Now, what I want to know is,

can we still say that today?

Is it still the best of times,

the worst of times?

Only the worst.

Why is it only the worst, Lennie?

'Cause that's what it is.

Well, perhaps it would help us

if you would tell us

what you mean by the word 'worst'.

Poor.

But aren't we in the midst of prosperity?

Isn't it also the best of times?

There's still the rats and no toilets.

Aren't there also

new housing developments

with playgrounds and parks?

Parks is murder pits.

Is Yellowstone National Park a murder pit?

We saw the movie in assembly.
-That's right, Esmeralda.
-Narcotics makes it worse.
All right.
All right, who can answer narcotics?
What's the best?
Is it still the season of light
and the season of darkness?
-Miss Barrett.
-Yes, Eddie.
Darks don't have no chance, only whites.
What about the civil rights laws
and integration?
Yeah, what about?
How stupid can you get, huh?
What are you talking about?
They passed the law.
Bussing kids to school miles away.
We can't be juggled
like different-colored marbles.
Yeah, and go home to the rats
with no toilets.
And the junkies on the road, dope addicts.
...kids who wouldn't even arrive.
All right. All right. All right.
We have time for one last comment.
All right, Harry.
The General Organization of which
I am president of is proud to consider
that other races have just as much right
to be human voters, too.
Get bent!
Get bent!
All right. All right, class. Please. Please.
What we've been saying
is that there are certain similarities
between our period
and the period of Dickens
and the period of Tale of Two Cities.
As we read on, let's continue to be aware
of these similarities and differences
because that will make us understand
why this book still can be exciting
and interesting

after being written 100 years ago.

All right.

All right, Lou, what do you want to say?

With the bombs going up and our morals going down, we got anti-thesis.

All right, class.

All right.

Miss Barrett, what is the meaning of this noise?

With Dr. Bester here, you allowed your class to behave in this unruly fashion?

I could hear them all the way down the corridor above the drilling.

It's the sound of thinking, Mr. McHabe.

This class cannot wait to read

A Tale of Two Cities,

and Lou Martin made a joke with a point, a serious point.

And Eddie Williams

spoke out in class for the first time...

Mr. McHabe, report to the main office at once. Urgent.

Mr. McHabe, report to the main office at once. Urgent.

Sit down in your seats.

Bob Whiteside will handle the class.

I'll be back in a moment. Let's not panic.

Get back in the room.

You are to go to the office immediately.

I'll keep an eye on your class.

Bob Whiteside is taking over mine.

-What happened?

-Alice Blake jumped out the window.

She killed herself?

No, the ledge broke her fall.

Alice Blake?

Thank heavens, someone's come.

The nurse is always forgotten at a time like this.

-Where is Alice?

-Hospital. Hospital.

-Is she going to be all right?

-It's too soon. It's too soon.

It's too late. Send her health card at once.

Do you have any blank accident reports?

I'm all...

Did you see her jump?

I didn't see anyone jump.

I'm not really a witness.

I was just passing room 309, and I saw something going out of the window.

Check here. Parent or guardian.

Reached or not reached.

Telephone or telegram, and you fill in here, jumped or fell.

How is Alice?

The only important consideration is that the whole disaster would not have occurred if...

Come in, Miss Barrett. Sit down.

Thank you, Dr. Bester.

Is Alice going to be all right?

Everything possible is being done.

The whole disaster would not have occurred if Mr. Barringer's classroom had not been empty during first period. I have no class then.

Nevertheless, you know it that you're supposed to be in the building.

I was having breakfast at Cora's Coffee Pot on Whitney Avenue.

I see. Is that your usual procedure during first period?

Sometimes I patronize Harry's Ham 'N' Eggs if Cora's is crowded.

Miss Finch, you haven't reported Mr. Barringer's lateness in punching in.

He's always punched in. Always.

On the dot.

Who's been punching in for you, Mr. Barringer?

Gallantry, Mr. McHabe. Gallantry.

Miss Finch, see that a directive goes out to all teachers at once.

In future, no room will be left uncovered at any time when not in use,

and to prevent further
unfortunate incidents,
all teachers are instructed to re-double
their vigilance at all times.
I punched him in. He's a creative artist.
He shouldn't have to get up at 6:30
like the rest of us.
I have here the girl's PRC, Dr. Bester.
Now, the capsule characterizations
for the past three terms read,
'Nice and helpful', 'Leadership potential',
and 'Reliable blackboard monitor'.
Thank you, Miss Friedenberg.
It's most atypical for a girl
with her stable PPP
to have done what she did,
but there are factors beyond our control
which are frequently the cause
of emotional disequilibrium.
Miss Friedenberg has delicately
brought us to the question of motivation.
It's my fault, sir. I am to blame.
Are you, Miss Barrett?
Alice came to me this morning
and wanted to talk.
If I had spent five minutes with her,
this might not have happened.
Well, this letter was found
on the child's person.
Do you recognize it, Mr. Barringer?
Yes, it's a letter she wrote to me.
A love letter, I should say.
Which I corrected for grammar
and spelling and returned to the student.
With no comment on its contents?
No, sir.
Your gallantry seems to vary
from day to day, Mr. Barringer.
May I ask, sir, what I should have done?
Talked to her.
And encouraged a neurotic teenager?
Miss Barrett, this boy is being admitted
once again, as always,
as usual, on probation.

I want you to report the slightest violation
of the smallest rule.
The next time it'll mean expulsion.
Yes, sir.
Look at me, Teach.
Punched in with my own hand.
Miss Barrett. Miss Barrett.
May I remind you
that Alice Blake still has
a library copy of Idylls of the King?
-It's already 15 cents overdue.
-Well, I'll see that you get it, Mrs. Wolf.
Can I talk to you
for a minute, Miss Barrett?
Good morning, Eddie. Sit down.
I've been wanting to talk to you, too.
You've been doing so much better lately.
Speaking out in class.
-Getting your assignments in on time.
-I'm dropping out.
You gotta sign my book clearance.
Oh, Eddie, why?
Just when you're doing so well.
Do your parents want you to? Is that it?
Do you have to get a job?
Listen, Eddie, if it's a matter of money,
we can talk to somebody.
Oh, Eddie,
you may be ruining your chances.
You may be able to get a job now.
You may be able to get an ordinary job,
but you can get a better job
if you just stick it out.
My brother stuck it out here.
He went up for that better job.
He went up for that ordinary job, also.
The very next day
some whities had both jobs.
Oh, Eddie, I'm...
-Look at the negro teachers in this school.
-I just won't be them, Miss Barrett.
Well, Eddie, what will you do? Nothing?
You gotta sign my book clearance.
Dickens calls the first book

of A Tale of Two Cities, ''Recalled to life.''

Now, what does that suggest?

-Can't be done.

-Dead is dead.

So who's recalling?

Physical death isn't the only kind of death.

The spirit may be killed, or the mind,
or the will,

and then sometimes something happens
to make it come to life again.

In the case of Dr. Manette,
who's been imprisoned for...

Good morning, Miss Barrett.

As all the world knows by now,

I've no class first period,

so I decided to sit in on yours.

-What's the lesson plan for today?

-Paul...

Surely a dedicated teacher like you
has a lesson plan.

-A Tale of Two Cities.

-Perfect!

May I remind you

that tale is spelt T-A-L-E.

They say a writer

should stick to what he knows.

What nonsense.

What did Dickens know

about French Revolutions?

What did Shakespeare know

about Moors in Venice?

If he'd stuck to what he knew,

we'd have no Othello.

We'd have no Alice in Wonderland.

We'd have no Treasure Island.

You brats think that I and Miss Barrett

stand up there, day after day,

talking about books and the writing

of books just for the hell of it?

You think it's got nothing to do with you.

A writer creates a book.

An individual creates a life.

For a writer to create a masterpiece,

he's got to think beyond what he knows.

For an individual to create a life,
even a halfway-decent one,
he's gotta go beyond what he knows.
Go beyond the poverty, the disease,
the dope, the degeneracy.
Go beyond the oceans to the Alps,
a magnificent replica of which
the Board of Education
has generously donated.
Stick with what you think
and that's what you're gonna
be stuck with.
You may as well get out. Now.
Miss Barrett's class dismissed.
All of you dismissed
for the rest of your crummy lives.
Some of you may prefer to leave by
the window. I prefer to leave by the door.
Punch me out, will you, Teach?
Browning wrote, "'A man's reach must
exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for?'"
But there's something to be said for first,
or finally, or sometime knowing what
your grasp is without giving up courage,
or heart, or whatever you want to call it.
If you deny what you know
or what you are, or where you are,
you deny the simplest part of being alive,
and you die,
like Dr. Manette
who was imprisoned for 18 years
in A Tale of Two Cities.
Can he be recalled to life?
I think some can.
At least, they come back to where life is
of their own accord.
And that's a beginning.
Do not turn the papers over
until the bell has rung.
Examination papers must not be touched
until the bell rings.
All books, notebooks,
pocket books and other personal
possessions must be placed

on the floor in front of the room.
Doctor says to take a pill at 9:30.
Can I keep a pill if it's not written on?
When the bell rings,
you are to turn your papers over in unison.
No student is to leave his seat.
If you have a question, raise your hand,
and I will be in the back of the room.
If you stand back there,
how can we tell who you're watching?
-Whom, whom I'm watching.
-Whom.
-Teach, hey, Teach. We gotta...
-Teach.
All right, class. Let's settle down.
Class, let's settle down
and wait for the bell.
It isn't fair. We never had this.
They always ask what I don't know
and never ask what I know.
Silence. Let's get to work. Time is passing.
Toilet.
Come with me.
You have to wait for the hall proctor.
You mean you don't trust me?
Proctor has to escort you.
All right, I'll make a deal with you.
I'll let you go alone.
But it's to be understood you are
honor-bound not to use the lavatory
for any but legitimate purposes,
not for a reference room,
not even for a quick smoke.
Now, is that understood?
Sure, Teach.
You let him out of the room unescorted.
There was no hall proctor.
You realize, of course,
his exam paper's now invalidated.
-There's no point in his continuing.
-He wasn't looking up any answers.
-How do you know that?
-He told me he wouldn't.
-Do you believe him?

-I believe him and I think
he should be allowed to finish.
Very well, Miss Barrett, but I want
that exam paper corrected immediately
at the end of the day and then I want
to see you and the boy in my office.
Second girl in third row,
eyes on your paper.
Joe, please return to your seat.
Eighty-six percent, Joe.
Wait. Wait.
Well, the boy has obviously cheated.
The 86 percent he earned
was for essay questions
requiring the personal interpretation
of the student.
Evaluations, comparisons and judgment.
And certainly not the kind of material
you could look up in a lavatory.
Well, the examination will be gone over
with a fine-toothed comb
by an unbiased party.
I think the boy should be
accused of cheating now
and allowed to defend himself,
or exonerated with an apology.
And as for your conduct,
Miss Barrett, in the...
-McHabe speaking.
-I think the boy has a right to know
where he stands.
Yes, Sergeant, she is one of our students.
Just a minute. We'll finish this later.
Well, there's nothing we can do
about it personally, Sergeant.
No, it's...
It's a matter for one of the youth boards.
Got you in trouble, didn't I, Teach?
Just think, if I'd gotten
my usual 20 percent,
the whole thing
would have probably blown over.
Listen, Joe, if you're saying to me you got
let me tell you something.

I don't care.
You got it. I was hard on you, Joe.
I was tough.
I didn't let you get away
with one single misplaced comma.
You, Joe, 86 percent.
To all parents. Welcome.
Your son or daughter has given you
a copy of his or her program
with the name of each
of his or her teachers
and the room
where the teacher may be found.
If you are unable to locate
these designated rooms,
please come to room 112,
the main entrance, for information.
In order to see as many...
-Come in, Roy.
-...parents as possible,
teachers have been instructed
to allot no more than five minutes...
-How do you do, Mrs. Atkins?
-...to each parent.
It's Lewes. Mrs. Lewes.
-We got different names.
-Mrs. Lewes.
Do my five minutes start now
or when we start talking?
No, no, please,
you can have as much time as you like.
There seems to be a small turnout tonight.
I've got to go.
Yeah, you'd better go.
-Good night, Miss Barrett.
-Good night, Roy.
Won't you sit down please, Mrs. Lewes?
I'm very pleased to meet Roy's mother.
-He seems very cooperative in class...
-What if I'm not his mother?
But Roy said that you were his mother.
But what if I told him to say so?
Just in case only mothers
were allowed here tonight.

And fathers.
Oh, I'm a mother,
but I've got four of my own.
-But I'm not his mother.
-Oh, if you're related, then it's...
He lives with us on the sofa.
I think he knows who his real mother is,
but I don't know.
I never told him. Nobody did.
Nobody would do that to him.
I think he just picked her out on his own.
I've seen him looking at her.
She works that block, pretty much.
He's had about 10 mothers
between her and me.
Neighbors.
He'd stay with a neighbor
until they moved out
and then he'd just sit on the stoop
and wait for another neighbor to say,
'Come on in, Roy.'
Can I stay, even though I'm not a parent?
Of course... Of course you can.
I've come about that D you gave Roy
at midterms.
The trouble is, Mrs. Lewes,
he doesn't pay attention during class.
His mind wanders, you know.
Go on, say it.
He goes to sleep.
He goes to sleep.
And that's why you gave him a D?
That's why he gave himself a D.
Oh, you're pretty. You're very pretty.
You know, he didn't want me
to come here tonight.
And when he saw I was really going
to come, he didn't want to come with me.
But I made him do it.
Oh, he listens.
I wanted him to come here
so you could see him go

to work at 8:

all night.

I wanted you to see him go.

He brings home all his money.

How's my five minutes?

Just begun.

He wants to be around cars, Roy.

But he wants to be good at being
around cars, so he wants to graduate.

I don't see how one follows the other,
but he says it does.

He's got this made-up mind
about cars and graduation.

But you don't graduate from nowhere
with D's.

Well, there are things that he can do
for extra credit.

Now I'm... I will help him.

What good is English to him when all
he wants to do is to be around cars?

He's not like... Like other kids
to look at them and drive them.

He wants to work around cars.

What good is English to him?

If he wants to graduate,
it must be important to him.

Then why not pass him on?

It's no skin off your pretty nose.

Miss Barrett.

Miss Barrett, I believe. I'm Alberta Kagan,
mother of Harry A. Kagan,
President of the General Organization.

Oh, I hope I'm not interrupting.

No, ma'am, I'm through.

Mrs. Lewes, please sit down.

I won't keep you a minute, Miss Barrett.

I just wanted to give myself the pleasure
of making the acquaintance
of such a lovely teacher like yourself.

A book like *Silas Marner* can mean
a lot to a boy like Rusty, Mr. O'Brien,
even if it was written by a woman.

It's about people's responsibility
to one another and parental love.

His mother already gave him

too much parental love.
The story can help him understand
such things from an adult point of view
rather than a child's point of view.
It can help prepare him to become a man.
You think he's not a man?
For example,
when we finish reading the book,
we are going to improvise a trial.
And Rusty...
Rusty is going to be the defendant.
Through the story, he will know
what it means to stand up for himself.
They tried to teach him self-defense
at the youth center.
He came home.
I'm... I'm not talking about
that kind of self-defense.
Yeah.
Well, I just wanted to see
what was going on in here.
Joe?
Did you bring your parents to see me?

Joe, it's 10:

Are you in trouble?
Came for our talk.
No, I meant after school.
This is after school.
Well, we're not supposed
to be in the building now.
You wanna go someplace else?
I want you to go home.
Look, I'm here.
Isn't that what you wanted?
Custodian will be checking the rooms
in a minute.
You want it in the dark?
Joe.
Joe, please, turn on the lights.
What is it, Teach?
Ever since the first day of school,
defending me with McHabe,
breaking rules for me, getting into trouble.

Maybe I'm what they call
a low under-achiever.
Took me long to figure it out.
But I figured it out.
Oh, Joe.
Is that the only reason you can think of?
What else?
Always wanting to see me
after school, alone.
Well, we're alone now.
-Finally got to me, Teach.
-No.
Joe, oh, Joe, no.
I've come to submit my resignation,
Dr. Bester.
On the basis
of less than a term's experience?
I will finish out the term, of course.
Do you think you've given us
a fair chance, Miss Barrett?
I have given myself a fair chance,
in and out of the classroom.
I have used everything I ever learned,
every instinct I have
or thought I had about teaching.
And you've decided
you're not cut out to be a teacher.
Not here.
You know, when I visited your class,
I did notice certain deficiencies
in your methods,
but I put them down to inexperience,
because you are a born teacher,
Miss Barrett.
Not here.
You say that as if that's your point.
There are better schools, we all know.
But there are worse.
And whatever waste, stupidity,
ineptitude you've found,
whatever problems and frustrations
of teachers and pupils,
something very exciting is going on,
even here.

In each of the classrooms,
on each of the floors, all at the same time,
education is going on.
In some form or other, for all its abuses,
young people are being exposed
to education.
Even here.
A teacher should be able to get through
to her students,
even here.
Very well.
Write a letter to the Board of Education.
They'll send you the proper form
for resignation.
Thank you, Dr. Bester.
Sylvia, Sylvia !
I suppose you're ticking off the number
of times you have left to walk this block.
Thirty-two.
Hi, Eddie.
And then what?
I've made application
to several private schools.
Well, Joe Ferone never came back, did he?
One or two
have expressed interest already.
Oh, you'll find some place
with white columns and green lawns
and high tuition.
And you'll sit in a quiet room
with eight or 10 well-dressed students,
teaching Chaucer.
In Old English, I'd dare say.
And they'll be so polite,
they'll let you love them, without risk.
Miss Finch.
They keep sending me retirement forms.
What I need is a resignation form.
They even make it hard for you to give up.
Maybe you should give up giving up.
Syl.
The Teacher's Interest Committee
is planning a gala luncheon
on the last day of school before Christmas.

-Henrietta, are you all right?

-Oh, Syl.

Bob Whiteside.

I went into the book room
yesterday afternoon late.

I just opened the door.

My Bob Whiteside with Linda Rosen.

Your Linda Rosen. Why, he won the essay
contest, and she can't even spell.

Do you want the chicken patty
with the cream sauce or fillet of sole?

-Patty.

-Patty.

Look at this Ivanhoe, Mr. McHabe.

Gutted.

It's been used to carry something
in and out of this building.

Something filthy, you can be sure.

Who would dare to do that to Ivanhoe?

Miss Barrett, you said we could
turn in extra-credit book reports,
and due to midterms and horsing
around, I need that 'E' credit.

So here's a myth report, Miss Barrett,
about Venus and Adonis. Funny, huh?

Thank you, Lou.

You gotta pass me on, Miss Barrett.

It's just my spelling that keeps me back.

At home, they won't let me drop out.

Class, class, please.

Class, pay attention.

Class.

Come on now, we don't have
all sorts of time, class, please!

Now, boys, Herbie, Ronnie, please.

Now, listen.

The jury pool sits down in the auditorium.

Will you please take your seats there
until you're called for examination?

Now, go quickly and go quietly.

Quietly.

Quietly. Listen to your teacher, now.

Prosecuting... Prosecuting attorney
sits here.

Lou? Lou. You there.
The plaintiff here. Wooley, right here.
Now, who's my defendant?
-Where's my defendant?
-That's me, Miss Barrett.
Rusty, defense attorney.
Well, Harry, stop trying to influence
the witnesses ahead of time,
and take your seat
next to your client, please.
Now the... The court clerk sits in here.
Gary, that's you. Right down here.
Don't look so worried.
All you have to do is write down
everything that's said and repeat it back
if the judge asks you to.
Now, let's see. My witnesses.
Witnesses will sit along here.
Girls, everybody along here,
we'll pretend as if there's a railing.
Miss Barrett, I'm not prepared to testify.
Well, in that case,
we'll just have to have the two attorneys
examine you as a hostile witness.
Lou.
Harry, take a note on that, now.
Meanwhile, Lennie, will you just take
your place with the others?
Now, let's see, what else... Oh, the judge.
Whom did I... Did I appoint judge?
Doesn't anyone remember?
I think it was Jose Rodriguez,
Miss Barrett.
Yes, it was Jose. Now where...
I wonder where...
Where is Jose?
Well, knowing the fellow only slightly as I
do, in which case I'm sure I'm not alone,
I would think he probably
got frightened at the last moment.
Cold feet!
Lou, Lou.
Enough is enough. Come on, sit down.
In that case, I'm going to have

to appoint another judge.

Now, do I have any volunteers?

No?

Class, class.

You're late, Jose.

Members of the court are supposed to address the judge as Your Honor.

Even teachers.

Well, we'd almost given you up, Your Honor.

The judge is supposed to be the last one to enter the court.

He don't need no late pass.

Court clerk's supposed to say they gotta rise.

He says you gotta get up.

The judge says the court clerk says.

The judge says I say.

You, too.

This here court is now in session.

The case of Silas Marner

versus Godfrey Cass

for the custody of the child

known as Eppie, by George Eliot.

I object, Your Honor, I object.

Objection overruled!

Your Honor's overruled every objection this defense has made.

Maybe I'm stupid,

but I'm the judge and you gotta listen.

I challenge Your Honor to

your knowledge of court procedure.

I ought to know, I been.

Quiet. This here court will get quiet,

or you'll be charged with contempt.

Because the bell is about to ring, it would be a waste of the taxpayers' money to call the next witness.

Members of the jury are instructed

not to discuss the details of the case

in any manner, ways, means,

shape or form.

Members of the court are to leave

in an orderly fashion by ones and twos,

with no talking and to proceed
to their next class without delay.
This court is adjourned
until the same time tomorrow morning.
Hey, we go to lunch?
Miss Barrett.
I'm sorry you're leaving us.
And I wish you happiness
in your new school.
Miss Barrett...
I'm Me.
In the suggestion box, I'm Me.
Thank you for telling me, Jose.
And thank you.
I just wanted you to know.
I think your English this term
was the greatest subject I ever had.
Oh, Miss Barrett, Miss Barrett!
Your resignation form has come through.
Fill it out now and return it to me.
Later on, there'll be other forms.
And your keys, don't lose any of your keys.
If I fill this out I will be late
for my next class, Miss Finch.
Oh, Miss Barrett, it has come to
my attention that one of your students,
namely Jose Rodriguez, has pilfered
a graduation robe and mortarboard
from the supply room.
Hi, Teach.
Hi, Pupe.
English