

MATH RASHES
by
Douglas Evans

(Based on the short story Math Rashes
from his book MATH RASHES AND OTHER CLASSROOM TALES)

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CHARACTERS

Miss Pedagog: young teacher

STUDENTS 1-9: the nine students can play themselves. When teacher calls out name, he should use student's real name. Change dialog for gender preference. Like-wise, *third-grade* can be replaced with appropriate grade. The number of students can be reduced as needed.

NOISE-MAKER: needed to blow whistle and ring bell off stage.

Scene One:

Time: The present. Early morning.

Scene: A third-grade classroom. Nine desks arranged in three rows center stage face a large teacher's desk stage right. A portable whiteboard stands next to teacher's desk. A sink with drinking fountain stands stage left.

Lights up: School bell rings.

STUDENTS 1-9 file in stage left blowing into hands and rubbing arms as if coming in from the cold. The students take their seats and gaze out downstage windows.

STUDENT 1

Man, look at it out there. All that snow.

STUDENT 2

The playground is as flat and shiny as the top of a marshmallow.

STUDENT 3

Everything's look different. The tetherball poles have tall white hats, and every monkey bar has on a white coat.

STUDENT 4

If I were out there, I'd tramp out my name in giant letters.

STUDENT 5

I'd pepper the side of the gym with snowballs until it was covered with white spots.

STUDENT 6

I'd dig a tunnel in that snowdrift by the kickball wall.

STUDENT 7

I'd roll the world's biggest snow boulders and roll them into a fort.

STUDENT 8

I'd make snow angels all over the soccer field

STUDENT 9

I'd build a tall snowteacher.

(students continue to stare out window as the teacher, MISS PEDAGOG, enters the room. She writes the date JANUARY 10 the whiteboard.)

MISS PEDAGOG

Good morning, class. We're getting a late start this morning because of the big snow storm last night. Now let's get to work. We have lots to do today.

(Students groan.)

MISS PEDAGOG

How about this troublesome snow? Brrrr. I could hardly drive my car into the school parking lot. Brrr. And won't our custodians have a big job shoveling the snow off the school sidewalks.

STUDENT 1

(looking out window)

Snow! Oh, so much flat untouched snow!

STUDENT 2

(looking out window)

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

TALL TEACHER

Now take out your reading books, class. We'll read a story about winter. Who can tell me some outside activities you do in the winter?

STUDENT 3

Sledding.

STUDENT 4

Snowboarding.

STUDENT 5

Skiing.

STUDENT 6

Ice skating.

MISS PEDAGOG

Good. Now let's read about winter. *S1 NAME* you may begin.

(MISS PEDAGOG sits on desk.)

STUDENT 7

(reading in book)

Winter. Winter is the time when much of the world turns white, lakes turn to ice, and temperatures drops...

(voice trails off)

STUDENT 8

(looking out window.)

One hour until recess.

By then all the kindergartners will have trampled it. The playground will look like the surface of the moon.

STUDENT 9

(looking out window)

Oh, if I could just throw one snowball. I'd peg it right through the tire swing.

MISS PEDAGOG

(looking up at class)

Very good, *S1 NAME*. Now *S4 NAME* please continue.

STUDENT 1

(reading from book)

During the winter many animals retire to their dens or burrow to hibernate...

(voice trails off)

STUDENT 2

(looking out window)

This is torture. All that snow going to waste.

STUDENT 3

(looking out window)

I don't want to read about snow. I want to roll in it.

MISS PEDAGOG

(looking up)

OK, class. I think that's enough reading for today. Now...let's see.

(MISS PEDAGOG looks out window.

Students sit up straight expectantly.)

MISS PEDAGOG (CONT'D)

We have lots of math to complete. Please take out your math books and turn to page seventy-five.

(Students groan and take math books from desks.)

STUDENT 4

How can I think about math when the glare of the snow is blinding me? If I opened the window I could grab a handful.

STUDENT 5

Classroom fever. I have classroom fever.

MISS PEDAGOG

Today, class, we'll do three-digit subtraction problems. Now first you look at the ones places and ask yourselves if you must borrow...

(voice trails off)

STUDENT 6

(looking out the window)

This morning I ran from my house to the bus. When we got to school I came straight from the bus to the school. Not a chance to touch a single snowflake.

STUDENT 7

(looking out window)

And recess is still one hour, forty-eight minutes, and thirteen seconds away.

STUDENT 8

Twelve seconds. Eleven seconds.

STUDENT 9

Ten seconds...

MISS PEDAGOG

And if you can't subtract the tens place, you must borrow from the hundreds place by crossing out the three and adding a ten to the seven.

STUDENT 1

(holding hand to mouth)

Hiccup! Hiccup! Hiccup! Hiccup!

MISS PEDAGOG

S1 NAME, is that you with the hiccups?

STUDENT 1

(nodding)

Hiccup! Hiccup!

MISS PEDAGOG

Go to the sink and get a drink. Swallow nine times. That's a hiccup cure that never fails.

(STUDENT 1 walks stage left and takes imaginary drink at sink. He swallows, holding up fingers to count nine gulps and returns to desk.)

MISS PEDAGOG (CONT'D)

Now where was I...yes, next you must subtract the tens place and check the hundreds place.

STUDENT 1

(louder this time)

Hiccup! Hiccup!

MISS PEDAGOG

How odd. My hiccup cure has never failed before. *S1 NAME* are you sure you swallowed nine times? Not eight or ten?

STUDENT 1

(nodding)

Hiccup! Hiccup! I'm sure, I'm sure. But now my hiccups are worse.

STUDENT 2

Hiccup! Hiccup! Teacher, now I have the hiccups, too. Should I get a drink? *Hiccup! Hiccup!*

TALL TEACHER

And swallow nine times, *S2 NAME*.

(STUDENT 2 walks to sink and drinks.)

STUDENT 3

Hiccup! Hiccup! I also have the hiccups. *Hiccup! Hiccup!*

STUDENT 4

Me, too. *Hiccup! Hiccup!* Teacher, whenever I get the hiccups, my mom tells me to do twenty jumping jacks.

STUDENT 5

(stands)

Hiccup! Hiccup! We might as well give it a try.

(STUDENT 1, STUDENT 2, STUDENT 3, STUDENT 4, and STUDENT 5 do jumping jacks.)

STUDENT 6

Hiccup! Hiccup! But I read where you should bend over and touch the ground. *Hiccup! Hiccup!*

(STUDENT 6 bends to touch the ground. STUDENT 7 sneaks up behind STUDENT 6.)

STUDENT 7

Boo! Did I scare you? Did I? I heard that scaring people is a sure cure for hiccups.

(pauses and holds hand to mouth)

Hiccup! Hiccup! No, I guess that didn't get rid of your hiccups. Instead it gave them to *me*. *Hiccup! Hiccup!*

(STUDENT 7 joins STUDENT 6 in toes touches. STUDENT 8 stands and starts hopping on one leg.)

STUDENT 8

Hiccup! Hiccup! My sure cure for hiccups is to hop on one foot one-hundred times. *Hiccup! Hiccup!*

MISS PEDAGOG

How odd. The hiccups seem to be spreading around the classroom.

If I didn't know better, I'd say these hiccups are contagious. What can I do? We still need to write snow stories this morning and cut out snowflakes for science.

STUDENT 9

Hiccup! Hiccup! Now the hiccups have spread to me.

(STUDENT 9 stands and does jumping jacks.)

MISS PEDAGOG

Contagious hiccups. How can any school get done if my class had contagious hiccups?

(STUDENT 1, STUDENT 2, STUDENT 3, STUDENT 4, and STUDENT 5 sit at desk exhausted.)

STUDENT 1

I don't know what's more tiring, hiccupping or doing the hiccup cure. *Hiccup! Hiccup!*

STUDENT 2

I've been hiccupping so much my gut aches. *Hiccup! Hiccup!*

STUDENT 3

(starts scratching arm)

And now I itch like crazy.

(pulls up shirt sleeve. Plus and minus signs cover his/her arm. He/She screams.)

Ahh! There are red spots on my arm. . .

(screams and scratches again)

Ahh! No, they're not spots; they're plus and minus signs. My arms are covered with plus and minus signs!

STUDENT 4

(begins scratching and pulls up sleeve.)

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, a five, a six, and a seven. An eight is on my wrist and a nine is by my elbow.

STUDENT 5

(scratches stomach. He/She lifts shirt and inspects skin.)

Yikes! Now I have itchy, red spots on my belly. They're times and division signs. . .

(looks closer)

. . . And numbers, too! Yikes! Entire math problems are breaking out all over me!

MISS PEDAGOG

(looking over class)

How odd!

It sound like you students not only have contagious hiccups, but Math Rashes as well! I know what to do about bee stings, mosquito bites, and poison ivy bumps, but I know nothing about Math Rashes.

STUDENT 6

(scratching legs)

And I think I have Math Rashes, too.

(pulls up pants leg)

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

STUDENT 7

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

And so do I. . .

(looks closer and scratches)

. . . Multiplication facts are covering my neck.

(reading)

Six times six is thirty-six. Seven times seven is forty nine.

MISS PEDAGOG

Hiccups and Math Rashes? Hiccups and Math Rashes? This can only mean one thing. . . an allergy. Class, I believe you've all had an allergic reaction to something, something in this classroom. But what could it be? You haven't eaten anything. You haven't touched anything. How can we cure this allergy and get back to our schoolwork.

(Students hiccup louder.)

STUDENT 8

(stops hopping and sits down)

Hiccup! Hiccup! Teacher, I think the allergy could have something to do with the work we've been doing this morning. Whenever you mention schoolwork, my hiccups get worse.

Hiccup! Hiccup!

STUDENT 9

(sits and scratches back of neck)

And my itching gets worse. *Hiccup! Hiccup!*

MISS PEDAGOG

(thinking)

Is that right? Is that possible? I think I'll do an experiment. . . Class, time for a pop math quiz.

(Students hiccup louder and scratch faster.)

STUDENT 1

(scratching)

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

STUDENT 2

(scratching)

I'd rather have chicken pox than Math Rashes.

STUDENT 3

(scratching)

School work. We're having an allergic reaction to all the schoolwork we've done this morning.

STUDENT 4

(scratching)

I'm allergy to peanuts. I must also have a Schoolwork Allergy!

STUDENT 5

(scratching)

Too much reading and too much math. We've had an overdose of schoolwork, and that's made us allergic to it.

MISS PEDAGOG

Yes but what's the cure for this Schoolwork Allergy, class? You can't all sit here, scratching Math Rashes and hiccuping.

STUDENT 6

(scratching)

Teacher, maybe. . . just maybe. . . since schoolwork caused the allergy, maybe. . . just maybe. . . doing the opposite thing might cure them.

STUDENT 7

(scratching)

Like play! I bet if we all go outside and start playing in the snow these hiccups --*Hiccup! Hiccup!*-- and Math Rashes will go away.

STUDENT 8

Whatever we do let's do it quickly. I don't think I can stand one more itch or one more hiccup.

STUDENT 9

Me neither!

MISS PEDAGOG

OK, I think you're right class. To cure this Schoolwork Allergy we must go right outside and play right away.

(steps toward down stage toward window.)

So your next assignment is to go into the hall and put on your wraps. Then you must head straight to the playground.

(Students stand still, staring at teacher.)

STUDENTS 1 AND 2

Snow tunnels and snow forts!

STUDENTS 3 AND 4
Snowballs and snow boulders!

STUDENTS 5 AND 6
Snow slides!

STUDENTS 7 AND 8
Snow angles!

STUDENT 9
Snowteachers!

ALL STUDENTS
Snow!

MISS PEDAGOG
Now no arguing about it. No more schoolwork for now, 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 and contagious hiccups are gone for good.

(Students cheer and charge off stage left.)

MISS PEDAGOG
(shaking head)
Schoolwork Allergies! Math Rashes and hiccups that spread
around a classroom. There's so much about teaching I still
need to learn about.

(MISS PEDAGOG exits stage left.
Lights fade.)