

## *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.*

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*Intermediate*



**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, according to Harvard president »

First published 18/01/2005 in *The Guardian* – Modified version

The president of Harvard University has provoked a furore by declaring 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. He made his remarks at a private conference on the position of women and minorities in science and engineering, organized by the National Bureau of Economic Research. Dr Summers offered two explanations for the shortage of women in senior posts in science and engineering: firstly, women are reluctant 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 press.

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. "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 following elements with the episode to the corresponding text and picture.

**Frances McDormand**



American animated musical film produced by Walt Disney and released in 1994.



**Julie Taymor**



American cartoonist born in 1950, who created the comic strip *Cathy*.



**Tom Stoppard**



Academy Award-winning American film actress born in 1957. She voiced Melanie Upfoot in the episode.



**Frida Khalo**



American director of theater, opera and film, born in 1952. She is represented by the character of Juliana Krellner in the episode.



**Georgia O'Keefe**



Mexican artist (1907-1954) who painted many portraits, self-portraits and works inspired by the nature and artifacts of Mexico.



**Cathy Guisewite**



A Czech-born British playwright born in 1937. He has written for TV, film and stage.



« **Stab-A-Lot** »  
a parody of the film  
« **The Lion King** »



American artist (1887-1986), best known for her paintings of enlarged flowers. She has been recognized and the "Mother of American modernism".



## IV. The story



Put the following images in order from 1 to 6 as they appeared in the episode and briefly describe the action taking place at the moment.

Number : \_\_\_\_\_



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Number : \_\_\_\_\_



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Number : \_\_\_\_\_



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Number : \_\_\_\_\_



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Number : \_\_\_\_\_



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Number : \_\_\_\_\_



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## V. Did you understand everything?



a. True or false? Correct the mistake briefly.

	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 the questions between one word and one sentence.

1. Who is going to pretend to agree with women in order to avoid talking with them?

\_\_\_\_\_

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

\_\_\_\_\_

3. During Lisa's lesson, what does Melanie Upfoot think of math for girls?

\_\_\_\_\_

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

\_\_\_\_\_

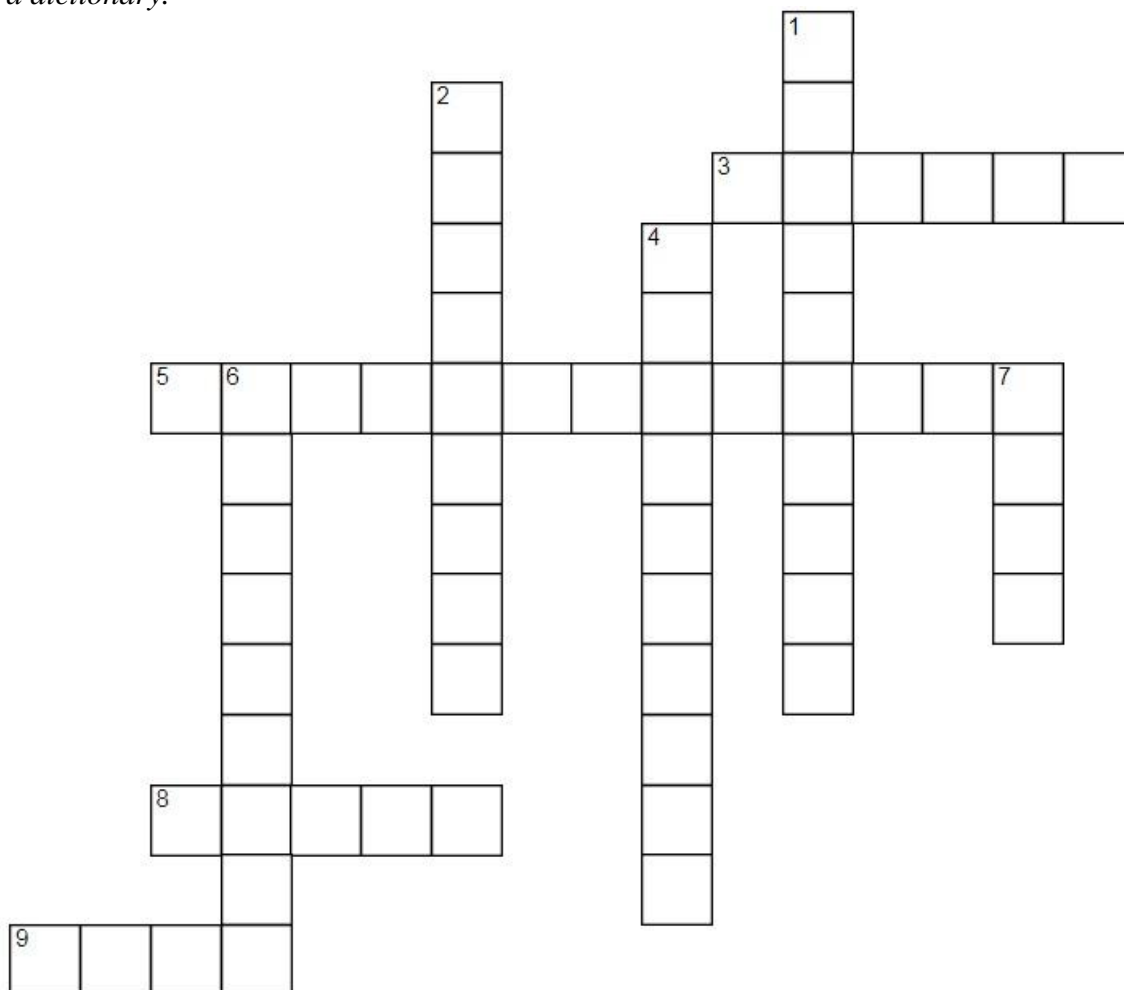
5. What does Lisa think of boys' world at the end of the episode? (2 adjectives)

\_\_\_\_\_

## VI. Vocabulary



Find the words hidden behind these definitions and place them in the crosswords. It is advised to use a dictionary.



### Down

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**\_\_\_\_\_.
4. A very hard candy. A **j**\_\_\_\_\_.
6. To be very offensive. To be **o**\_\_\_\_\_.
7. To mock or to make fun of someone. To **r**\_\_\_\_\_ someone (US slang).

### Across

3. To be very adhesive, sticky. To be **c**\_\_\_\_\_.
5. 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**\_\_\_\_\_.

## VII. Writing skills



### ***New rule at school.***

*No more maths for girls at school, full-time sports lessons on Tuesday, English songs forbidden, ... Invent a new rule for your school and introduce three arguments to support this rule. Who does it apply to? Girls? Boys? Students? Teachers? How does it work? What is the punishment if you don't follow it?*

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## 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!*



## 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>