

Math Rashes

One act play for children

By Douglas Evans



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CHARACTERS

Miss Sims: a new teacher

STUDENTS 1-6: Six middle-grade students

Setting

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

PRODUCTION NOTES:

CHARACTERS: Seven characters, 6 middle-grader students of either gender. 1 teacher of either gender.

PLAYING TIME: 20 minutes

PROPS: portable whiteboard.

Whiteboard pen

Whiteboard eraser

6 student desks

6 math books

Tattoo stickers or ink stamps of math symbols:

$+$, $-$, $\times$, $\div$, $=$, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 0, $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{1}{4}$

Scarf and coat for teacher

SETTING:

A middle-grade classroom during the winter.

Six desks arranged in a row center stage

Desks face a large teacher's desk stage right.

A portable whiteboard stands next to teacher's desk.

Classroom windows, unseen, are downstage.

Classroom door, unseen, stage left.

Unseen snowy playground is outside windows.

COSTUMES: Students, modern winter school clothing

Teacher, warm sweater, long skirt

LIGHTING: No special lightning

SOUND: School bell

MUSIC: Recording of *Let it Snow!*

Scene One:

Time: The present. Early morning.
Winter

Setting: Modern middle-grade classroom.
At stage center, six student desks stand in a row. At stage right is a teacher's desk. Portable whiteboard stands next to teacher's desk. Unseen classroom windows downstage. Unseen classroom door at stage left. Snow-covered playground is outside windows.

At Rise: School bell rings.

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

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

STUDENT 1

Look at it all. All that snow on the playground.

STUDENT 2

Yesterday the playground was wet and covered with soggy leaves. Today it's white and blanketed with fluffy snow.

STUDENT 3

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

STUDENT 4

I didn't have a second to play in the snow this morning. The bus aide hurried me straight off the bus and into the school.

STUDENT 5

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

STUDENT 6

I'd dig a tunnel in the snowdrift by the slide.

STUDENT 1

I'd stomp my name in giant letters on the soccer field.

STUDENT 2

I'd make an army of snow angels.

STUDENT 3

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

(MISS SIMS looks up from her desk and smiles. She stands and walks to front of her desk.)

MISS SIMS

(to students.)

Good morning, class. How about all this snow? Quite a storm we had last night, wasn't it? Brrrr. I had a hard time driving my car into the school parking lot. Brrr. Our custodians will have a big job shoveling off the school sidewalks. I'm glad the buses made it here safely. A snowstorm can cause big problems for a school.

STUDENT 4

(looking out window)

Snow! All that untouched snow outside!

STUDENT 5

(looking out window)

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

STUDENT 6

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

MISS SIMS

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

(Students groan and take math books from desks. They plop them on their desktops.)

STUDENT 1

(looking out window.)

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

STUDENT 2

(looking out window.)

One hour until recess. By then the kindergartners will have trampled the snow. The playground will look like the cratered surface of the moon.

STUDENT 3

(looking out window)

Why didn't they call a Snow Day? I lay in bed listening to the radio, hoping, hoping. But no, this school district never calls a Snow Day.

STUDENT 4

Classroom fever. I have classroom fever.

MISS SIMS

(facing class)

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

(MISS SIMS turns and writes problem on board.)

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

MISS SIMS (CONT'D)

(working problem on whiteboard)

Now watch, class. First you look at the ones place and ask yourself '*Can I take five from one?*' No. So you must regroup. Now you take one ten from the tens place and it becomes six tens. Then you add that ten to the ones place and it becomes eleven ones. Now...

(MISS SIMS'S voice trails. She completes problem on whiteboard while students talk.)

STUDENT 5

(looking out the window)

At home I didn't have a chance to touch a single snowflake.

STUDENT 6

(looking out window)

Me neither. And recess is still one hour, forty-eight minutes, and thirteen seconds away.

MISS SIMS

(facing class)

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

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

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

MISS SIMS

(working problem on board)

Now, class, you must again start by looking at the ones place. Ask yourself do you need to regroup? Yes, you can't take six from two. So what do you do?

(MISS SIMS'S voice trails off as she completes the problem while students talk.)

STUDENT 1
(looking out window)
Think of all the things I do in the snow. I go sledding and cross-country skiing and snowboarding.

STUDENT 2
(looking out window)
By tomorrow, all the snow might be gone.

STUDENT 3
(looking out window and sings)
Let it snow. Let it snow. Let it snow.

STUDENT 4
My classroom fever is worse than ever.

STUDENT 5
I usually like math, but not today.

STUDENT 6
One hour, forty-one minutes, and six seconds until recess.

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

(MISS SIMS turns toward whiteboard and erases problem. She writes this one.)

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

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

(MISS SIMS'S voice trails off. She completes the problem on whiteboard while students talk.)

STUDENT 1
(starts scratching arm)
Yikes! Suddenly I itch. My arm itches like crazy. What's going on?

STUDENT 2
(begins scratching neck.)
And my neck itches.

STUDENT 3
(scratches legs)
I itch, too from my head to my toes.

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

STUDENT 4
Now, I itch. The itching seems to be spreading around the class.

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

STUDENT 6
(scratching shoulders)
But I'm itching too, so that makes all of us.

MISS SIMS
(still writing on whiteboard)
You should be able to finish your mathwork by recess time. Don't forget to look at the ones place first and ask yourself if you have to regroup. And make sure you keep all your columns nice and straight.

STUDENT 1
(pulls up shirt sleeve. Plus and minus signs cover his/her arm.)
Hey! There are red spots on my arm!
(scratches other arm and pulls up other shirt sleeve. Plus and minus signs cover this arm, too.)
No, they're not spots; they're plus and minus signs. My arms are covered with plus and minus signs!

STUDENT 2
(inspects arms and hands)
There are spots are on my arm, too. They're numbers! I'm covered with numbers! That's a one, and a two, and a three. There's a four, five, six, and a seven. An eight is on my wrist and a nine is by my elbow.

STUDENT 3
(scratches side. lifts shirt and inspects skin.)
Yikes! I have itchy, red spots on me, too.

They're plus, minus, times and division signs.

(looks closer)

There are also numbers and equal signs! Yikes! Entire math problems are breaking out all over me!

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

MISS SIMS

What's this? You're all scratching. Did I hear some of you have broken out in a red rash?

(STUDENTS 1, 2 & 3 nod while continuing to scratch.)

MISS SIMS

And your rash is in the form of numbers and math symbols.

(STUDENTS 1,2,& 3 nod. MISS SIMS walks over to STUDENT 1 and examines arm.)

MISS SIMS

Goodness I know what this rash is. I learned about it in teacher's college. I'm almost certain you have broken out in... Math Rashes!

STUDENT 1

(still scratching)

Math Rashes?

STUDENT 2

(still scratching)

Math Rashes?

STUDENT 3

(still scratching)

Math Rashes?

MISS SIMS

(nodding)

Fortunately, except for the itching, Math Rashes are harmless.

STUDENT 4

(scratching legs)

I think I have Math Rashes, too.

(pulls up pants leg)

Yep, fractions and decimals. I have Math Rashes all over me.

STUDENT 5

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

And so do I. Multiplication facts are covering my shoulder. Six times six is thirty-six. Seven times seven is forty nine.

STUDENT 6

(scratching chest and looks
down shirt)

Me too. There are long division problems all down the front of me. What's worse than long division? And they sure do itch.

MISS SIMS

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

(MISS SIMS wanders down the row of
student's inspecting their Math Rashes.
Everyone is still scratching.)

MISS SIMS

(while walking)

Math Rashes? Math Rashes? Like most rashes this can only mean one thing, you've had an allergic reaction to something in this classroom. But what could it be? You haven't eaten anything. You haven't touched anything. How can we cure these Math Rashes and get back to our math lesson.

(Students scratch even harder.)

STUDENT 1

(scratching back of neck)

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

STUDENT 2

(scratches ankles)

Mine, too. The subtraction problems on my ankles itch the most.

STUDENT 3

(scratching hand)

Could our Math Rashes have something to do with the loads of math we've done this morning?

MISS SIMS

(nodding and thinking)

Perhaps. Yes, perhaps.

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

MISS SIMS

(to class)

Let's do an experiment, class. Ready? Please take out some paper and a pencil. It's time for a pop math quiz.

(Students scratch faster.)

STUDENT 4

(scratching)

That was awful. Just thinking about more math made my Math Rashes itch even more.

STUDENT 5

(scratching)

Yep, we've become allergic to math.

STUDENT 6

(scratching)

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

MISS SIMS

All right, now that we know what's caused your Math Rashes, what's the cure? You can't sit here all day scratching.

STUDENT 1

(scratching)

Teacher, maybe... just maybe... since too much math work caused our Math Rashes, maybe...just maybe... doing the opposite might make them disappear.

STUDENT 2

(scratching)

And the opposite of work is play!

STUDENT 3

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

STUDENT 4

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

STUDENT 5

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

STUDENT 6

(scratching)

Yes! Playing in the snow is sure to cure us.

MISS SIMS

(nodding)

I think you're right class. To cure these Math Rashes we must go outside and play right away.

(MISS SIMS steps downstage toward windows.)

MISS SIMS

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

(Students stop scratching and stare at Miss Sims.)

STUDENT 1 AND 2
Snow tunnels and snow forts!

STUDENTS 3 AND 4
Snowballs and snow angels!

STUDENT 5
Snow everything!

STUDENT 6
No more Classroom Fever!

ALL STUDENTS
No more Math Rashes!

MISS SIMS
And no more math for today, class. You have your assignment. Make sure you play hard and long out in the snow. We'll stay outside until I'm sure your Math Rashes are gone for good.

(Students cheer. They stand and head for door stage left.)

STUDENT 1
Dibs on the kickball wall.

STUDENT 2
I'll beat you out to the soccer field.

STUDENT 3
We'll be the first one out there!

STUDENT 4
No other class has touched the snow yet.

STUDENT 5
I've stopped itching already.

STUDENT 6
(checking arms)
And I think my Math Rashes are disappearing.

(students exit stage left. MISS SIMS takes coat and scarf off back of chair and puts them on.)

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

(MISS SIMS walks stage left, then calls
out to class)

MISS SIMS

Wait for me, class. Let's build the world's tallest
snowperson!

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

End of Play