

Math Rashes
One Act Play
by
Douglas Evans

(Based on the short story Math Rashes
from his book MATH RASHES AND OTHER CLASSROOM TALES)

CHARACTERS

WALTER TEACH MELON: (Narrator) portly, black-bearded man about fifty who lives above the classroom at the end of the hall.

TALL TEACHER: male teacher about 30

STUDENTS 1-10: the ten students can play themselves. When teacher calls out name, he should use student's real name. Change dialog for gender preference. Like-wise, *third-grade* can be replaced with appropriate grade. The number of students can be reduced as needed.

NOISE-MAKER: needed to blow whistle and ring bell off stage.

STAGING

The play takes place in a typical elementary school classroom.

Time: The present; early morning

Use a simple set of ten student desks facing a large teacher's desk. A portable blackboard should stand upstage. Downstage are the imaginary classroom windows that look out onto the audience where the snow-covered playground would be. Classroom door is stage right. Drinking fountain and rear of room are stage left.

Scene One:

Time: The present. Early morning.

Scene: A third-grade classroom. Ten desks stage left face a large teacher's desk stage right. Upstage center stands a portable blackboard with a chalk doghouse drawn in the upper corner. Names of students are written in the doghouse.

Lights up: The classroom is empty. WT MELON, a big bellied, black-bearded man, enters right. He looks at doghouse and shakes head. School bell rings.

WT MELON

(facing audience)

Ah, greetings girls and boys, boys and girls, wonderful ones, one and all. Welcome to the classroom at the end of the hall at WT Melon Elementary School. My name is Walter Teach Melon, otherwise known as WT Melon.

(pauses and smiles)

Yes, that's correct. The folks who name things in this school district named this school after me. To be sure, wonderful ones, that is a great honor. However, those folks who name things in this school district also believe that I've been dead for many years. Fortunately for me, they are incorrect. For, as you can see, I'm very much alive, and well, and happy to be here. In fact, I live right above this classroom where I can listen in on all that goes on down here during the school day.

(WT Melon points upward and turns toward doorway stage right. TALL TEACHER enters stage right. He sits at desk and shuffles through papers.)

WT MELON (CONT'D)

(still addressing audience.)

Now, you may wonder, wonderful ones, if this is a classroom and the morning bell just rang rung, why aren't there third-graders sitting in these desks? Well, the reason is simple. Today the school bus is late for last night it snowed, not enough to cancel school, but enough to slow down the ride to school.

(pretends to look out window)

But don't worry, wonderful ones, I see the school bus pulling into the school parking lot right now. Oh, look at the playground out there. Aren't the kids in for a surprise. The playground is not what it was yesterday. Overnight it turned into flat, soft, powdery blanket of white.

(Whistle blows off stage. TALL TEACHER stands and walks stage right. He stands at door, waiting.)

WT MELON (CONT'D)

(shrugging while shaking head)

But, alas, there's no time for the third-graders to play in all that winter wonderfulness. For the playground lady has blown her bad-news whistle, ordering them to march straight inside.

(sound of tramping boots heard off stage.)

WT MELON (CONT'D)

So with all that wonderful snow glistening right outside the classroom window, the school day is about to begin. This means it's time for me to return to my room overhead.

(starts toward the door stage right)

But before I go, wonderful ones, I must tell you the title of this play. It's Math Rashes. Math Rashes? Don't you wonder what that has to do with *snow*?

(WT MELON exits right. At same moment, STUDENTS 1-10 file in stage right blowing into hands and rubbing arms as if coming in from the cold. The students stand downstage center, pretending to gaze out the windows.)

STUDENT 1

Man, look at it out there. The playground is as flat and white as the top of a marshmallow.

STUDENT 2

Every's different. All the tetherball poles are wearing white top hat, and each monkey bar has on a white coats.

STUDENT 3

Perfect! Look at it! Not one footprint on the soccer field. If I were out there, I'd tramp out my name in giant letters.

STUDENT 4

Look at that huge snowdrift by the kickball wall. I want to dig a tunnel right into it.

STUDENT 5

If I were out there I'd roll the world's biggest snow bolder and build the world's tallest snowteacher.

(TALL TEACHER stands before his desk.)

TALL TEACHER

All right, class. Good to see that you all hung your coats in the hallway neatly and left your boots in straight row. Now, please take your seats. We're getting a late start this morning, and we have lots of schoolwork to do.

(Students groan and sit at their desks.)

TALL TEACHER (CONT'D)

How about this troublesome snow? Brrrr. It sure did snarl traffic this morning. But first, I had to dig my car out of the driveway. Brrr. And won't Mr. Leeks have plenty of snow shoveling to do at school this morning.

STUDENT 5

(looking out window)

Snow! Oh, so much snow! If I were outside I'd drop on my back and make a string of snow angles.

STUDENT 6

(looking out window)

I'd pepper the side of the gym with snowballs until it's covered with white spots.

TALL TEACHER

Now take out your reading books, class. We'll read a story about winter. Who can tell me some outside activities you do in the winter?

STUDENT 7

Tobogganing.

STUDENT 8

Snowboarding.

STUDENT 9

Playing hockey.

STUDENT 10

Cross-country skiing.

TALL TEACHER

Good. Now let's read about winter. *S1 NAME* you may begin.

(TALL TEACHER sits on desk.)

STUDENT 1

(reading in book)

Winter. Winter is the time when much of the world turns white, lakes turn to ice, and temperatures drops...

(voice trails off)

STUDENT 2

(looking out window.)

One hour until recess. By then all the snow will be trampled. The playground will look like the surface of the moon.

STUDENT 3

(looking out window)

Oh, if I could just throw one snowball. I'd peg it right through the tire swing.

TALL TEACHER

(looking up at class)

Very good, *S1 NAME*. Now *S4 NAME* please continue.

STUDENT 4

(reading in book)

During the winter many animals retire to their dens or burrow to hibernate...

(voice trails off)

STUDENT 5

(looking out window)

This is torture. All that snow going to waste.

STUDENT 6

(looking out window)

I don't want to read about snow. I want to roll in it.

TALL TEACHER

(looking up)

OK, class. I think that's enough reading for today. Now...let's see.

(TALL TEACHER looks out window and students sit up straight in desks expectantly.)

TALL TEACHER (CONT'D)

We have lots of math to complete this morning. Please take out your math books and turn to page seventy-five.

(Students groan and take math books from desks.)

STUDENT 7

How can I think about math when the glare of the snow is blinding me? If I opened the window I could grab a handful.

STUDENT 8

Classroom fever. I have classroom fever.

TALL TEACHER

Today, class, we'll do three-digit subtraction problems. Now first you look at the ones places and ask yourselves if you must borrow...

(voice trails off)

STUDENT 9

(looking out the window)

This morning I ran from my house to the bus. When we got to school I came straight inside. Not a chance to touch a single snowflake.

STUDENT 10

(looking out window)

And recess is still one hour, forty-eight minutes, and thirteen seconds away. Twelve seconds. Eleven seconds. Ten seconds...

TALL TEACHER

And if you can't subtract the tens place, you must borrow from the hundreds place by crossing out the three and adding a ten to the seven.

STUDENT 1

(holding hand to mouth)

Hiccup! Hiccup! Hiccup! Hiccup!

TALL TEACHER

S1 NAME, is that you with the hiccups?

STUDENT 1

(nodding)

Hiccup! Hiccup!

TALL TEACHER

Go to the sink and get a drink. Swallow nine times. That's a hiccup cure that never fails.

(STUDENT 1 walks stage left and takes imaginary drink at sink. He swallows, holding up fingers to count nine gulps and returns to desk.)

TALL TEACHER (CONT'D)

Now where was I...yes, next you must subtract the tens place and check the hundreds place.

STUDENT 1

(louder this time)

Hiccup! Hiccup!

TALL TEACHER

How odd. My hiccup cure has never failed before. *S1 NAME* are you sure you swallowed nine times? Not eight or ten?

STUDENT 1

(nodding)

Hiccup! Hiccup! I'm sure, I'm sure. But now my hiccups are worse.

STUDENT 2

Hiccup! Hiccup! Teacher, now I have the hiccups, too. Should I get a drink? *Hiccup! Hiccup!*

TALL TEACHER

And swallow nine times, *S2 NAME*.

(STUDENT 2 walks to sink and drinks.)

STUDENT 3

Hiccup! Hiccup! I also have the hiccups. *Hiccup! Hiccup!*

STUDENT 4

Me, too. *Hiccup! Hiccup!* Teacher, whenever I get the hiccups, my mom tells me to do twenty jumping jacks.

STUDENT 5

(stands)

Hiccup! Hiccup! We might as well give it a try.

(STUDENT 1, STUDENT 2, STUDENT 3, STUDENT 4, and STUDENT 5 start doing jumping jacks.)

STUDENT 6

Hiccup! Hiccup! But I read where you should bend over and touch the ground. *Hiccup! Hiccup!*

(STUDENT 6 bends to touch the ground. STUDENT 7 sneaks up behind STUDENT 6.)

STUDENT 7

Boo! Did I scare you? Did I? I heard that scaring people is a sure cure for hiccups.

(pauses and holds hand to mouth)

Hiccup! Hiccup! No, I guess that didn't get rid of your hiccups. Instead it gave them to *me*. *Hiccup! Hiccup!*

(STUDENT 7 joins STUDENT 6 in toes touches. STUDENT 8 stands and starts hopping on one leg.)

STUDENT 8

Hiccup! Hiccup! My sure cure for hiccups is to hop on one foot one-hundred times. *Hiccup! Hiccup!*

TALL TEACHER

How odd. The hiccups seem to be spreading around the classroom. If I didn't know better, I'd say these hiccups are contagious. What can I do? We still need to write snow stories this morning and cut out snowflakes for science.

STUDENT 9

Hiccup! Hiccup! Now the hiccups have spread to me.

STUDENT 10

Hiccup! Hiccup! And to me.

(STUDENT 9 stands and does jumping jacks. STUDENT 10 stands and hops on one foot.)

TALL TEACHER

Contagious hiccups. How can any school get done if my class had contagious hiccups?

(STUDENT 1, STUDENT 2, STUDENT 3, STUDENT 4, and STUDENT 5 sit at desk exhausted.)

STUDENT 1

I don't know what's more tiring, hiccupping or doing the hiccup cure. *Hiccup! Hiccup!*

STUDENT 2

I've been hiccupping so much my gut aches. *Hiccup! Hiccup!*

STUDENT 3

(starts scratching arm)
And now I itch like crazy.
(pulls up shirt sleeve. Plus and minus signs cover his/her arm. He/She screams.)
There are red spots on my arm. . .
(screams and scratches again)
. . . No, they're not spots; they're plus and minus signs. My arms are covered with plus and minus signs!

STUDENT 4

(begins scratching and pulls up sleeve.)
Spots are on my arm, too. . . They're numbers! I'm covered with numbers! That's a one, and a two, and a three. There's a four, a five, a six, and a seven. An eight is on my wrist and a nine is by my elbow.

STUDENT 5

(scratches stomach. He/She
lifts shirt and inspects
skin.)

Yikes! Now I have itchy, red spots on my belly. They're
times and division signs. . .

(looks closer)

. . . And numbers, too! Yikes! Entire math problems are
breaking out all over me!

TALL TEACHER

(looking over class)

How odd! It sound like you students not only have contagious
hiccups, but Math Rashes as well! I know what to do about
bee stings, mosquito bites, and poison ivy bumps, but I know
nothing about Math Rashes.

STUDENT 6

(scratching legs)

And I think I have Math Rashes, too.

(pulls up pants leg)

Yep, fractions and equal signs. I have Math Rashes all over
me.

STUDENT 7

(pulls at neck of T-shirt and
looks at shoulder)

And so do I. . .

(looks closer and scratches)

. . . Multiplication facts are covering my neck.

(reading)

Six times six is thirty-six. Seven times seven is forty
nine.

TALL TEACHER

Hiccups and Math Rashes? Hiccups and Math Rashes? This can
only mean one thing. . . an allergy. Class, I believe you've
all had an allergic reaction to something, something in this
classroom. But what could it be? You haven't eaten
anything. You haven't touched anything. How can we cure
this allergy and get back to our schoolwork.

(Students hiccup louder.)

STUDENT 8

(stops hopping and sits down)

Hiccup! Hiccup! Teacher, I think the allergy could have
something to do with the work we've been doing this morning.
Whenever you mention schoolwork, my hiccups get worse.

Hiccup! Hiccup!

STUDENT 9

(sits and scratches back of
neck)

And my itching gets worse.

STUDENT 10

(sits and scratches back)

Hiccup! Hiccup! Both my hiccups, and itching grow worse.
Hiccup! Hiccup!

TALL TEACHER

(thinking)

Is that right? Is that possible? I think I'll do an
experiment. . . Class, time for a pop math quiz.

(Students hiccup louder and scratch
faster.)

STUDENT 1

(scratching)

That was awful. Just thinking about more math made my Math
Rashes itch more.

STUDENT 2

(scratching)

I'd rather have chicken pox than Math Rashes.

STUDENT 3

(scratching)

School work. We're having an allergic reaction to all the
schoolwork we've done this morning.

STUDENT 4

(scratching)

I'm allergy to peanuts. I must also have a Schoolwork
Allergy!

STUDENT 5

(scratching)

Too much reading and too much math. We've had an overdose of
schoolwork, and that's made us allergic to it.

TALL TEACHER

Yes but what's the cure for this Schoolwork Allergy, class?
You can't all sit here, scratching Math Rashes and hiccuping.

STUDENT 6

(scratching)

Teacher, maybe. . . just maybe. . . since schoolwork caused
the allergy, maybe. . . just maybe. . . doing the opposite
thing might cure them.

STUDENT 7

(scratching)

Like play! I bet if we all go outside and start playing in the snow these hiccups --*Hiccup! Hiccup!*-- and Math Rashes will go away.

STUDENT 8

Whatever we do let's do it quickly. I don't think I can stand one more itch or one more hiccup.

TALL TEACHER

OK, I think you're right class. To cure this Schoolwork Allergy we must go right outside and play right away.

(steps toward down stage toward window.)

So your next assignment is to go into the hall and put on your wraps. Then you must head straight to the playground.

(Students stand still and quiet, staring at teacher.)

STUDENT 9

Snowballs!

STUDENT 10

Snow mazes!

STUDENTS 1 AND 2

Snow tunnels!

STUDENTS 3 AND 4

Snow forts!

STUDENTS 5 AND 6

Snow boulders!

STUDENTS 7 AND 8

Snow angles!

ALL STUDENTS

Snow!

TALL TEACHER

Now no arguing about it. No more schoolwork for now, class. You have your assignment. Make sure you play hard and long out in the snow. We'll stay outside until I'm sure your Math Rashes and contagious hiccups are gone for good.

(Students cheer and charge off stage right.)

TALL TEACHER

(shaking head)

Schoolwork Allergies! Math Rashes and hiccups that spread around a classroom. There's so much about teaching I still need to learn about.

(TALL TEACHER exits stage right.
Lights fade.)