

Apostrophe's



Sample Pages from Apostrophe's

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APOSTROPHE'S

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT BY
Bradley Hayward



Apostrophe's

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Printed in the USA

Characters

13 Either

THE EMCEE

STUDENTS

ANDY/ANNIE - the brown-noser

CHAD/CHELSIE - the rebel

EDGAR/EDITH - the geek

GREG/GINA - the jock

IAN/IRIS - the brain

KEVIN/KARLA - the loner

BABS/BRETT - the poet

DEBBIE/DREW - the singer

FIONA/FABIAN - the hot head

HELGA/HANS - the foreigner

JANICE/JARED - the slacker

TEACHERS

MR/MRS SULLY

MR/MRS UNGER

MR/MRS TRIPP

PRINCIPAL VALE

The teacher roles were written for one actor or actress to play. However, they may be assigned separately.

Set

Four simple acting areas: a classroom, a gymnasium, the yearbook room, and the principal's office. They can be as simple as your heart desires, or as elaborate as your budget allows.

Lighting

The script calls for a few lighting setups, but they can easily be eliminated. A solution would be to have four separate platforms, each with their own curtains. The EMCEE could then reveal the action at his/her will.

The original production used colorful turntables like *The Price Is Right*, which was hysterical; however, if you have a better idea, have at it.

Notes From The Playwright

If the teachers are all played by one actor, make sure the appearance and characterizations of each are strongly differentiated. Also, feel free to have the actor or actress play both genders. That would make for a lot of fun opportunities.

It is possible that ANDY, BABS, CHAD, DEBBIE or EDGAR could double as any teacher other than MR. SULLY.

The audience participation may be cut for the sake of time.

Most importantly, have fun. Don't be afraid to act silly or try things that are a little wacky. This is a play, after all... so play!

IN THE DARKNESS... A drum roll begins.

EMCEE: Before Jerry Maguire said, "Show me the money..." "

Thunder claps.

EMCEE: Before Hamlet said, "To be or not to be..." "

Lightning flashes.

EMCEE: Before God said, "Let there be light..." "

Thunder and lightning together. A SPOTLIGHT RISES on the EMCEE, with a microphone in hand. He's very playful with the audience, but stern when he needs to be.

EMCEE: English teachers around the globe have been repeating the same phrase over and over again for centuries. Listen closely, for this announcement is likely to be the greatest profundity since the dawn of mankind...

Silence. THE LIGHTS RISE on the most boring classroom in history. Five students, ANDY, BABS, CHAD, DEBBIE and EDGAR, are fast asleep in their desks. MR. SULLY, a nerdy English teacher with thick glasses is at the blackboard. They are frozen.

EMCEE: "Watch your apostrophes."

THE SPOTLIGHT FADES. Everyone in the classroom unfreezes as MR. SULLY drones on.

MR. SULLY: Write this down because I'm not saying it again. Watch your apostrophes. Apostrophes indicate possession and should never be used to pluralize. For example...

He turns to the blackboard and has chalk all over his butt. He proceeds to write down every example in big letters.

MR. SULLY: "Jane's dog." Likewise, they may be used in contractions. For example: "Don't do that" or "That's mine." But keep in mind, I frown on contractions. Alternately, an incorrect usage of the apostrophe would go something like this: "I like tree's" or "Smell the rose's." Does everyone understand?

He turns back around. The KIDS snore.

MR. SULLY: I said, does everyone understand?

They snore louder.

MR. SULLY: Is anyone listening? I just gave a very important speech about the apostrophe.

As one, their hands go limp and dangle from the desktops.

MR. SULLY: Hello?

They all fall out of their chairs and hit the ground hard... but continue to snore. They freeze. THE SPOTLIGHT RISES on the EMCEE.

EMCEE: Like I said, they've been going on like this for years. But I never said anyone's been listening. Excessive apostrophication is a major problem in today's society, and it is our duty to remedy the situation. This evening we will focus on the students and faculty of Westfield High. (*substitute your school's name*) I chose Westfield High not because the dilemma is any worse than other schools, although it's not any better, but rather because it proves a point. If the problem exists in Westfield, it most certainly exists elsewhere. As we observe these teachers and pupils, perhaps we can understand the wherefore and why apostrophes have taken over the world. The quicker we discover those reasons, the sooner we can stomp on them. Then, and only then, may we prevent apostrophes from being used willy-nilly. So watch closely, or this could be a long night. Nobody is going home until we fix this. (*He motions to the frozen classroom.*) We've already seen what goes on in this classroom. Obviously the teacher is trying to do his job, but he's rather like a sedative, isn't he? Obviously, this approach will not do. Sleep tight, kids.

THE LIGHTS FADE on classroom. LIGHTS RISE on a gymnasium. FIONA and GREG are frozen, with badminton rackets in hand.

EMCEE: So let's visit these two athletes as they attempt to set a world record for the longest badminton match. Things are going well, but soon they'll be duking it out over birdies, cupcakes and punctuation.

THE SPOTLIGHT FADES. FIONA and GREG unfreeze and bat a birdie back and forth. They count off each hit.

FIONA: (*enthusiastic*) Ninety six.

GREG: (*bored*) Ninety seven.

FIONA: Ninety eight.

GREG: Ninety nine.

FIONA: Five thousand!

GREG: Five thousand and one...

He misses the birdie.

GREG: Oops. I'm sorry.

FIONA gets angry. Really, really angry.

FIONA: You missed! You dumb, stupid, idiotic moron! We made it to five thousand and you missed!

GREG: I'm sorry.

FIONA: I hate you! You dumb, stupid, idiotic moron!

GREG: You covered that.

FIONA: It's worth repeating. What's Mr. Tripp going to say?

GREG: He's the gym teacher. It doesn't matter what he has to say.

FIONA: We were on our way to a shattering a world record and you blew it! You –

GREG/FIONA: Dumb, stupid, idiotic moron.

FIONA: I bet Mr. Tripp is on his way over here right now to see how we're doing. I bet he made us his famous cupcakes. You and I both know he only bakes them on special occasions. And what could be more special than breaking a world record?

GREG: Don't bite my head off. This is your big idea. I'm just doing it to be nice.

FIONA: I knew you wouldn't understand.

GREG: If it's so important, then why don't we just start from the beginning? We've only been doing it for an hour.

FIONA: Only an hour? If you throw away time like that, you'll be dead before you know it. When I'm withered and grey, I'll want that hour back. I'll be a frail old lady in some hospital bed, watching game shows as I hang on for dear life. And you know what I'll be thinking? I'll be thinking if you didn't waste that hour, I'd make it through the commercials and live to see Final Jeopardy!

GREG: Jeez, take a pill. It's not like you'd know the answer anyway.

FIONA: That's it. You asked for it!

She smacks him repeatedly with her racket. MR. TRIPP enters with a huge rolled up banner. He's the cheeriest gym teacher to ever walk the earth. He's always smiling, even as he pulls them apart.

MR. TRIPP: Hey, guys! What have I told you about team spirit? (*He performs a cheer*) Let's hear it! Ha! Ha! Ha! Team spirit! Ra! Ra! Ra!

FIONA: Team spirit, my butt. We were trying to break that world record you told us about, Mr. Tripp, but Greg blew it.

GREG: Then she blamed me for missing Jeopardy and came at me with her racket.

MR. TRIPP: Aww. That's too bad. Do you want to settle this over cupcakes? My truck is full of them.

FIONA: (*smacks him again*) See!

GREG: Now she hates my guts.

FIONA: That's because you're a –

MR. TRIPP: Stupid, dumb, idiotic moron. I've heard.

GREG: Actually, it's DUMB, stupid, idiotic moron.

MR. TRIPP: Thank you.

GREG: No problem.

FIONA: So what are you going to do about this, Mr. Tripp?

MR. TRIPP: I have no idea. In the meantime, you can help me unroll this banner.

FIONA: What's it for?

MR. TRIPP: Open it and see.

FIONA and GREG each take an end and unroll the banner. In big letters, it reads: CONGRATULATION'S!

FIONA: He even made us a banner. You ruined everything, Greg. I hate you!

MR. TRIPP: Remember what I said about hatred in high school?

FIONA: I know. Save it for the nurse.

MR. TRIPP: That's right. Now whattaya say we hang up this banner and dig into those cupcakes?

FIONA: But we didn't break the record.

MR. TRIPP: I know. But if we don't get at them, they may attract mice.

FIONA: Sounds good to me.

MR. TRIPP: What about you, Greg?

GREG: I don't like cupcakes.

As they tape up the banner.

GREG: Hey, Mr. Tripp...

MR. TRIPP: Yes?

GREG: Is that really how you spell congratulations?

MR. TRIPP: Yeperooney.

GREG: I could swear there's no apostrophe.

MR. TRIPP: *(laughs)* Ah, young man, that's what they want you to believe. Take it from me... there's always an apostrophe.

They stand back and admire the banner.

FIONA: It's beautiful, Mr. Tripp. Even if it's not true.

MR. TRIPP: Lies are a beautiful thing, Fiona. Don't forget that. Now let's eat!

MR. TRIPP and FIONA exit. GREG stays back and inspects the banner.

GREG: Apostrophe S? It just doesn't look right.

He shrugs his shoulders and exits. THE SPOTLIGHT RISES on the EMCEE. He walks to the CONGRATULATION'S sign and snickers.

EMCEE: You see that? Proper grammar has even evaded the faculty. Granted, he is the gym teacher, but that's still no excuse. Just the same, this sign is proof that the problem stems from something much deeper than monotonous high school education. It has somehow seeped into adulthood by evading possible eradication by university institutions. That leaves me to one conclusion. The

general public has drowned in the melting pot of popular culture. We've become a society of followers. Record labels and movie studios dictate our every move. It's no wonder the word "cult" is in pop culture. Let us conduct a little investigation to see if, indeed, the media has played a role in our fractured syntax.

THE LIGHTS FADE on the gymnasium.

EMCEE: So off we go to another part of Westfield High, where the editors of the yearbook are hard at work.

THE LIGHTS RISE on the yearbook room. There's a huge bulletin board with mock-ups for all the pages in the yearbook. IAN and JANICE are frozen.

EMCEE: They're supposed to be making a book full of memories, but it's really just full of apostrophes.

THE SPOTLIGHT FADES. JANICE and IAN unfreeze as he points madly to one of the mock-ups. She's engrossed in The National Enquirer and couldn't care less.

IAN: What's the meaning of this? I specifically told you not to put the drama club on the same page as the football team. Last year, the actors were furious when they didn't get their own spread. They were so mad that they went to a football game and performed *The Crucible* between goal posts.

JANICE: I was there. Elizabeth Proctor scored a touchdown.

IAN: Then they burned her at the forty yard line. I can't go through that again. Which means we can't send this to the publisher. The whole page is a mess.

JANICE: It's not that bad.

IAN: Have you seen the captions? They're all mixed up. Read what it says under the football team.

JANICE: Little Women.

IAN: And right here under the coach. The Miracle Worker. They haven't won a game in six years! Why do you think they're called The Underdogs? And things only get worse in the drama section. Here's the beautiful picture I took of the cast of *The Diary of Anne Frank*. But it gives me actual physical pain to read the caption. "The Underdogs Get Pummelled." I hardly think it's the role of the yearbook to promote anti-Semitism. Not to mention, there's

an apostrophe in “pummelled.” There’s not even an S. Explain yourself!

JANICE stopped listening long ago and intently reads the Enquirer. She flips a page. After a few moments, IAN taps her shoulder.

IAN: Helloooooo.

JANICE: *(still reading)* Huh?

IAN: Are you in there, Janice?

JANICE: Oh, sorry. I kind of tuned you out. You were saying?

IAN: *(snatching the paper)* Will you get your head out of the paper and tell me why you screwed up this page of the yearbook!

JANICE: Is that what this is all about? I lost the point of this conversation during that big speech of yours.

IAN: Just answer my question.

JANICE: I was kind of busy, so I asked Helga to do that page.

IAN: You did what?

JANICE: You heard me.

IAN: You put a foreign exchange student in charge of the captions?

JANICE: Not just the captions. She did the whole page.

IAN: Great. You could fit her vocabulary on a fortune cookie.

MRS. UNGER enters with HELGA. MRS. UNGER is kind of dippy and HELGA hardly speaks English.

MRS. UNGER: Hey guys.

IAN/JANICE: Hi, Mrs. Unger.

HELGA: Hello.

MRS. UNGER: Helga was roaming the halls all alone. I told you not to let her do that. She can’t read any of the signs.

IAN: Where was she?

MRS. UNGER: In the boys’ locker room. *(to HELGA)* You’re not supposed to be in there.

HELGA: Yes.

IAN: (*exasperated*) Oh, man! She's been here six months, and still can't speak English. The only words she knows are "hello" and "yes."

MRS. UNGER: Exactly why she's not allowed in the boys' locker room.

IAN: (*indicating the mock-up*) Well, Janice here allowed Helga to put together this page for the yearbook. Good thing I caught it or else we'd all be blacklisted.

MRS. UNGER reads the page and gasps.

MRS. UNGER: "The Underdogs Get Pummelled." Oh dear! Helga did this?

IAN: Yes! Why, oh why, did she register for yearbook?

MRS. UNGER: There were only two classes open. Yearbook or debate. I think she made the right choice.

HELGA: Yes.

MRS. UNGER: Janice, did you put Helga up to this?

She's busy reading the paper again.

MRS. UNGER: Janice?

IAN: Don't pester her. She's busy reading the Enquirer.

MRS. UNGER: Oh, really? (*She sits down excitedly next to JANICE*) Is Dolly Parton still on that space mission to Mars?

JANICE: Page eight. She just adopted an alien.

MRS. UNGER: Way to go, Dolly!

IAN: Aren't you going to do anything about this? (*she's busy reading*) Mrs. Unger? (*nothing*) Fine. I'll take care of it myself. (*slowly, to HELGA*) No more working on the yearbook.

HELGA: Yes.

IAN: Just sit here quietly.

HELGA: Yes.

IAN: You have no idea what I'm saying, do you?

HELGA: Yes.

IAN: (*just testing her*) You're an idiot, aren't you?

HELGA: Yes.

IAN: This is absurd. Okay, I'll be fair. Here's a question you're bound to get right. Are you from Germany?

HELGA: Hello.

IAN: Jeez, Louise! Won't anyone help me?

JANICE: Hey, look. J-Lo gave birth to a hippopotamus!

MRS. UNGER: Let me see that! *(she grabs the paper and reads)* Well, I'll be. Isn't that something?

HELGA: Yes.

IAN groans, then faints. They freeze as THE SPOTLIGHT RISES on the EMCEE.

EMCEE: I'd say this bunch is proof positive that the English language is on the verge of a breakdown. We bury our heads, and eventually our intelligence, in mindless gossip. Whether it be the yearbook or the Enquirer. And I just want to take a little look-see at this paper.

He carefully snatches the Enquirer from MRS. UNGER's frozen hands. He reads, then begins to chuckle.

EMCEE: Just as I thought. *(He turns the paper over for the AUDIENCE to see.)* There's an apostrophe in "hippopotamus."

He puts the paper back into MRS. UNGER's hands and THE LIGHTS FADE on the yearbook room.

EMCEE: So far, we've seen a teacher hard at work preventing random apostrophes. A gym teacher promoting random apostrophes. And the media glamorizing random apostrophes. Plus a weird little German girl who has no idea what an apostrophe is. But that's beside the point. The point is, have we come to any conclusion regarding this issue? *(he waits)* No, really, I'm asking. *(he waits some more)* Are you awake? *(nothing)* If you can hear me out there, yell "YAY!" *(The audience will likely/hopefully respond weakly: "Yay." If not, keep repeating the following line until they get fired up.)*

EMCEE: You can do better than that. Come on! YAY!

AUDIENCE: YAY!

EMCEE: That's better. Now repeat after me: I know...

AUDIENCE: I KNOW...

EMCEE: The reason why...

AUDIENCE: THE REASON WHY...

EMCEE: Apostrophication is running rampant through the the halls of Westfield High, as well as every other high school in the entire free world, except perhaps Antarctica.

AUDIENCE: APOSTROPHICATION IS RUNNING RAMPANT... *(they will trail off eventually)*

EMCEE: Close enough.

IF ANYONE REPEATS "CLOSE ENOUGH:"

EMCEE: No, sir. We're done with that now.

IF NOT:

EMCEE: But the fact is, you're all a bunch of liars. You still don't have a clue why we purposelessly perpetuate this particularly punishing punctuation. *(he's thrilled)* Hey, I said it! Mrs. Rutledge *(substitute your director's name)* didn't think I'd get that out right. Purposelessly perpetuate this particularly punishing punctuation! Purposelessly perpetuate this particularly punishing punctuation! Purposelessly perpetuate this particularly punishing punctuation! *(exhales)* Shouldn't I get an A for that? Anyway... I think we need to see the flipside of the coin before we can properly make a diagnosis. It's not fair to assume all people use apostrophes with reckless abandon. For every hundred or so people who overuse them, there's one who leaves them out entirely.

THE LIGHTS RISE on the principal's office. KEVIN and PRINCIPAL VALE are frozen.

EMCEE: Here's exhibit D. My last example, I promise. Unless you don't figure it out. Like I said, I'm prepared to keep you here as long as it takes. So listen closely, or it could be a long night. This is the principal's office, and... oh, I'll just let you figure out the rest.

THE SPOTLIGHT FADES. KEVIN and PRINCIPAL VALE unfreeze. KEVIN is down in the dumps, and PRINCIPAL VALE is a calm voice of reason.

PRINCIPAL VALE: Kevin, all of the teachers here have noticed a change in your demeanour. You've always been a quiet sort, but your English teacher noted that you've been retreating more and more from class discussions. Is there something you'd like to talk about?

KEVIN: Nope.

PRINCIPAL VALE: He also said that you've flunked the last four exams.

KEVIN: Yep.

PRINCIPAL VALE: Any reason why?

KEVIN: Nope.

PRINCIPAL VALE: I had a look at the exams and I know why you failed them. Do you know why you failed them?

KEVIN: Yep.

PRINCIPAL VALE: Will you please say something more than "nope" or "yep?"

KEVIN: Nope.

PRINCIPAL VALE: Because it feels like your answers are on a revolve.

KEVIN: Yep.

PRINCIPAL VALE: You failed the tests because you left out all the apostrophes.

KEVIN: Yep.

PRINCIPAL VALE: That's two "yeps" in a row. We're making progress.

KEVIN: Nope.

KEVIN takes off a shoe.

PRINCIPAL VALE: Oh no. What are you doing?

KEVIN: Nothing.

He takes off his sock.

PRINCIPAL VALE: Don't you dare.

KEVIN: I'm not doing anything.

He puts the sock on his hand.

PRINCIPAL VALE: We know you're a bit odd, but we've asked you time and time again not to do this.

KEVIN: Why? My feet don't stink.

He grabs a marker off the desk.

PRINCIPAL VALE: I said no!

KEVIN draws two eyes on the sock and it suddenly turns into LEX, a mouthy sock puppet. All of KEVIN's dialogue in quotations is spoken as LEX, with an energetic voice.

KEVIN: "Hi, Principal Vale! Boy, you're looking good today!"

PRINCIPAL VALE: I won't do it, Kevin. I won't talk to the puppet.

KEVIN: "What puppet? I don't see a puppet. Do you, Kevin?"

KEVIN shakes his head.

KEVIN: "See. No puppet here, Principal Vale. Just me. Your old pal, Lex. I think you're seeing things."

PRINCIPAL VALE: Kevin, we know that you like to be left alone. But quite frankly, it worries the faculty that you've turned a sock puppet into your best friend.

KEVIN: "You're just jealous."

PRINCIPAL VALE: Why would I be jealous?

KEVIN: "Ha! Ha! You talked to me. You said you wouldn't talk to me, but you did! You're a liar, Principal Vale!"

PRINCIPAL VALE: I'm not a liar!

KEVIN: "There! You did it again! You talked to me!"

PRINCIPAL VALE: Let's just calm down.

KEVIN: "You're jealous because I'm Kevin's friend and not yours!"

PRINCIPAL VALE: Kevin, stop this nonsense at once!

PRINCIPAL VALE puts her hand over LEX's mouth.

KEVIN: "You think that's going to stop me? I can still talk, you know. Even with your hand over my mouth. Ha! Ha!"

PRINCIPAL VALE: I didn't want to have to do this, but I have no choice.

She starts to rip the sock off KEVIN's hand. KEVIN leaps up and runs away. PRINCIPAL VALE chases him in circles.

KEVIN: "Neener, neener, neener. You can't catch me!"

PRINCIPAL VALE: Oh yes I can.

KEVIN: "Ha! Ha! You talked to me again!"

PRINCIPAL VALE: That does it!

PRINCIPAL VALE tackles KEVIN. She yanks the sock as hard as she can. KEVIN won't let go, so the sock gets stretched longer and longer. LEX starts to choke.

KEVIN: "Stop it! You're choking me!"

PRINCIPAL VALE: Give me that sock!

KEVIN: "Help me!"

She finally rips the sock off and both of them fly backwards. LEX screams, loudly at first, but then it slowly fades away as if he was dying. They pant wildly. KEVIN immediately reverts back to his depression.

PRINCIPAL VALE: Sorry I had to do that, but it was for your own good.

KEVIN: You killed him.

PRINCIPAL VALE: I did not.

KEVIN: He was my only friend in the whole wide world.

PRINCIPAL VALE: That's why I want to help you. Many of the teachers believe, and I for one agree, it might help for you to see the school counsellor. What do you think about that?

KEVIN: Can Lex come?

PRINCIPAL VALE: No. He's staying in my drawer.

She drops the sock into her drawer and slams it shut.

KEVIN: Fine.

He reaches for his other shoe.

PRINCIPAL VALE: Don't even think about it!

KEVIN slumps in his chair. Things have calmed down. PRINCIPAL VALE tries again.

PRINCIPAL VALE: Let's get back to your problems in English class. Are the exams too difficult for you?

KEVIN: Nope.

PRINCIPAL VALE: What, then? Why do you leave out all the apostrophes?

KEVIN: I don't like them.

PRINCIPAL VALE: Don't like what? Your teachers?

KEVIN: Nope. I don't like apostrophes.

PRINCIPAL VALE: And why is that?

KEVIN: They bother me. It means you belong to someone. Jane's dog or Bob's cat. I don't belong to anything. I've never belonged to anything in my life. That's why I spend all my time with Lex. I know it's just a sock, but it's my sock. Kevin's, apostrophe S, sock.

EMCEE: Stop right there!

They freeze. THE SPOTLIGHT RISES on the EMCEE.

EMCEE: Did you hear that? (he waits for an answer) No? Can we back this scene up, please?

KEVIN and PRINCIPAL VALE do the scene in reverse, including the chase. Even the sock shrinks back over KEVIN's hand. If the actors can make up some backwards gibberish, all the better. They finally get back to the beginning and freeze.

EMCEE: That's it. Go!

They resume.

PRINCIPAL VALE: All of the teachers here have noticed a change in your demeanour. You've always been a quiet sort, but your English teacher noted that you've been retreating more and more from class discussions. Is there something you'd like to talk about?

KEVIN: Nope.

EMCEE: Stop!

KEVIN and PRINCIPAL VALE freeze.

EMCEE: You've gone too far back. Bring it forward a few lines.

KEVIN and PRINCIPAL VALE continue in super-fast motion, high-pitched lines and all, back over the chase, and then slow down as they approach the important part.

EMCEE: Okay... okay... almost there. Now!

They pick up the scene in real time.

KEVIN: I don't like apostrophes.

PRINCIPAL VALE: And why is that?

KEVIN: They bother me. It means you belong to something. Jane's dog or Bob's cat. I don't belong to anything. I've never belonged to anything in my life.

EMCEE: Stop!

They freeze.

EMCEE: Go back.

They do.

EMCEE: Play!

KEVIN: They bother me. It means you belong to something.

EMCEE: Stop!

They freeze.

EMCEE: Go back.

They do.

EMCEE: Play!

KEVIN: It means you belong to something.

EMCEE: Stop!

They freeze.

EMCEE: Go back.

KEVIN/PRINCIPAL VALE: No way!

EMCEE: Okay, okay. I'll move on.

THE LIGHTS FADE on the principal's office.

EMCEE: Sorry. Just a little power trip. Won't happen again. But did you hear that? "It means you belong to something." Could this be the breakthrough we've been waiting for? I think it is. Better yet, I know it is.

He takes a moment to collect himself and clears his throat.

EMCEE: I'll take this slowly. If he refuses to use apostrophes because he's scared of belonging to something, we can deduce that the reason everybody else uses them so frequently is because they WANT to belong. *(takes a deep breath)* Whew! I did it. *(he stares at the audience)* I said, I did it! *(he stares again)* I think that deserves a little applause.

The audience should applaud. If not:

EMCEE: Go ahead, snub me. You try standing here all night.

But if they do:

EMCEE: Thank you. *(moving on)* Now that we've figured that out, we can fix the problem. You may have seen your last apostrophe. Figuring it out was the hard part. Fixing it's the easy part. *(pause)* Or is it the other way around? Oh dear. I hope figuring it out was the hard part. Because if fixing it's the hard part, we're never going home. But don't worry, I have coffee. Enough for everyone, so don't get any big ideas about leaving. *(He paces back and forth.)* I'll think of something, I promise. I know! I need help from you in the audience to figure this out. I'll close my eyes and you send me your thoughts. *(He closes his eyes and waits for brain waves.)* I'm waiting... *(He opens them.)* You guys stink at telepathy.

THE LIGHTS RISE on the classroom. The five STUDENTS are still asleep on the floor. MR. SULLY hollers down.

MR. SULLY: Hey there.

The EMCEE turns.

EMCEE: What do you want?

MR. SULLY: I want to help you.

EMCEE: Really? How?

MR. SULLY: I know how to stop all the apostrophes.

EMCEE: *(to the audience)* Hey! I told you to send the ideas to me, not him.

MR. SULLY: Come on over.

The EMCEE moves to the classroom.

EMCEE: What's your big idea?

MR. SULLY: First of all, I don't know why you didn't come to me in the first place. I knew all along why people use an overabundance of apostrophes. (*pointing to the audience*) You could have saved these people a lot of time.

EMCEE: Well, if you knew, why didn't you say anything? Come to think of it, why haven't you been teaching students all along that apostrophes represent their subconscious desire to belong?

MR. SULLY: You try selling that psycho babble to teenagers. I prefer to drone on endlessly like all the other teachers.

EMCEE: How motivational of you.

MR. SULLY: Listen. I learned long ago that it doesn't matter what I have to say. Year after year goes by, and I keep seeing the same thing. Students listen for the first couple weeks, and then English class turns into nap time. It's not that they don't care, but because it takes a lot of energy to connect with one another.

EMCEE: I don't follow.

MR. SULLY: It's tough being a kid. They spend so much time trying to fit in... to belong... that they don't have much energy left for academics. All they can muster up is a few apostrophes.

EMCEE: (*to the audience*) Are you getting any of this?

MR. SULLY: I'll prove it to you.

EMCEE: How?

MR. SULLY: (*pointing to the kids*) I'll show you that all five of these kids here, in some way or another, feel like they don't belong and, therefore, have to work extra hard in order to fit in.

EMCEE: Go right ahead.

MR. SULLY: This is Andy. A bit of a brown-noser, but even he throws in extra punctuation from time to time.

He taps ANDY who quickly stands at attention.

ANDY: Sorry, sir. I shouldn't have fallen asleep, sir. What can I do for you, sir?

MR. SULLY: At ease.

ANDY doesn't move.

MR. SULLY: Or not. Andy, what was I talking about in class today?

ANDY: Punctuation, sir.

MR. SULLY: What kind of punctuation?

ANDY: Um, the kind you write down, sir.

MR. SULLY: You don't remember, do you?

ANDY: No, sir. I was napping, sir. It won't happen again, sir.

MR. SULLY: Do you remember what you were doing before class?

ANDY: Yes, sir. I was studying, sir.

MR. SULLY: With who?

ANDY: (*gloomy*) Nobody, sir.

MR. SULLY: Thank you, Andy. That's all I need.

ANDY: (*gloomier*) No problem, sir.

MR. SULLY: Go back to sleep.

ANDY: Yes, sir.

He quickly obeys and hits the ground like a brick.

EMCEE: Was that supposed to prove something?

MR. SULLY: He said he was studying, but he's obviously more concerned about finding a study partner than he is a perfect score. You saw how upset he got when I mentioned being alone.

EMCEE: He did seem a little glum.

MR. SULLY: Now this is Babs. It's sometimes difficult to decipher the meaning of her words, but the school board has requested that we continue to encourage her "poetic voice." It's not always easy. (*tapping BABS*) Babs, wake up.

She wakes and immediately begins to recite a poem in a soothing voice, with odd hand gestures.

BABS: Unicorns. I see unicorns. They frolic. In the dew. Their wings spread. Open, wings! Fly, unicorn! Dance among the clouds! Be free! Pointy head and all.

MR. SULLY: Very nice, Babs. Write that down before you forget it.

BABS: Pencils and pens. Eraser and chalk. My hand cramps.

MR. SULLY: Babs, does the word cramps have an apostrophe?

She thinks about this for some time.

BABS: Me think it do. Though brain and hand often part ways.

MR. SULLY: (*confused*) Sure. Would you say you have a lot of friends?

BABS: No, not. Thy empty circle hath me in it. Go away, all. Take a hike, all. Then take that hike on a hike. I hike myself. I hike alone. Hike, hike, hike.

MR. SULLY: Babs, you're practically Shakespeare. (*to the EMCEE*) Wouldn't you say?

EMCEE: Oh, yes.

EMCEE turns to the audience and mouths, "Oh, no."

MR. SULLY: Continue thy sleep. Fall away. Your pillow awaits thy head on soft feathers.

BABS: Is that a poem, Mr. Sully? If it is, it sucks.

She sits in her desk and writes quietly in a journal.

MR. SULLY: See what I mean? No friends, no apostrophes. Although, in her case, that could be an artistic choice. Shall I move on and wake up Debbie?

EMCEE: Be my guest.

MR. SULLY: Then stand back.

EMCEE: What for?

MR. SULLY: Trust me.

EMCEE: (*standing back*) This far?

MR. SULLY: Farther.

The EMCEE takes another step back.

MR. SULLY: Perfect. You should be safe.

He taps DEBBIE and she immediately jumps up and takes over the stage in a huge Broadway-style song and dance number. Mid-song, she gets to the EMCEE and makes him dance with her. She dips the EMCEE.

DEBBIE: Ta da!

MR. SULLY: (*to the EMCEE*) Sorry. I thought you'd be safe over here.

EMCEE: You were wrong.

MR. SULLY: Debbie...

*She turns to answer and drops the EMCEE on his butt.
He howls in pain.*

DEBBIE: Yes, Mr. Sully?

MR. SULLY: You're in the drama club, right?

DEBBIE: The STAR of the drama club!

MR. SULLY: You like being on stage, don't you?

DEBBIE: Yes! All eyes on me!

MR. SULLY: You like the attention, don't you?

DEBBIE: I love it! I crave it! I need it!

MR. SULLY: Why?

DEBBIE: Because I never get enough at home!

MR. SULLY: Just as I thought. Thank you.

She twirls, then sits back down.

EMCEE: I get your point. But what can we do about it? How can we get them to connect? To belong?

MR. SULLY: I'm getting there. Let me wake these two first. Then we can fix the problem in no time. This is Chad and Edgar. Chad's the coolest guy in school. And I hate to say this, but Edgar's the nerdiest. Just like I was.

He nudges CHAD and EDGAR with his foot.

MR. SULLY: Wake up, sleepyheads.

They roll around groggily, but don't get up.

CHAD/EDGAR: Go away, mom.

MR. SULLY: This could take a while. Unless I get some help from the audience.

EMCEE: I'm right on it. What should we say? "Wake up?"

MR. SULLY: That won't work with these guys. They sleep through anything. We need threats.

EMCEE: Sounds like fun. Just leave it to me.

He walks to the front of the stage and speaks to the audience.

EMCEE: Mr. Sully needs us to help wake them up. So once again, repeat after me. And don't make me yell at you. Just be loud the first time. Are you ready?

AUDIENCE: READY! (*If not, get them ready.*)

EMCEE: Repeat after me. Kids...

AUDIENCE: KIDS...

EMCEE: This is the audience speaking...

AUDIENCE: THIS IS THE AUDIENCE SPEAKING...

EMCEE: And if you don't wake up...

AUDIENCE: AND IF YOU DON'T WAKE UP...

EMCEE: We're never getting out of here.

AUDIENCE: WE'RE NEVER GETTING OUT OF HERE...

EMCEE: Also...

AUDIENCE: ALSO...

EMCEE: I am...

AUDIENCE: I AM...

EMCEE: Really stupid.

AUDIENCE: REALLY STUPID...

Someone will most likely say it. If so, the EMCEE laughs uproariously and speaks to those who did.

EMCEE: I got you to say you're stupid!

If not:

EMCEE: You're a quick bunch. You'd think we would have solved things by now.

MR. SULLY: Enough of that tom foolery! Now there's only one other way to wake them.

EMCEE: What's that?



help@theatrefolk.com www.theatrefolk.com

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