

Math Rashes

One act play for children

By Douglas Evans



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CHARACTERS

Miss Pedagog: new third-grade teacher

STUDENTS 1-6: Six third-grade students

Setting

A third-grade classroom during the winter. Six desks stand in a rows center stage. They face a large teacher's desk stage right. A portable whiteboard stands next to teacher's desk. Classroom windows, unseen, are downstage. Classroom door, unseen, is stage left.

PRODUCTION NOTES:

CHARACTERS: Seven characters, 6 eight-year-old students of either gender. 1 female teacher.

PLAYING TIME: 30 minutes

PROPS: portable whiteboard.

Whiteboard pen

Whiteboard eraser

6 student desks

6 math books

Tattoo math symbol stickers or ink stamps:

+, -, ×, ÷, =, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 0, 1/2, 1/4

Scarf and coat for teacher

SETTING:

A third-grade classroom during the winter.

Six desks arranged in a row center stage

Desks face a large teacher's desk stage right.

A portable whiteboard stands next to teacher's desk.

Classroom windows, unseen, are downstage.

Classroom door, unseen, stage left.

Unseen snowy playground is outside windows.

COSTUMES: Students, modern winter school clothing

Teacher, warm sweater, long skirt

SOUND: School bell

MUSIC: Recording of *Let it Snow!*

Scene One:

Time: The present. Early morning.
Winter

Setting: Modern third-grade classroom.
At stage center, six student desks
stand in a row. They face teacher's
desk stage right. Portable whiteboard
stands next to teacher's desk. Unseen
classroom windows downstage center.
Unseen classroom door stage left.

At Rise: School bell rings.

MISS PEDAGOG sits at her desk, grading
papers. Her coat and scarf hang on the
back of her chair.

STUDENTS 1-6 file into classroom stage
left. They blow on hands and rub arms
after coming in from the cold. Students
sit at their desks and gaze longingly
at snowy playground outside windows
downstage.

STUDENT 1
Look at it. All that snow on our playground.

STUDENT 2
Yesterday, it was covered with soggy leaves. Today it's
white, soft, and fluffy.

STUDENT 3
Every tetherball pole is wear a tall white hat. The monkey
bars are wrapped in thick coats, and the soccer field looks
like a cozy quilt.

STUDENT 4
I didn't get a second to play in the snow this morning. The
bus aide hustled me straight off the bus and into the school.

STUDENT 5
Me too. If I were out there now, I'd pepper the kickball wall
with snowballs.

STUDENT 6
I'd dig a tunnel through the snowdrift by the slide.

STUDENT 1
I'd stomp my name in giant letters across the soccer field.

STUDENT 2
I'd make an army of snow angels.

STUDENT 3

I'd build a snow fort and keep out all the little kids.

(MISS PEDAGOG stands and walks to front of her desk.)

MISS PEDAGOG

(to students.)

Good morning, class. Look at all that snow? Quite a storm last night, wasn't it? Brrrr. I had a hard time getting out of my driveway. I'm glad the buses made it here safely. Snowstorms can really cause trouble for a school.

STUDENT 4

(looking out window)

Snow! All that untouched snow out there!

STUDENT 5

(looking out window)

Nothing's more fun than being the first one on a snowy field.

STUDENT 6

To grown-ups, snow's a hassle. To kids, it's an adventure!

MISS PEDAGOG

Because of all the snow, we're starting a little late. So let's get right to work. Please take out your math books.

(Students groan and take math books from desks, plopping them on their desktops.)

STUDENT 1

(looking out the window.)

How can I think about math when all that snow is calling to me?

STUDENT 2

(looking out window.)

One hour and thirty-six minutes until recess.

STUDENT 3

By then the kindergartners will have trampled all the snow. The playground will look like the cratered surface of the moon.

STUDENT 4

(looking out window)

Why didn't they call a Snow Day? I lay in bed listening to the radio, hoping, hoping.

STUDENT 5

(shaking head)

This school district never calls a Snow Day.

STUDENT 6

Classroom fever! I've got classroom fever!

MISS PEDAGOG

Today, class, we'll work on three-digit subtraction problems.

(MISS PEDAGOG turns and writes problem on board. Class continues to gaze out the window.)

$$\begin{array}{r} 471 \\ -235 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

MISS PEDAGOG (CONT'D)

(working problem on whiteboard)

Now watch carefully. Start with the ones place and ask yourself '*Can I take five from one?*' No? So you must regroup. Now take one ten from the tens place, leaving six tens, and add it to the ones place, making eleven ones. Now...

(MISS PEDAGOG'S voice trails off. She finishes the problem while students talk.)

STUDENT 1

(looking out the window)

At home, I didn't have time to touch a single snowflake. It was rush, rush, rush right out the door.

STUDENT 2

One hour thirty one minutes and twelve seconds until recess.

STUDENT 3

(looking out window)

Why does time go so slowly when I'm waiting for something fun?

STUDENT 4

I'm going to go blind staring at that glaring snow.

STUDENT 5

The icicles hanging from the gutters look like sparkling fangs.

STUDENT 6

My classroom fever is getting worse.

MISS PEDAGOG

(facing class)

Now what do you do if there is a zero in the tens place, as in this problem?

(MISS PEDAGOG turns toward whiteboard, erases the first problem, and writes this one.)

$$\begin{array}{r} 302 \\ -156 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

MISS PEDAGOG
(working problem on board)
Start again by looking at the ones place. Ask yourself do you need to regroup? Yes, you can't take six from two. So what do you do?

(MISS PEDAGOG'S voice trails off as she completes the problem.)

STUDENT 1
(looking out window)
Sledding, cross-country skiing, snowboarding. Snow is good for so many things. What's math good for?

STUDENT 2
(looking out window)
One hour, twenty-nine minutes, and one second until recess.

STUDENT 3
By tomorrow, all the snow might be gone.

STUDENT 4
My classroom fever is so bad I can't sit still.

STUDENT 5
(looking out window and sings)
Let it snow. Let it snow. Let it snow.

STUDENT 6
I usually like math, but not today.

MISS PEDAGOG
(facing class)
And sometimes you must regroup twice in a problem. As in this one.

(MISS PEDAGOG turns toward whiteboard and erases problem. She writes:)

$$\begin{array}{r} 520 \\ -237 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

MISS PEDAGOG
(working problem on whiteboard)
Again start by looking at the ones place. Ask yourself do you need to regroup? Yes, you can't take seven from zero. So what do you do?...

(MISS PEDAGOG'S voice trails off as she completes the problem.)

STUDENT 1
(starts scratching arm)
Hey! My arm...it itches like crazy. What's going on?

STUDENT 2
(begins scratching neck.)
And my neck! It itches, too.

STUDENT 3
(scratches legs)
I'm also itching. From my head to my toes.

MISS PEDAGOG
(writing assignment on board.)
Now class, here is your math assignment for today. Do page seventy. Problems one to twenty.

STUDENT 4
(starts scratching)
Now, *I* itch. The itching seems to be spreading around the classroom.

STUDENT 5
(scratching belly)
Who ever heard of contagious itches?

STUDENT 6
(scratching shoulders)
I'm itch too. That makes all of us.

MISS PEDAGOG
(still writing on whiteboard)
You should be able to finish by recess time. Remember: Keep all your columns nice and straight.

STUDENT 1
(pulls up a shirt sleeve. Plus and minus signs appear all his over arm.)
Hey! There are red spots on my arm! Wait, they're not spots. They're plus, minus, times, and division signs. My arm is covered in math symbols!

STUDENT 2
(inspecting arms and hands)
Mine, too. But they're numbers! I'm covered with numbers! Look a one, a two, a three..a four, five, six, seven...an eight on my wrist and a nine on my elbow!

STUDENT 3
(Lifts shirt to inspect skin.)
Yikes! My red spots are equal signs and fractions.

(looks closer)
Yikes! Whole math problems are all over me!

(MISS PEDAGOG turns and faces class.
The entire class is scratching.)

MISS PEDAGOG
What's this? Everyone itches?

(STUDENTS nod while continuing to
scratch.)

STUDENT 4
We all have some sort of rash.

STUDENT 5
In the shapes of numbers.

STUDENT 6
And math symbols

MISS PEDAGOG
Goodness!

(MISS PEDAGOG walks up to STUDENT 1 and
examines arm.)

MISS PEDAGOG
Goodness, in teacher training I learned about a rash like
this. I think this class has broken out in... Math Rashes.

STUDENT 1
(still scratching)
Math Rashes?

STUDENT 2
(still scratching)
Math Rashes?

STUDENT 3
(still scratching)
Math Rashes?

MISS PEDAGOG
(nodding)
Fortunately, aside from the itching, they're completely
harmless.

STUDENT 4
(pulling up a pant leg)
But my Math Rashes are getting worse. Look! There's a square,
a circle, and a triangle.

STUDENT 5

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

I've got the whole times tables on my shoulder. Six times six
is thirty-six! Seven times seven is forty nine!

STUDENT 6

(scratching chest and peering
down shirt)

And I've got long division problems running down the front of
me. What's worse than long division? Long division that
itches!

MISS PEDAGOG

Goodness! In teacher training, I learned what to do about bee
stings, mosquito bites, heat rash, and poison ivy bumps, but
I don't remember any cure for Math Rashes.

(MISS PEDAGOG wanders down the row of
desks inspecting students. Everyone is
still scratching.)

MISS PEDAGOG

(while walking)

Math Rashes? Math Rashes? How can we cure this rash and get
back to our math lesson.

(Students scratch even harder.)

STUDENT 1

(scratching back of neck)

Teacher, when you mentioned math, my itching got worse.

STUDENT 2

(scratching hand)

I think we've had an allergic reaction to something.

STUDENT 3

Could our Math Rashes have something to do with all the math
we've been doing?

MISS PEDAGOG

(nodding and thinking)

Perhaps. Yes, perhaps.

(MISS PEDAGOG returns to desk and sits
on desktop.)

MISS PEDAGOG

(to class)

Let's do an experiment, shall we? If math caused this rash,
more math should make the itching worse. Take out some paper
and a pencil. It's time for a pop math quiz.

(Students scratch faster.)

STUDENT 4

(scratching)

Just thinking about math made my Math Rashes itch more.

STUDENT 5

(scratching)

Yep, we've become allergic to math.

STUDENT 6

(scratching)

I'm allergic to shellfish, pollen, and gluten. I guess I can add math to the list.

MISS PEDAGOG

All right, now that we know what caused your Math Rashes, we must find a cure? You can't sit here scratching all morning.

STUDENT 1

(scratching)

Maybe... just maybe... since working on math caused our Math Rashes, maybe...just maybe... doing the opposite might make them disappear.

STUDENT 2

(scratching)

And the opposite of work is play!

STUDENT 3

(scratching)

Maybe if we all go outside and play, our Math Rashes will go away.

STUDENT 4

(scratching)

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

STUDENT 5

(scratching)

Me neither! These Math Rashes are making me hate math.

STUDENT 6

(scratching)

Yep! I bet playing in the snow will cure our Math Rashes.

MISS PEDAGOG

(nodding)

You're right class. We must go outside and play right away.

(MISS PEDAGOG steps downstage toward windows.)

MISS PEDAGOG

So, your next assignment is this: put on your wraps in the hall and head straight to the playground.

(Students stop scratching and stare at Miss Pedagog.)

STUDENT 4

Snow tunnels and snow forts!

STUDENTS 5

Snowballs and snow angels!

STUDENT 6

No more Classroom Fever!

ALL STUDENTS

No more Math Rashes!

MISS PEDAGOG

And no more math for today. We'll stay outside until I'm certain your Math Rashes are gone for good.

(Students cheer. They stand and exit stage left.)

(MISS PEDAGOG puts on her coat and scarf.)

MISS PEDAGOG

Math Rashes! Goodness, there's still so much about teaching I need to learn.

(MISS PEDAGOG hurries after the class, calling out.)

MISS PEDAGOG

Wait for me. Let's build the world's tallest snowman!

(MISS PEDAGOG exits stage left as *Let it Snow* plays.)

(lights fade)

End of Play