

Emily's Rumbling Stomach  
A one-act play for children  
by  
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From his short story Emily's Rumbling Stomach

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## Characters

Emily-third-grader with a stomach that rumbles at lunchtime

Roger-third-grader

Veronica-third-grader

Ember-third-grader

Paul-third-grader

Taylor-third grader

Miss Simms-third-grader teacher

## SCENE ONE

At rise: Third-grade classroom with six desks in three rows facing downstage. Students are working on math sheet. Whiteboard, upstage center, displays date: April 3. Clock above whiteboard reads 12:00.

MISS SIMMS, the teacher, sits at teacher's desk, stage left, grading papers.

EMILY sits at center front row desk. She is doodling on her math sheet.

Classroom fills with sound of Emily's stomach gurgling.

EMILY

(places hand on belly. To self)

Oh, no. Please no. Not this again.

Other students snicker and exchange looks.

More growling sounds fills room

EMILY

(places math book on belly and leans forward. To self)

Stop. Please stop.

More gurgling fills classroom.

Class snickers and points at Emily

EMILY

(to self)

Every day it's the same. My stomach growls and the other kids laugh at me.

More snickers from classmates

Emily's stomach growls again

Miss Simms looks up from desk. She checks clock.

MISS SIMMS

Look at the time. It's lunchtime, Class. Please put away your mathwork and line up at the door.

Students put math books in desks and take out lunch boxes. They stand and form line downstage left facing off stage. Emily stands last in line.

ROGER

(first in line to Veronica behind him)

Loud and clear today.

VERONICA

(to Roger)

Right on cue. It never fails

EMBER

(standing third in line to Paul behind her)

That sound is the highlight of the day.

PAUL

(to Ember)

Gurgle, gurgle, gurgle.

TAYLOR

(standing fifth in line. To Paul)

Rumble, rumble, rumble

EMILY

(to self)

Yi, yi, yi! Why must my stomach grumble. I'm the class joke.

MISS SIMMS

All right, class. You may proceed to the lunchroom. Slowly. No running in the hall.

Class files from room with Emily straggling behind.

LIGHTS FADE.

SCENE TWO

LIGHTS UP:

Class but Ember sits at desk doing math sheet.

Miss Simms sits at teacher's desk  
 helping Ember with math problem.  
 Date on whiteboard reads April 4.  
 Clock reads 11:55.

MISS SIMMS

(to Ember)

Now you regroup from the hundreds place and add it to the  
 tens place.

EMBER

Add what to the ten place?

MISS SIMMS

The ten tens. See you show this by crossing out the six  
 hundred and writing five above it. Then you add the little  
 one to the three in the tens place.

EMBER

OK. Miss Simms. If you say so.

Clock hands move to 12:00.

ROGER

(checking clock. To rest of  
 class.)

Any minute now.

VERONICA

(checking clock)

Here it comes.

PAUL

I'm starving.

TAYLOR

And I have sushi for lunch.

EMILY

(placing math book on lap.  
 To self)

Yi, yi yi! No, please no. Here it goes again.

Room fills with rumbling stomach  
 sounds

Class laughs and points at Emily.

EMILY

Stop. Please stop.

Emily's stomach continues to  
 rumble.

Thar she blows

ROGER

Sounds like a garbage disposal.

VERONICA

Or an earthquake. I'm surprise her stomach doesn't set off the earthquake alarm.

PAUL

Hello sushi.

TAYLOR

Emily's stomach rumbles some more.

Class laughs.

MISS SIMMS  
(checks clock)

OK, Class. Lunchtime. Put away your math books and line up for the cafeteria.

Students put math books in desk and take out lunchboxes. They form line at door. Emily remains at her desk.

ROGER  
(first in line to Veronica behind him)

Right on cue again.

VERONICA  
(to Roger)

Best sound at school.

EMBER  
(to Paul behind her)

Emily's stomach never fails us.

PAUL  
(to Ember)

What did we do before her stomach started erupting.

TAYLOR  
(to Paul)

Math period was sure a lot less exciting.

MISS SIMMS  
(standing at door)

OK, Class. Enjoy your lunch. No running in the hall.

Miss Simms and students file from the room. Emily sits at desk stewing. Rumbling stomach sounds fill room.

EMILY

(To self)

Why oh why oh why? What must my stomach make that embarrassing racket every day during math. The class thinks it's the funniest thing in the world.

Emily opens lunchbox and takes a bite out of her sandwich.

EMILY

(crying)

I'm going to run away from school and live with bears. Then my stomach can growl all it wants. Bears would never laugh at me.

Emily takes another bite of sandwich. She pauses and stares at the bread.

EMILY

How curious. My stomach stopped rumbling. As soon as I ate something it got quiet. Maybe my belly only growls when it's empty. Like before lunchtime. Maybe if I keep my stomach full during math, it will never embarrass me again.

Emily closes her lunchbox. She stands and walks to door.

EMILY

I have a plan. Tomorrow my stomach will be as quiet as a mouse.

LIGHTS FADE.

SCENE THREE

LIGHTS UP:

Class again sits at desks doing math. Date on whiteboard reads April 5. Clock reads: 11: 50

Emily's shirt pockets are stuffed with soda crackers.

EMILY

(to self)

Today I'm prepared. Today no one is going to laugh at me and my rumbling stomach. I'm fed up with being the joke of the class.

Emily checks clock. She removes cracker from pocket.

EMILY

It's almost lunchtime. Time to make my move.

Emily stuffs cracker in mouth. She chews and swallows. She takes out a second cracker and eats it as well.

EMILY

So far so good. Not a sound is coming from my belly.

Emily continues to eat crackers.

The clock ticks off the minutes until it reaches 12:00

The other students fidget. They check the clock and look toward Emily.

Miss Simms sits at desk grading papers.

ROGER

(whispers to others)

What's going on? No sound. No rumbling

VERONICA

(whispers to others)

This could be a disaster.

EMBER

(whispers to others)

We must do something. We could sit here the entire lunchtime.

PAUL

(whispers to others)

Emily's stomach has never let us down before.

TAYLOR

(whispers to others)

Why is Emily eating all those crackers. Someone stop her or we'll never get to lunch



Emily continues to shove crackers into her mouth. Her cheeks bulge.

Clock continues to click off minutes.

Miss Simms continues to grade papers.

EMILY

(smiling)

This is much better. Today no belly noise. No laughing. No snickers.

Clock reads 12:10.

ROGER

(whispers to others)

Ten after twelve.

VERONICA

(whispers to others)

This is a disaster.

EMBER

(whispers to other)

Miss Simms will never check the clock. Her mind is on grading papers.

PAUL

(whispers to others)

And Emily is still eating those crackers.

TAYLOR

(whispers to others)

I should be in the cafe right now eating my sushi.

Clock reads 12:12

Miss Simms looks toward clock and stands.

MISS SIMMS

Goodness, look at the time. We're late for lunch. OK, Class. Put away your math books and line up at the door.

Students toss books in desk and pulls out lunchboxes. They rush to the door and stand in line;

Emily stands last in line. She swallows more of the crackers in her mouth.

ROGER

Man-oh-man, I'm starved.

PAUL

I thought she'd never release us.

EMBER

Half our lunchtime is wasted.

VERONICA

II bet all the good seats are taken.

TAYLOR

(turns toward Emily behind  
her)

Man, Emily, what happened?

EMILY

(makes a face)

What are you talking about?

VERONICA

(in front of Taylor turns)

What happened to the Lunch Alarm?

EMILY

What's a Lunch Alarm?

Ember in front of Veronica turns.

VERONICA

(to Emily)

You know, the way your stomach makes those sounds just before lunchtime.

EMILY

(making face)

Yeh, you all think that's a big joke. You laugh are me every time my bell rumbles.

The entire class turns toward  
Emily.

TAYLOR

(to Emily)

Are you kidding? Your rumbling stomach, the Lunch Alarm, is the only thing that reminds Miss Simms it's lunchtime.

VERONICA

(to Emily)

Right. She gets so busy grading paper she forgets to check the clock.

EMBER

(to Emily)

But when your belly sounds off, it wakes her up.

PAUL

(to Emily)

But today your stomach was silent, so we're way late for lunch.

ROGER

(to Emily)

We don't laugh at you, Emily. We laugh at the way the teacher looks up when she hears your stomach.

VERONICA

(to Emily)

Right. That's what's funny.

TAYLOR

(to Emily)

So please, no more eating crackers before lunchtime.

ALL

(nodding)

We need our Lunch Alarm.

MISS SIMMS

(from desk)

Ok, Class. You may go to lunch. And please don't run in the hall.

The class files from the room.

Before she exits, Emily examines a cracker in her hand.

EMILY

Yi, yi, yi. My rumbling stomach was just being helpful. It's the Lunch Alarm. Well, how about that?

LIGHTS FADE.

END OF PLAY