

ROLE MODEL  
by Earl R. Bergland

Dedicated to my eighty-four year old Mother, Catherine Bergland, of Princeton, Illinois who has always gone to church every possible Sunday, who has only drunk a few of glasses of wine, who has never smoked, who has very rarely sworn, who has the honesty of Abraham Lincoln, who has always given more than a full day's work for a day's pay, who has never worked an eight hour day until she retired at seventy, who has never let anyone down who needed or depended on her, who has believed in doing the toughest job first which, of course, her only husband, Evar, would testify to were he alive.

Type of stage play:

A one act comedy (41 pages)

Philosophical concepts:

- 1) We all have faults; how much self-discipline is necessary to produce a "successful" life?
- 2) We all have things in common, like being role models.

Purpose:

To provoke disagreement, discussion and awareness.

Plot:

Mr. Oak is afraid to leave his textbook and organized teaching procedures; he doubts his ability to deal successfully with the at risk students (ARS) to achieve goals. He feels alone and abandon by his peers. His fragile support system makes him feel anxious. Mr. Oak is not aware of it, but he is living a classroom life similar to most ARS in spite of his education and self-discipline. Mr. Oak and Ms. Willow persistently seek to aid the ARS while "riding herd" on them. The class begins to develop a team attitude toward the end of the play with a slight promise of future improvement.

Sets:

There are two quite similar sets:

- 1) faculty workroom - desks, chairs, tables, coffee pot, calendar
- 2) classroom - desks, chairs, tables, desk with wired button
- 3) upstage door on each side of set

CAST (7 FEMALES & 7 MALES)

Oak (perfectionist) is a married, thirty year old, hardworking school teacher who has little use for day dreamers and cry babies. He thinks, talks, and acts quickly.

Willow (mother hen) is a single, twenty-three year old school counselor with more book learning than experience. She prefers to be polite and diplomatic.

Principal Peach (temper) is not in tune with the finer points of education. He says, "Let's try to do an acceptable job with a minimum of mistakes. Some students are winners, and some are losers; we have to accept it as a fact of life".

Superintendent Walnut (smoking) is a straight forward person who has a realistic understanding of education. She will get the wagon train thru or die trying.

Sycamore (low self-esteem male) teaches drivers education.

Beechnut (conceited male) is a science teacher who is nicely attired.

Maple (credit cards) is the school nurse.

Date (over weight) is a home economics teacher.

ARS Birch should be in the eleventh grade and a honor roll student. His aggressive anger is woven with strong demand for attention. He cannot or will not control himself.

ARS Magnolia is a mature ninth grader who is quite knowledgeable about how women can manipulate men because her mother and aunt are both outspoken and financially independent hookers. She dresses well, uses little make-up and is polite. Her problem is depression with no interest in school work.

ARS Hickory on a good day has the disposition of a hungry grizzly. He broods, moods and crudes, never smiles. He has a warehouse full of hurts riding on his back. Pay backs are a boot. Abuse them and lose them.

ARS Sequoia is an Indian who constantly relates the present to the past. He desires to uphold the best of the Indian image; alcohol has robbed him of his potential.

ARS Cypress is a drug user, a restless smart self-deceiving tiger.

ARS Pine has at least average intelligence, but she has the teachers believing she is a slow learner who cannot finish anything. She is always trying to manipulate someone into doing things for her by pretending to be helpless (If you help me, you like me.). This behavior has gone on for so long that Pine has little confidence in herself to accomplish anything. She is being destroyed by her own web. She is very withdrawn. Teachers and students hand her things or look at her drawings. She half-looks at magazines and draws incomplete pictures.

## PART I

Scene 1 Faculty workroom full of teachers

SYCAMORE  
with coffee cup

A toast to the first Friday of a new school year, the best defense is a strong offense.

BEECHNUT

Speaking of that how is the coffee fund? Last spring the caffeine program dripped dry and left the teachers correcting final exams with droopy drawers.

SYCAMORE

The librarian embezzled our kitty for a MAD magazine subscription.  
Ms. DATE

To entice the teachers to come to the library, no doubt.

PRINCIPAL PEACH  
enters following Willow

Mr. Oak, it is your lucky Friday. Our new teacher for the At Risk Students or ARS got arrested for a DUI last night. Unfortunately, he also got a DUI about two months ago which eliminates him from our starting lineup. You're the new lead teacher for the At Risk Students. Ms. Willow, our new counselor, will exchange with you in 90 minute time blocks.

OAK

Mr. Peach, you must be the Joker in disguise because Batman would take education more seriously.

PRINCIPAL PEACH

Wrong! The Joker would be more considerate of a teacher. You have 30 minutes before class time to find a can of mace and read their case histories.

OAK

raising voice

I have a contract to teach history classes. I've a good friend on the school board. I'll call in a bomb threat. Why me?

PRINCIPAL PEACH

raising voice

Well, Mr. Oak, you're always telling us how to do things! Here is your chance to show us. You have four psychology courses; that is two more than anyone else. Now you just hitch up your pants and get your shoulders back! If you wanted to escape real life, you should have joined the monastery.

OAK

Teaching At Risk Students is as real life as riding a camel on stilts. I don't have any materials, tests, lectures.

PRINCIPAL PEACH

Don't be squawking like an endangered species. Environmentalists will try to save you.

OAK

But I'm not prepared!

PRINCIPAL PEACH

I'll tell you what you need to know.

- 1) You must never leave the classroom unattended.
- 2) No student ever leaves that classroom without an escort.
- 3) The door is always locked.
- 4) There is a buzzer on your desk; press it for an emergency.

OAK

What kind of an emergency?

PEACH

If you aren't man enough to handle it, it's an emergency! Press the buzzer. Ms. Willow shall come to the rescue.

OAK

leaving room

In France, there are guillotines; here it's a torture chamber. You're a real peach.

PRINCIPAL PEACH

yelling

Control yourself, act like a man. You can write your daddy and mommy a letter at night nighttime.

OAK

slamming door

I'll file a formal protest.

WILLOW

Principal Peach what is going to happen?

PRINCIPAL PEACH

I lost my temper again. I'm sorry to have said that Ms. Willow, but you could see him doubting his ability to handle the At Risk Students. He's fired up now! He'll back those little ARS against the wall for smart mouthing. They may never have seen a corncob, but they'll know what one feels like today.

WILLOW

But what about our poor kids?

PRINCIPAL PEACH

They live in haunted castles with moats and dragons. Some of them are in dungeons, others in towers. They're too afraid to operate the drawbridge to the future. Good luck with their remote controls.

WILLOW

leaving

So we just fake it and talk like professionals?

PRINCIPAL PEACH

leaving

Ms. Willow, taxpayers do not pay us to just fake it. Mr. Oak will be like a pit bull fighting a bear. Dancing! Barking! Faking! Looking for an opening! Those At Risk Students will have dreams about him.

PART 1

Scene 2 Faculty work room

SYCAMORE

The new ARS teacher had two DUI's; think Oak will start drinking? Trust me, I won't let him drink alone.

Ms. DATE

eating a candy bar

Do you know what is better than a box of chocolates on a cold night?

SYCAMORE

Ice skating with a walrus?

Ms. DATE

That's a stupid remark.

BEECH

Being 35 pounds overweight and eating a candy bar is brilliant?

Ms. DATE

You're ridiculing me?

BEECH

To the contrary I was only inquiring about your intelligence.

Ms. DATE

Trying to stick to a diet is terrible. I always feel like a loser. I am either cheating or being cheated.

Mr. SYCAMORE

Sounds like my marriage.

Mrs. MAPLE

There is the matter of perspective. We can reduce our self-hate/ anger whatever by thinking in terms of lifestyle, not diet. We think of a diet as a short-term goal with rigid boundaries and related stress. If we break it, we are bad people. Lifestyle is forever with boundaries that allow some flexibility yet achieves a reasonable good health goal.

Mr. BEECHNUT

A diet by definition means failure.

Mrs. MAPLE

About 95% of the time for most people.

Mr. BEECHNUT

Overweight people would have a better chance to win at Las Vegas.

Ms. DATE

looking at Maple

Do you want to check out the big mall sale tomorrow?

Mrs. MAPLE

leaving

I'd never miss it, but first I need to hit a couple of garage sales. This is a buy buy weekend; on Sunday I'm going to a super antique auction. It is never too early to shop for Christmas presents. I hope I can use my charge cards.

Ms. DATE

leaving

Tonight my life style should allow for a few chocolate clusters. Then tomorrow for breakfast toast and grapefruit with a side dish of pie and ice cream.

Mr. SYCAMORE

One spends and one eats...

Mr. BEECHNUT

Just the right pair for a bigamist!

Mr. SYCAMORE

Hey, Peach said you're planning to ski Aspen this Christmas, big bucks.

Mr. BEECHNUT

condescendingly

If I can get the food stamps, I applied for.

Mr. SYCAMORE

You will not believe this, but a couple of years ago I skied at Vail. I was short on money, hot weather, melting snow. I couldn't find a woman to ski with. Hit my leg getting on the lift, fell getting off the lift. I wanted to shout something bad like I hate the opposite sex...

Mr. BEECHNUT

You, alone against a world united in love.

Mr. SYCAMORE



leaving

Mad, depressed and hateful at the same time, I stopped in the middle of the run to moon the lodge. Just as I got my drawers down, a wise guy nailed me with a wet snowball.

Mr. BEECHNUT

leaving

The devil works in mysterious ways...is there a moral?  
Do not thee protest by undress.

lights dim and ARS with Oak enter the classroom

PART I

Scene 3 Classroom

lights brighten

OAK

O.K. Let's all sit at the table and...

PRINCIPAL PEACH

Principal Peach enters the classroom with student who has a ponytail.

Mr. Oak, this is Sequoia; he is the last member of the class.

SEQUOIA

Wrong, Sequoia is # 1 member of class.

OAK

Save the numbers for math class.

PRINCIPAL PEACH

leaving

I could stay and help some?

OAK

You must have a temperature; you're having hallucinations

BIRCH  
wanders to desk, notices button and starts  
reaching for it

What's the button for? Bingo games?

OAK  
pushes Birch's hand away

The button is for emergencies like getting sick...

BIRCH  
yanks back hand and blows on it

From an overdose.

HICKORY  
has his belt off attempting to snap it.

I need to see someone use a whip to learn how this is done.

OAK  
How about a job working on a Mississippi chain gang?

BIRCH  
going toward door

I'll call a travel agent...

OAK  
Whoa, Cowboy. O.K. let's get started. Come over here and sit at the  
tables.

HICKORY  
does not sit at table  
You should be more polite and say please.

BIRCH  
stands with foot on chair  
Right on, there are ladies present. An officer and a gentleman!

PINE  
sits in desk, points to magazine, Magnolia hands  
it to her

MAGNOLIA  
sits at table

We really do need polite role models, Mr. Oak.

SEQUOIA  
wandering around

Chief Screaming Panther say being a good role model take um more  
courage than ride um bareback.

OAK  
works polite angle

Sequoia, do you think we should be polite to each other?

SEQUOIA  
Indian think um it very hard um for white man be polite. Tell um me  
again how white man get um to heaven.

BIRCH  
Hey, come on that was our grandfathers, be fair

SEQUOIA  
Their shoplifting papooses still try to steal our lands, minerals,  
fish and game without thank you or kiss my bear skin.

OAK  
Politeness is a goal of education, of civilization. To be able to  
politely disagree takes self-control and practice. Any fool can get  
mad and call names.

PRINCIPAL PEACH  
sticks head in door and withdraws  
Just checking.

HICKORY

I like getting mad, it's exciting. The jerks are afraid; they watch me.

OAK  
trying to get some insight

The fear and the watching makes you feel...

CYPRESS

Mr. Oak, do we go to early lunch today?

MAGNOLIA

I hope it is something we can eat.

HICKORY

Ya, why say grace if you can't eat it?

BIRCH  
picks up pencil for Pine

OAK

Take a station break. Let's talk more about politeness and practice...

MAGNOLIA  
nagging

Mr. Oak, you didn't say the magic word again.

HICKORY  
looking at Magnolia and talking to Sequoia

Chief, you think um that squaw make um teepee happy for 30 years?

OAK

Please, you must be able to use self-control. Make it a goal! Practice it!. It is called self-discipline. Now the goal we are talking about is politeness; let's stick to it. Hickory, has anyone ever taught you how to politely disagree?

HICKORY

That would be soft approach like hitting with your hands instead of with a club?

BIRCH

It's a trick question. There is one small peaceful tribe in the Amazon that is not civilized yet. An expedition is attempting to collect semen and eggs for experiments.

HICKORY

Some collection agency... imagine it. Interviewing the new help.

CYPRESS

Next he'll want us to practice disagreeing.

SEQUOIA

And me without my tomahawk.

OAK

Pine, is it O.K. to disagree?

PINE

feels threaten-shakes head no

SEQUOIA

puts streaks of chalk dust on face

OAK

Pine, do you think it would be fun to disagree?

PINE

wide-eyed shakes head no

MAGNOLIA

trying to make Pine comfortable

Pine, you can disagree with me anytime you want, O.K.?

PINE

smiles at Magnolia

BIRCH

Hickory, how about you?

HICKORY

What about me? Yeah, Pine can disagree with me but just in class.

PINE  
looks surprised and pleased

SEQUOIA

Right, no squaw backtalk outside teepee.

PINE  
smiles and covers mouth.

BIRCH

Wait until I tell my Mom I'm practicing how to disagree. School Board City!

SEQUOIA

Be like um the old days, firewater and wagon trains.

HICKORY  
self-protecting

I don't want to politely disagree! How can I be sure I won?

OAK  
grabbing an opening

You can learn how to politely disagree and win if that is your goal. Goal setting takes planning and practice. The first step is to talk about what major goal is important to you. The next step is for each of you to have daily and weekly goals...

MAGNOLIA

My goal is to never look back...

BIRCH

I want to ride a motorcycle up a mountain and fly off the top.

CYPRESS

My goal is lunch. Mr. Oak, please lend me five dollars for lunch. I'm starving.

PART I

Scene 4 Classroom

OAK

Mr. Oak is standing behind his desk talking to

Pine who is seated at a desk facing a wall.

We shall practice trying to achieve goals like athletes do. Pine, would you join us for our goal planning session? We need your help.

PINE

stands up and stands there

BIRCH

stands up from group and walks to the front of Oak's desk.

OAK

to Pine

Bring your picture to draw on while we are planning.

BIRCH

in a mocking voice trying to intimidate

We need your help, really. She could be the committee chairperson for checking out that emergency button. Then who knows maybe someday a student council member. Her parents would be so proud. You puke talking pilgrim. I could spit right in your face!

OAK

ignores Birch  
Pine...

PINE

puts hands over ears and sits down

BIRCH

I'm serious. I could...

OAK  
gives big picture

Serious, Serious! I'll tell you what is serious. Young people dying on battle fields because of greedy power hungry leaders. Thousands of children a day worldwide starving to death. That's serious! Spitting in my face is a joke.

BIRCH

Listen to me.

OAK  
adjusts picture to individual

You listen! Change your focus. You need to see the big picture. This classroom does not revolve around you. And hey, just because you're ticked off at your father, don't give me any crap.

BIRCH

My father, what's he got to do with anything?

Oak

You had to ask. O.K. According to your file, your parents are divorced. Anybody would realize that if the father left his family, the kids would feel hurt and angry, except maybe the father. He would like to think the kids would bounce thru it like a head cold. Only it is a heart attack without any by-pass surgery. Birch, did you ever tell your dad how angry you are?

BIRCH

I'm not mad at him, he's O.K.

OAK  
gives permission and assurance

It's O.K. to say you're mad at someone you love. It's one of the laws of love. Love is a two way street with yield signs. You're at dead stop at an imaginary red light. Fire up the engine; blow the horn. Your world will not fall apart.



BIRCH  
feels pain and goes on offense

Flush it, Oak. Mess with brain cause you pain.

OAK  
gives focus to Birch's fear and anger

Sure Birch, if you're such a wimp that you can't handle saying you're mad at your father, who cares? But tomorrow when you blow up again, aim your spit at the right face.

SEQUOIA

Great Spirit say too much fire burn signal blanket.

PART I

Scene 5 Classroom

WILLOW  
enters classroom, walks over to the desk  
and puts her armful of materials on it.

OAK  
aside to Ms. Willow

These kids can pitch a wicked ballgame. There are no umpires here, only that cover your butt button.

WILLOW

You pushed it?

OAK

No, we'll have nightmares about that strikeout buzzer.

WILLOW

Nightmares?

OAK

Ya, like driving a fire truck thru a forest fire blowing the siren!

Class, I would like you to meet Ms. Willow; she will be your teacher for part of the day. I am sure she will be a delightful change for you.

BIRCH  
worryes about his ability to adjust

Hey, wait a minute. We don't have to change teachers do we?  
How would you like to have two different sets of parents?

OAK  
leaving and cheering the team on

Well, as a matter of fact I do. Look, change, change is what life is all about, jump on board the change train. If you can't ride in the saddle, then walk in the mud and dust. Bottom's up.

BIRCH  
attacking

Hey, get your shoes cleaned.

HICKORY

He leaves just when I was starting to hate him.

WILLOW  
a prying question to Hickory

Does it take you very long to hate someone?

HICKORY  
attacking

For you, maybe 30-60 seconds?

WILLOW

What's your name, please?

HICKORY

glares and growls

I'm tough as Hickory and mean as sin.

WILLOW  
throws Hickory a curve ball

Tough and mean! Is that what it takes to ride a broomstick?

BIRCH  
fowls Willow by pushing a stack of papers off a desk.

HICKORY  
belches and walks away.

SEQUOIA  
claps his hands trying to catch an imaginary fly

WILLOW  
So that's the game plan.

BIRCH  
What game?

WILLOW  
puts class on notice

I try to talk to Hickory, and you and Sequoia use diversionary tactics to cut the conversation.

SEQUOIA  
Hickory's knife isn't for cutting conversations.

WILLOW  
So, Sir Ivanhoe and Sir Lancelot gallop to the rescue. For whose benefit?

SEQUOIA  
Some Indians not like um scalp um parties.

CYPRESS

Son of a gun, General Custer was born too soon.

HICKORY

You aren't a teacher are you?

WILLOW  
explaining

If you are learning, I'm teaching.

MAGNOLIA  
picks up Pine's drawing to look at

She's the new school counselor.

WILLOW

That is correct and every afternoon we shall review what happen in the morning session, what happen at home or coming to school.

BIRCH

Hey, what about getting subjects for graduation?

WILLOW  
encourages students to use new languages

Let me speak in alligator language. Until you students start doing what the other students do in the other classrooms, graduation is not on the menu.

HICKORY  
defense

Do, all they do is brown-nose. A bunch of kissy-faced puppies!

BIRCH  
defense

Right on, we are true individuals preserving nature's natural instincts.

CYPRESS  
defense

We are not copycats or parrots chasing gold stars.

WILLOW  
to Hickory

What they do is to control their behavior. You students either don't want to or can't control your behavior.

PINE

Say something in teddy bear language...

HICKORY

I know weasel language.

SEQUOIA

Like um.

HICKORY

Well, of course, they are good people, but would you want your son to marry one?

SEQUOIA

That explains why the Apaches were always stealing the Navajo sheep.

PINE  
points to magazine-Cypress gets it for her

MAGNOLIA

What about rich people not wanting their children marrying poor people?

BIRCH

That's what we're talking about, right?

HICKORY

She couldn't hear because of the sheep.

CYPRESS

Ms. Willow, how would you like a van full of trash coming to your mansion every weekend hitting on the beans and bar be cue?

SEQUOIA

Talking like alligators.

WILLOW

It is true that some poor people are treated like trash by some rich people who are trash. A general statement is often wrong. It is not fair to say all politicians are liars...

BIRCH

Right because some of them are dead.

WILLOW

Do you all agree that different people are entitled to a different point of view?

BIRCH

And some people may have the same point of view, but if it is at night, they could not see the point, Dr. Watson.

WILLOW

throws another curve to Hickory

That's why we go to school, Mr. Holmes, in order to see the point even in the dancing shadows of truth.

HICKORY

I hate shadows. They sneak around hurting people.

WILLOW

keeps trying for insight

Shadows are in dreams?

HICKORY

Sometimes I feel them when I'm awake.

MAGNOLIA

Shadows try to get you to do things, like jump in a river  
or drive fast.

PINE

If I stay quiet, sometimes they don't see me. I fool  
them; they get mad.

HICKORY

Shadows chase me. They wait to jump me.

WILLOW  
offers hope

I have a light beam that makes shadows disappear.

HICKORY  
leaves group

You're lying. Liar! Nobody has a shadow light, nobody!

SEQUOIA  
looks to ceiling

Great Grandfather, talk um like in old days, sheep,  
shadows and medicine woman.

LIGHTS DIM - STUDENT DISPLAYS A "DAYS LATER" SIGN.

PART II

Scene 1 Classroom

BIRCH  
by himself doing a ritual-type activity

Ms. WILLOW

Class, could we begin with an evaluation of what happen this morning?  
Pine, was there anything that you liked or disliked?

PINE

I liked looking at magazines. Are there any new ones for me?

SEQUOIA

warning Willow

Ms. Willow, maybe you should talk to Birch about the man-in-the-moon...

WILLOW

Hickory, please sit at the table.

HICKORY

Ms. Willow, you've heard of falling meteors. We're going to get hit with a moonshot if you don't do something.

Ms. WILLOW

A moon what?

MAGNOLIA

Birch is going to moon us. Do it, Ms. Willow, smack the button for help.

CYPRESS

Quick, Hickory, press the button or it's Cheek's City U.S.A.

Ms. WILLOW

starts for the button but grabs her purse

instead and hurries to Birch

Wait Hickory, Birch, take this pill; it is for allergies, like moonitis. Take it, hurry before it is too late.

BIRCH

puts the pressure on Willow

They're after me. The shadows are going to get me. Don't grab my pants. Help me! Press the button, Ms. Willow. Please!

WILLOW

interprets behavior as personal attack



Stop it, stop. Why are you doing this to me? Please, take the pill. Quit doing that. Please stop! Hickory don't touch the button!

BIRCH

drops pants - Is he wearing trunks?

The devil is after me; shadows always making me do things. Push the button. Help!

WILLOW

starts toward button and almost screams the first words then starts recovering poise

I'll push the button right down your throat. Your graduation? Graduation to what a circus performer? The lion tamer trains lions to jump thru hoops. But he first trains himself. Birch, do you want to be the lion tamer or the lion?

HICKORY

Birch, you can't lose. Either way you get the whip.

CYPRESS

Birch, you could start by training a mean rabbit. Get one with tough looking ears.

BIRCH

being deflated by jokes, pulls up pants

SEQUOIA

How about a high dive act into a pail of water; nobody would care if your pants were up or down.

PART II

Scene 2\_Classroom

WILLOW

triumphantly turning away from Birch

Pine, what pretty shoes. They look great with your dress, and your fingernails are painted! You look pretty proud and sassy.

PINE



I don't know how to act...

CYPRESS

posturing

Miss Willow, for all you know about men, you'd be exhaling when you should be inhaling.

MAGNOLIA

Look, my Mother and aunt are financially independent because of their expertise with men. They talk about it all the time. How to say this. How to do that.

HICKORY

class is on a roll

Hookers? My kind of role models.

WILLOW

making fun remark

Maybe, I should take lessons.

MAGNOLIA

moving closer, taking charge

There are several things you should think about. My aunt would first tell you that only a fool chases a horse with a sack of oats.

BIRCH

What would a fool chase a conceited twit with?

CYPRESS

posturing

And how you hold the sack of oats is important.

MAGNOLIA

Mom says whoever laughs and agrees the most in a conversation is the least in control.

HICKORY

Judges always look in control. They don't laugh and agree much.

MAGNOLIA

lowers voice/hot tip

My Mother would say a busy woman attracts more attention than a couch potato. When Mr. Beechnut wants to talk to you, tell him you only have a minute.

BIRCH

Right scarcity increases value.

MAGNOLIA

Value is the most important of all. Can't ever let anyone or anything destroy your value. Aunty says that even without the fancy clothes, make-up and hairdo a woman must have in her manner that glow of value, of preciousness. When a man sees that, he must have it for himself and for his children to be.

CYPRESS

doing a dance step

Sucks them in like vampires to virgins.

SEQUOIA

Chief Horny Toad say young brave who hesitates at teepee door need goose by old squaw.

WILLOW

Wait, peace! Some topics really inspire you. You should write a newspaper column. Mr. Oak will soon be here. What would you want me to say to him for you?

SEQUOIA

serious manner

Bare naked in the sun I speak um man to man to him, no need um squaw.

WILLOW

serious manner to class

Sequoia, speak um as true warrior.

OAK  
entering and taking command

Well, have you taken a vote? Have you decided who wants to walk and who wants to ride on the change train? You have never heard the bluuues until you hear a man talk about trying to chaaanngge his ways. Change is as mean and wild as a blizzard; it smashes marshmallow-types like a boot.

BIRCH  
looking at Mr. OAK

You were stepping in dust and mud now it's marshmallows.

HICKORY  
looking at Mr. Oak

Be careful about putting your foot in your mouth.

SEQUOIA  
with crossed arms

Great Spirit say only a mighty warrior make um change.

CYPRESS  
with crossed arms

Great Spirit say squaw lead um, warrior follow.

Ms. WILLOW  
leaving

A change in self-control is a macho goal for any warrior.

PART II

Scene 3 Classroom

OAK

Pine, what are you drawing today?

PINE

Flowers.

OAK

doing a little fishing/trying to catch Pine

What do you like to draw best?

PINE

Flowers and Christmas trees.

OAK

working on rapport

Why Christmas trees?

PINE

Because I get super Christmas presents.

OAK

Pine, please bring your drawing and join for a discussion?

PINE

looks at Birch

I just want to draw flowers.

HICKORY

agrees with Pine in resisting Oak

Why sit around and talk? What good is it anyway?

OAK

keeps trying to form group before kids are ready

Look the main goal is for you to learn about subjects for graduation. Now we're taking one step toward a goal by sitting together and discussing things in a sensible manner.

MAGNOLIA

resisting Oak's try for group work

Why bother to learn about the Civil War?

CYPRESS

What fun is it to type a letter?

OAK

Bother, fun! Life is in the learning, the doing. If you are not doing, you are being cheated, ripped off. Most TV programs distract you from living, from doing. You're getting conned and dumped on by TV air heads.

HICKORY

Crap on our heads and crap in our heads makes sewer heads tomorrow's leaders. Go Team!

BIRCH  
sets Oak up for leadership

Talking is not doing.

OAK

The first part of doing is planning. We talk and plan about our goals. Planning tells us if something makes sense to do.

BIRCH  
distracts with remark

If doesn't make sense, then Congress will do it?

OAK  
Oak misjudges Pine.

You got it; Pine, please bring your drawing and join us.

PINE  
looks at Birch and stays seated

BIRCH

So why do we cut down Christmas trees?

OAK

Birch, we are talking about planning. Show some self-discipline, stick to the subject...

BIRCH

Hey, I'm talking about planning. The school council has a plan to plant trees. The radio said that last year we cut 35 million Christmas trees.

HICKORY

joins in for some fun

So should we plan on planting or plan to cut cutting?

BIRCH

Planting trees doesn't make any sense.

OAK

Of course, it does. The Christmas trees grow on tree farms. Truckers deliver trees. Stores sell trees. Garbage collectors pick them up. Factory workers make ornaments. Christmas trees provide a lot of jobs.

HICKORY

tries to be a leader in positive manner

If that's great, then let's plan another tree day. If one is good, two is better.

CYPRESS

going to the chalk board

Go for it, hit me with a day. A day with songs and sizzle.

MAGNOLIA

hands a magazine to Pine and joins group

How about an Easter tree with flowers, bunnies...

HICKORY

and rotten eggs?

SEQUOIA

class on a roll

What about a Fourth of July tree?

HICKORY



Yeah, we can hang toy tanks and rockets on it.

BIRCH

At the top of the tree, we could have an atomic bomb.

CYPRESS

making notes on chalk board

How about songs? Up with a warhead quick, quick, quick down thru the atmosphere St. Nuke It.

MAGNOLIA

Greeting cards for war heroes: John Wayne and Bugs Bunny.

SEQUOIA

Under the tree, instead of three wise men, we could have three generals.

HICKORY

Instead of a manger, a coffin.

SEQUOIA

Have a battlefield like the Civil War or my favorite, Custer's Last Chimes.

CYPRESS

Are we planning or what? Think of all the jobs, Mr. Oak.

SEQUOIA

Great Spirit say one tree worth a thousand words.

OAK

Must always talk like a teacher

Planning is doing. How did it feel to work together?

CYPRESS

gives Oak a verbal kick in the crotch which he deserves.

I've had better roller coaster rides.

HICKORY  
looking at Cypress

Ya without even being in a roller coaster.

PART II

Scene 4 in classroom

MAGNOLIA

Pine, would you draw a picture of a Fourth of July tree?

PINE  
smiles and shakes her head yes

I'll try to make one.

OAK  
talks like teacher needs another kick

Pine, trying is not good enough. One does not try to do something.  
One plans it. One starts it. One does it. One finishes it.

BIRCH  
gives kick

Sounds like a street repair crew taking a coffee break.

MAGNOLIA  
defending

Mr. Oak, I think Pine should get credit for trying. It shows she is  
willing to help.

OAK  
She is always drawing half-finished pictures. She looks at half a  
magazine...

CYPRESS  
warning

It could be worse; she could be half trying to accuse you of molesting her...

OAK

Hold it. The point has missed the bull's eye.

HICKORY

class on a roll

Maybe it hit the donkey's...

OAK

The point is do you "try" to jump across Grand Canyon, or do you jump across Grand Canyon?

BIRCH

First, get the marshmallows off your shoes.

SEQUOIA

Are you in tight with Great Spirit?

OAK

How do you get a sense of pride or satisfaction if you don't finish what you start? Accomplish the goal!

HICKORY

Who cares lying at the bottom of Grand Canyon?

OAK

Correct, merely trying to do something will quickly get you to the bottom. It's tough to care when you're on the bottom.

CYPRESS

Then its bottom's up.

OAK

Up and away to the library to see a film that Ms. Willow has ready

for us about problem solving techniques.

HICKORY  
walking toward door

I like the BMFH (behavior modification for humans) technique.

SEQUOIA

Frontier Soldier's Technique, the only good Indian is a dead one.

BIRCH

For convenience, you can't beat good old fashion bribery.

LIGHTS DIM

PART II

Scene 5 Classroom

PRINCIPAL PEACH  
follows Supt. Walnut into empty ARS classroom

Supt. Walnut, it's good of you to visit with us about our At Risk Students to feel our frustration. We doubt our ability to help them.

SUPT. WALNUT

There shall be more at risk students in the future with more severe symptoms.

PRINCIPAL PEACH

Dumb me, I should be enjoying the good life now. How is it that superintendents always make today seem better than tomorrow? The earth shall be destroyed by fire, won't it?

SUPT. WALNUT

ignoring Peach

Principal Peach, I was at the Women's League of Voters' luncheon today. I overheard one of the ladies say the mayor's wife bet the mayor \$20 bucks that Ms. Willow wouldn't press the button first. Another woman bet her husband a month of grass cutting.

PRINCIPAL PEACH

That is not smart betting.

SUPT. WALNUT

What button, Principal Peach?

PRINCIPAL PEACH

The emergency button in this ARS classroom. Here on the desk.

SUPT. WALNUT

Why is it dumb betting?

PRINCIPAL PEACH

Mr. Oak can control students better as he has more experience.

SUPT. WALNUT

Is that all Principal Peach, experience? Maybe you think that Mr. Oak being a man offers an image of a greater emotional stability, a more sincere quality of leadership which would provide a better comfort zone for ARS.

PRINCIPAL PEACH

True Supt. Walnut, Mr. Oak might have a comfort zone, maybe even a thermostat.

SUPT. WALNUT

What are you going to about this bedroom betting?

PRINCIPAL PEACH

ask a dumb question...

I will call the mayor's wife and tell her to cancel the bet. Nip it in the bud so to speak.

SUPT. WALNUT

Not being a man, she probably considers her bedroom betting a private matter.

PRINCIPAL PEACH

Well, her bedroom betting needs more imagination with less crackers and peanut butter.

SUPT. WALNUT

This emergency button was supposed to solve a problem, not create one. You may need to have a daily journal on the ARS class.

PRINCIPAL PEACH

Ah, Mr. Oak and Miss Willow are both making daily reports.

SUPT. WALNUT

If an emergency occurs and they do not press the button because of a bet or pride, we could end up in a toxic waste truck before the smoke clears.

PRINCIPAL PEACH

As drivers? I will discuss the need for them to teach in a professional manner.

SUPT. WALNUT

opening debate

How can you expect them to teach in a professional manner with ARS? Each student is in orbit around a different planet. Should the students really be in school? It is doubtful if we can ever get them to function in a regular classroom. Professional behavior in an ARS class may consist of only controlling oneself.

PRINCIPAL PEACH

side steps debate-long day-tries needle

Speaking of that, how's your smoking habit coming along?

SUPT. WALNUT

leaving

Monday I try an acupuncture program... Principal Peach, the point is not to call foul and yell hypocrisy while sneering at our imperfections. Our task is to set standards and to do our best in helping children to achieve them regardless of our handicaps, our faults.

PRINCIPAL PEACH

leaving

Actually, if we had to correct our faults, that would be the last straw. The teachers would certainly strike for a raise then.

DIM LIGHTS-STUDENT CARRIES A "DAYS LATER" SIGN ACROSS STAGE

PART III

Scene 1 Classroom:

WILLOW

The ARS enter the classroom.

Cypress, what did you like about that problem-solving movie last week?

HICKORY

leads in group discussion/big win for Willow

If we know so much about solving problems, how come we have wars?

MAGNOLIA

Because most people have not seen the movie.

CYPRESS

Can't they rent it for a couple of days, see it twice?

BIRCH

to Willow

You know, with my father? How can I be politely mad? He never had any proper training for politely disagreeing?

WILLOW

It is a place to start. Do you want him to know how angry you are; how much you hurt?

BIRCH

Don't know. I'm afraid... ashamed. I guess I should take it like a

man. It keeps us apart, a buried bomb.

WILLOW

Is not doing school work a sign you're mad? Goofing off is it like flipping the bird or dropping your drawers? Is your father trained to understand that kind of communication? Is it fair?

BIRCH

Easier to drop my pants and moon the world than tell my father what's inside. What if he got mad? Maybe he wouldn't visit me anymore.

SEQUOIA

to Birch-upset about openness of feelings and trying to cut Willow's effectiveness

Steady, Rain Cloud, classroom not teepee. Squaws gossip.

CYPRESS

comes Willow's aid

Great Spirit say brave who badmouths squaws get potholes in warpath.

PINE

tries to aid Cypress and surprises others

Great Spirit say...say say turtle with head up shell can't get foot in mouth.

HICKORY

Pine surprises Hickory.

Next week she'll be trying to chew Redman.

CYPRESS

attacks Hickory-protecting Pine

Trying, she just did, Porcupine Points.

BIRCH

to Sequoia-fishing

Have you ever seen any porcupine pornography?

SEQUOIA

baits up hook



A cute little porcky flashed me once. She was up a tree trying to balance on a limb, quite sensuous. You know how expressive they can be with their quills reflecting in the sunlight.

BIRCH  
sets up Hickory

Hickory definitely could not cope with their romantic life style, too intimate. Maybe a job on an alligator ranch would sweeten his disposition and improve his table manners.

PINE  
tunes in from sideline

Hickory smiled.

CYPRESS

What is this talk about stupid alligators?

SEQUOIA  
tosses the ball up

Sure alligators have dumb little brains and lots of tail. So who is perfect?

BIRCH  
bunts the ball

Careful, Hickory or you might laugh and pass gas.

SEQUOIA  
tries for a home run

Hickory, how would you like to be able to lift your tail like a skunk and squirt stink like you talk it...

HICKORY  
ready to make a wise crack

MAGNOLIA  
defends Hickory and attacks

Hickory, just skunk them good by being polite. You don't have to talk to stinky alligators with small brains.

HICKORY  
tries to look dignified, remains quiet  
surprised and pleased someone came to his defense.

PART III

Scene 2 Classroom

WILLOW  
sits beside Magnolia-fishing

Magnolia, I was looking over your school records. You did very well in school until the last half of the eighth grade; then your grades dropped. What happened?

MAGNOLIA

I don't know, not interested.

WILLOW  
still fishing

Would you just take a guess about the change?

MAGNOLIA  
self-satisfied

Maybe, I just don't know what to do? Why should I study?

WILLOW

Pine, help us. Why should Magnolia study?

PINE  
makes a don't know gesture

CYPRESS  
throws in game ante and bets

White collar crime pays better than robbery with a deadly weapon.

WILLOW  
matches Cypress

Educated people should enjoy their work more and solve their problems

better.

BIRCH  
has game ante and bets

You could be a politician and have your palms greased with low cholesterol grease, of course.

CYPRESS  
raises the bet

How about being a truck driver?

MAGNOLIA  
doesn't like the cards but calls

Truck driver, you've been hearing too much country western music.

CYPRESS  
wanted more betting

Truckers drive a lot of horses. Horses like oats.

WILLOW  
has Cypress got something

Cypress, what's with the word games?

CYPRESS  
drops a couple cards on table

Maybe in the eighth grade, Magnolia got the idea that she inherited a sack of oats. Now she is just chewing on her nails waiting for the starting gate.

BIRCH  
filling in a straight

You know, I visited a friend on a farm at harvest time. Oats really itch.

CYPRESS  
asks to see Magnolia's cards

Magnolia might agree with that.

MAGNOLIA

show down time

How can I stop it? It is going to happen! Shadows will get me. I will be just like them.

WILLOW

catches an ace/fish at last

By them..? You mean! Cypress, you're a genius! Team we have defined a problem. Hallelujah!

BIRCH

Magnolia looks like she has lost her national anthem.

HICKORY

If Magnolia needs any help with her losses...

WILLOW

Magnolia, it's O.K. You can win. We'll use a running game, no interceptions. We'll make a first down every day and have a defense that gives up yardage like a sawed-off shotgun.

MAGNOLIA

It's poison; I'm no good inside...I'll be just like them.

SEQUOIA

Great Spirit say if you got um love, you got um goodness.

BIRCH

not noticed sneaks from classroom

WILLOW

leaving

Class, Mr. Oak will be here soon because I must leave to attend a meeting.

PART III

Scene 3 Classroom

OAK  
entering

Ms. Willow, if the meeting should be postponed, remember the students really need all the gentle feminine guidance they can get.

HICKORY

Mr. Oak, did you miss the saddle? Your shoe is dirty.

OAK

Hickory, the mud is proof that change is constant, and people are not. By not looking ahead, I stepped in a new mud hole.

HICKORY  
team acceptance

It's O.K. Mr. Oak; we make mistakes too.

OAK  
not looking at Pine

Pine, do you need any help?

PINE  
shakes head her head no

OAK  
not looking at Pine

Pine, did you draw the Fourth of July tree for Magnolia?

PINE  
nervous shakes her head no

MAGNOLIA  
coming to Pine's aid

She has done half of it, Mr. Oak. I'll help her finish it tomorrow.

OAK  
not looking at Pine

Pine, can you hear me? Are you O.K.?

PINE  
acts afraid and shakes head yes

Yes.

OAK  
not looking at Pine

Pine, could you help me pass around these papers, please.

PINE  
looks around, starts to get up, sits down

OAK  
not looking at Pine

Pine, I need some help; can you hear me?

PINE  
head in hands sniffing

Yes.

OAK  
faces Pine

Pine, is it O.K. for me to help you?

PINE  
afraid shakes head yes

OAK  
takes a step toward Pine

We help you, we protect you and we give to you, but you don't help us. Life is a one way street with you. Pine, what is the name of your street? Me! Me! You always try to get people to do things for you that you can do for yourself. Help Pine. Give something to Pine...

HICKORY  
protects Pine/seek peace

Mr. Oak, how about being polite, liked we talked about?

PINE  
looks at Hickory surprised

OAK

You're like an elephant at a zoo waiting for peanuts. Give a peanut to Pine. Peanuts for Pine, please. Do you like peanuts, Pine? Do you want to live the rest of your life for peanuts, Pine?

PINE  
stands with hands to ears

No, please, no

MAGNOLIA  
defends Pine

Mr. Oak, she can't help it. She is afraid; she needs our help.

OAK

You've made a cage for yourself. You're behind bars. You can't get out. You can't have any fun. Have you ever seen an elephant laugh? Elephants just shake their heads. Do you shake your head, Pine?

PINE  
in tears shakes her head yes, walks about

Yes, please I'll be good, Mr. Oak.

HICKORY

You are crazy. We are all crazy.

OAK

Run away and hide. You can't change, can't fight!

PINE  
goes to desk

OAK

Get help, Pine. Whack that button! They'll bring you peanuts.

HICKORY

walks halfway to Pine and sits on whatever  
wants to protect Pine

Isn't anyone going to do something, say something! Sequoia, joke um.

CYPRESS

with scissors in hand by Sequoia  
wants to protect Pine from jokes

Indian, say the word "squaw" and the ponytail is history.

4 seconds of silence

SEQUOIA

looking at Hickory then Pine  
speaks for the Indian nations

White man, halfway is not far enough.

OAK

Pine, you're afraid. Press the button! Run away!

HICKORY

looks at Sequoia who nods toward Pine  
Hickory gets up and goes to Pine

Are you O.K.? Oak is crazy, a lot of pressure, hemorrhoids.

PINE

trying to control herself

CYPRESS

catching Oak's idea

Pine, the boys will laugh, and badmouth us. "Hey, a squaw pressed  
the button." Don't give them that. Come on, we deserve better.

PINE

looks defiantly at Mr. Oak

MAGNOLIA

catching on

Help yourself! Kick butt, Pine.



PINE

(rap talk)

Got the changing blues riding on my back,  
Got the changing blues riding on my back,  
Just trying to keep my train on the track.

Look ahead what am I going to get,  
Look ahead what am I going to get,  
All I can see is a cloudy sunset.

Hear that lonely train whistle moan in me,  
Hear that lonely train whistle moan in me,  
Where is the sunshine to set my spirit free.

PART III

Scene 4 Classroom

PRINCIPAL PEACH

Birch enters classroom with Principal Peach  
behind him.

Mr. Oak, Birch was wandering around in the hallway without an escort.

OAK

Birch, why are you messing around with the rules? What happen to your  
goals?

BIRCH

Those old rules are for an old me. I'm a different  
me needing two way streets with yield signs. I was just sampling the  
sea of self-disciplined assertiveness.

PRINCIPAL PEACH

Drop the funny talk; rules are serious.

BIRCH

Serious, Serious! Young people dying in battle for their country.  
Thousands of children a day starving to death. That's serious!

Your rules are a joke. You need perspective. You are so self-centered  
you think this school revolves around you. You walk around here  
worrying about getting caught with your pants down rather than  
thinking what... what if nobody had pants.

SEQUOIA

Like um good old days.

HICKORY

Yeah, and everyone was feeling their oats or something.

SEQUOIA

That's why squaw make um teepee with no corners.

ARS

(more rap talk)

Got the change train jive beating in our hearts  
Got our role model friends giving jump starts

Got a lifestyle view from mirror on train  
That we don't ever want to see again

Taking two steps ahead and one step back  
While keeping all our wild oats in a sack

Great Spirit laugh in happy hunting ground  
All the castle drawbridges are letting down.

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