

NOTES

America is changing. Today, we have to be more eco-friendly with the environment; more conscious of our consumer spending; and overall, more politically-correct in our day-to-day lives. So it should come as no surprise that today's textbook publishers have the arduous task of trying to meet all of these needs in the super-competitive world of education. *Goodbye Dick and Jane* is humorist, Arthur Hoppe's jab at our constant need to stay current of trends and, in the process, offend no one. This short comedy may be performed by a male or female and should be entered in Humorous Interpretation. The characters are as diverse as the subject matters being revised in the company's upcoming new editions of primary educational textbooks. Be creative. Make sure each character is clearly defined. Due to the nature of the material, performing a few stereotypes may better serve the overall satirical message of the play. Using pantomimed charts and graphs might also add to the overall physical performance of the play. Great literature has the unique ability to withstand the test of time. Hoppe's play, inspired by his humorous essay written in the mid-1970s, simply proves his humor is just as relevant and poignant today as it was many decades ago.

Cast of Characters:

President Harmon (Biff) Rowback, President of Forward & Rowback
Wilbur Wasp, an author at Forward & Rowback

Albert S. Einstein, Executive Director of Long Division

Alfred J. Ponzi, Sales Director

Edgar Alan Proe, Creativity Director

Julio Explaineous, another author at Forward & Rowback

Ms. Marilyn Conroe, Mr. Rowback's Executive Secretary

Biff Rowback: Ladies and gentlemen, across this great land of ours, school officials are making a determined, if not belated, effort to offend no one. In order to accomplish this admirable ideal, they are demanding textbooks that: *1. Retain no vestiges of racism or male chauvinism; 2. Incorporate Genesis and Darwin; and 3. Offer clinical sex education acceptable to Catholics, gynecologists and your Aunt Ida Lou.* Obviously, offending no one is a goal all Americans can applaud in these divisive times; however, it has posed certain challenges for our nation's textbook publishers. That's why I've called this meeting. We, here at Forward & Rowback, must brainstorm together in order to revise our three most

popular textbooks, *Reading is Fun*, *Your Cousin, the Orangutan* and *Sex Is Fun, Too*.

Wilbur Wasp: We're up for the task, Chief.

Biff Rowback: That's what I want to hear! Ladies and gentlemen, let us first examine *Reading is Fun*. As a public-spirited, socially conscious business organization, we should be deeply concerned about this work on two levels. First, it no longer accurately depicts our glorious "American Way of Life," and secondly, sales have fallen off 24.2 percent.

Wilbur Wasp: Look, Chief. Look and see. See the book. It is a good book. It is about Jack and Janet. Jack and Janet have a mommy. Mommy cooks. Mommy sews. Mommy does the dishes. Jack and Janet have a daddy, too. Daddy is strong. Daddy is smart. Daddy is the boss. Jack and Janet have many friends. Their friends are named Alan and Sue and—

Biff Rowback: (*Interrupting*) I'm afraid the times have passed you by, Wilbur. Not only has your book been attacked as sexist claptrap, but do you realize Jack and Janet don't have a single, black friend? Drastic revisions are in order.

Wilbur Wasp: Yes, Chief. (*Taking a black marker and quickly coloring in the face of Alan in his textbook*) Now look. Look and see. Jack and Janet now have a little black friend, too. His name is Sambo. Sambo—

Biff Rowback: Shut up, Wilbur! Al, how many black friends do Jack and Janet need?

Albert S. Einstein: Well, according to the latest census, 12.6 percent of the population is black; therefore, they would require 12.6 percent black friends!

Biff Rowback: Good work, Al.

Alfred J. Ponzi: Just a minute, Chief. Our major market today is in the inner cities due to the fact that they're getting the lion's share of federal funds. Our surveys show this market is 34.8 percent black, 14.6 percent brown, 4.7 percent yellow, 2.8 percent red and 56.9 percent varying shades of pink.

Biff Rowback: Jack and Janet are certainly going to need a lot of friends!

Albert S. Einstein: Perhaps they should just have one friend—one friend who is 34.8 percent black, 14.6 percent brown—

Biff Rowback: (*Irritated*) No, no, no! We've got to do this right. Send those figures up to the Coloring Room and let them get cracking on the illustrations. Now, what about the characters? We want a modern reader that destroys all the old stereotypes and accurately depicts our glorious "American Way of Life" without, of course, offending anyone.

Edgar Alan Proe: I think I've got it, Chief! Listen to this! (*Thinking extemporaneously*) Chiang and Chiquita Applebaum are brother and sister—or vice versa—they don't care. Chiang is a Catholic Afro-American of Eskimo descent. Chiquita is a Dravidian of the Zoroastrian Love Cult. Their little brother's name is Vasalai. Vasalai plays with dolls.