

The Simpsons

“Girls Just Wanna Have Sums” (Season 17, episode 19)



*“No one is better than anyone else and everyone is the best at everything”
– Seymour Skinner.*

Advanced



Learner's File

I. Starter



Before the episode. Your teacher has split up the group in two: boys on the left and girls on the right. What do you think about the way of teaching? Should boys and girls be separated from each other? Yes? No? Why? Write down your pros and cons.

<i>I'm in favor of splitting the group according to gender</i>	<i>I'm against splitting the group according to gender</i>

During the episode. Write down the differences between boys and girls that are said or shown in the episode. It can be physical or psychological differences.

<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>

II. Reading



« Why women are poor at science, by Harvard president »

First published 18/01/2005 in *The Guardian*

The president of Harvard University has provoked a furore by arguing that men outperform women in maths and sciences because of biological difference, and discrimination is no longer a career barrier for female academics. Lawrence Summers, a career economist who served as treasury secretary under President Clinton, has a reputation for outspokenness. His tenure at Harvard has been marked by clashes with African-American staff and leftwing intellectuals, and complaints about a fall in the hiring of women.

He made his remarks at a private conference on the position of women and minorities in science and engineering, hosted by the National Bureau of Economic Research. In a lengthy address delivered without notes, Dr Summers offered three explanations for the shortage of women in senior posts in science and engineering, starting with their reluctance to work long hours because of childcare responsibilities. He went on to argue that boys outperform girls on high school science and maths scores because of genetic difference. "Research in behavioural genetics is showing that things people previously attributed to socialisation weren't due to socialisation after all," he told the Boston Globe yesterday. As an example, Dr Summers told the conference about giving his daughter two trucks. She treated them like dolls, and named them mummy and daddy trucks, he said.

Dr Summers also played down the impact of sex bias in appointments to academic institutions. He said: "The real issue is the overall size of the pool, and it's less clear how much the size of the pool was held down by discrimination." At least half of his audience comprised women, several said they found the remarks offensive and one walked out. "It was really shocking to hear the president of Harvard make statements like that," said Denice Denton, who is about to become president of the University of California at Santa Cruz. Others said Dr Summers's comments were depressingly familiar. "I have heard men make comments like this my entire life and quite honestly if I had listened to them I would never have done anything," said Donna Nelson, a chemistry professor at the University of Oklahoma.








A Harvard spokeswoman declined to comment yesterday, or to release the transcript of Dr Summers's remarks. Richard Freeman, who invited the Harvard president to speak at the conference, said Dr Summers's comments were intended to provoke debate, and some women over-reacted. "Some people took offence because they were very sensitive," said Dr Freeman, an economist at Harvard and the London School of Economics. "It does not seem to me insane to think that men and women have biological differences." During Dr Summers's presidency, the number of tenured jobs offered to women has fallen from 36% to 13%. Last year, only four of 32 tenured job openings were offered to women.

Suzanne Goldenberg

III. Characters



Match the alphabetical letters representing some elements drawn from the episode with the corresponding number (their descriptions) and the corresponding roman numeral.

<p>A. Frances McDormand</p> <p>B. Julie Taymor</p> <p>C. Tom Stoppard</p> <p>D. Frida Khalo</p> <p>E. Georgia O'Keefe</p> <p>F. Cathy Guisewite</p> <p>G. « The Lion King »</p>	<p>1. Czech-born British playwright and screenwriter born in 1937. He has written prolifically for TV, radio, film and stage. In the episode, he is the author of the book on which is based the Itchy & Scratchy Musical <i>Stab-A-Lot</i>.</p> <p>2. Academy Award-winning American film and stage actress born in 1957. She voiced Melanie Upfoot in the episode.</p> <p>3. Mexican artist (1907-1954) who painted many portraits, self-portraits, and works inspired by the nature and artifacts of Mexico. In the episode, her <i>Self-Portrait with Monkey</i> is caricaturized</p> <p>4. An American animated musical film produced by Walt Disney and released in 1994. The opening song <i>Circle of Life</i> is parodied in the episode and renamed <i>Circle of Knife</i>.</p> <p>5. An American artist (1887-1986), best known for her paintings of enlarged flowers, as her painting <i>Jack-in-Pulpit No. 2</i> featured in the episode. She has been recognized as the “Mother of American modernism”.</p> <p>6. American director of theater, opera and film born in 1952. Her adaptation of <i>The Lion King</i> becomes the most successful stage musical of all time. In the episode, she is represented by the character of Juliana Krellner, a former Springfield Elementary student and director of the Itchy & Scratchy Musical <i>Stab-A-Lot</i>.</p> <p>7. American cartoonist born in 1950 who created the comic strip <i>Cathy</i>. The story focused on a career woman facing the issues and challenges of life (work, relationships and her mother).</p>	<p>I. </p> <p>II. </p> <p>III. </p> <p>IV. </p> <p>V. </p> <p>VI. </p> <p>VII. </p>
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A	B	C	D	E	F	G

IV. The story



Sum up the episode shortly using the following images.



V. Did you understand everything?



a. True or false? Correct the false sentences.

	True	False
1. Tom Stoppard is the director of the Itchy & Scratchy Musical <i>Stab-A-Lot</i> . Correction: _____		
2. According to Skinner, boys are always better at maths than girls. Correction: _____		
3. During the lesson, Lisa doesn't want to do maths because she thinks it is too difficult. Correction: _____		
4. Jake Boyman is nicknamed Toilet because Bart and Milhouse meet him at the school toilets Correction: _____		
5. According to Bart, if Lisa succeeds in maths, it is because she learns to think as a boy Correction: _____		

b. Answer precisely the following questions.

1. What is Skinner's plan to negotiate with women?

2. What is the educational expert Melanie Upfoot's idea to improve the school?

3. According to Melanie Upfoot, how do boys deal with maths that is different than girls?

4. What is Lisa's final test to become a real man?

5. At the end of the episode, what does Lisa think of boys' world? How do boys react?

VI. Vocabulary



A. Find the word hidden behind these definitions. It is advised to use a dictionary.

1. To have a favorable impression of oneself, self-respect.	To have s _____ -_____.
2. An act of judging something too quickly, especially against a racial, religious or national group.	A p _____.
3. A very hard candy.	A j _____.
4. To be very offensive.	To be o _____.
5. To mock or to make fun of someone.	To r _____ someone (US slang).
6. To be very adhesive, sticky.	To be c _____.
7. A word or sequence of words that is difficult to pronounce, especially rapidly.	A t _____ -_____.
8. A very loud or noisy action.	A h _____ - h _____ (informal).
9. A tendency toward judging something without full knowledge of it.	A b _____.

B. Can you understand these expressions?

1. "In for a penny, in for a pound" means...
 - a. That I just lost one penny on the floor, so don't mind if I lose a pound.
 - b. That I am decided to something, regardless of what it may entail.
2. If you succeed in something, you will say that...
 - a. You did well.
 - b. You did good.

C. Impossible to know...

1. Chef Boyardee is the name of...
 - a. a food brand that sells pasta cans internationally.
 - b. a French Chef known for his memorable participation to Fort Boyard.
2. The Hardy Boys are...
 - a. fictional characters that appeared in several series of mystery books for children and teenagers.
 - b. two famous brothers : Laurel and Hardy.
3. « We've been Yentled ! » This sentence is said by Jimbo (18'45'') when students discover that Toilet is Lisa, but what does it mean exactly?



VIII. Speaking



Who invented what?

Make assumptions about the origin of the following inventions. In your opinion, is it a man or a woman that created it? Why? In which century do you think it was developed? Discuss it.

Liquid paper: _____

Paper: _____

Windshield wiper: _____

Car: _____

Nylon stockings: _____

Rocket ship: _____

Suspension bridge: _____

The First Constitutional Government: _____

Snowshoes: _____

Brass knuckles: _____

Pinball machines: _____

The Renaissance: _____



Role play.

You and your friend have recently discovered an incredible invention! However, it is impossible to know if it was created by a man or a woman.

A: You are convinced that it was created by a man. Argue your position using arguments and examples. Be relevant!

B: You are convinced that it was created by a woman. Argue your position using arguments and examples. Be relevant!



Debate: Gender theory.

The episode suggests that gender disparity in the hard sciences may definitely be linked to social education and background. Therefore, how can we fight these stereotypes and decrease gender differences?

IX. Music Maestro



Which one out of the six songs above is not featured in the episode? Read carefully the following comments describing five songs, then listen to an abstract drawn from the episode. Can you match the description with the right song title? Be careful: there is one title that is not featured in the episode.

A. The composer Wendy Carlos (1939-...) composed this arrangement to be the main theme of “A Clockwork Orange”, by Stanley Kubrick (1928-1999) and released in theatre in 1971. In the episode, one can hear a bit of the arrangement when Lisa enters the boys’ school area.

B. The song was released in 1980 by the heavy metal band Judas Priest. In the episode, it is played when Otto sets free the boys from the back of the bus to go to school.

C. The song came from the musical animated Disney film “The Lion King”, released in theatre in 1994. It was composed by Elton John with Tim Rice’s lyrics. Nowadays, it is still a very successful song, especially in Disney theme parks. In the episode, the song is parodied in the Itchy & Scratchy musical *Stab-A-Lot*.

D. The song was written by guitarist Chris Butler in 1978 and was released as a single in 1980. It did not appear on any charts when it was released, but in 1981, Butler formed the band The Waitresses with Patty Donahue as lead vocalist. This version became a hit in 1982. In the episode, the song is played when Lisa, dressed as Toilet, finally got accepted among the boys.

E. The song is played on the flute by Martin Prince at the end of the episode, in a shorter version. It is taken from the fifth studio album by the British rock band Jethro Tulln released in 1972. The album contains a continuous piece of music and was deliberately designed to parody the concept album genre. The lyrics are like a musical adaptation of an epic poem written by a fictional 8-year-old genius who won a award for his poem which was immediately drawn back after swearing on TV.

	<i>Breaking the Law</i>
	<i>Girls Just Wanna Have Fun</i>
	<i>I Know What Boys Like</i>
	<i>Beethovenia</i>
	<i>Thick as a Brick</i>
	<i>The Circle of Knives, a parody of The Circle of Life</i>