

STET

by

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"STET"

INT. SCHOOL/GYM - DAY - 1999

Mexican-American JOSE sits cross-legged on the gymnasium floor amongst one hundred other students, most appearing to be about eleven or twelve, and acting like it.

At the front of the gym a sweaty costumed GRAMMAR GOPHER is holding up large cards, desperate to hold the attention of the bored and distracted beings that confirm for her yet again why she chose not to have children.

Blonde MISS AMY, in her late twenties, attractive yet no longer slim -- as sometimes only food can sustain a teacher-- stands to the side of the three rows of students in Jose's class. A pleasant person, she frowns at the students who are most overtly misbehaving.

THE MAN, an obviously somewhat older student who is also obviously much taller than the other students, stretches up high in front of Jose, blocking his view of Grammar Gopher.

JOSE
(muttering, mainly to himself)
Now, I can't see.

BRANDON looks up at Jose. He has been coloring his shoelaces green with a marker.

BRANDON
Like, you care, man?

THE MAN
(turning around)
You call me, Josie?

JOSE
Nah, it's okay.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRANDON

She said we could go outside if the assembly waddn't too long.

Miss Amy frowns towards Brandon. He gestures toward the outdoors. She smiles but blankly. She is totally bored, too. But she rallies.

GRAMMAR GOPHER

Who can answer what is on this card?

Miss Amy looks toward the poster at the front of the room: "natural interest" is supposed to be a benefit of hiring Grammar Gopher for assemblies. There is a silence. A long silence. Well, not really a silence, as the cacophony of movement and whispers continues. Students scratch themselves and lift themselves to pass gas and show their friends they are indeed wearing a bra and put on chapstick and remove their shoes. Miss Amy charges.

FRANKIE sits drumming on his sneakers.

MISS AMY

(affecting an interested lilt
that also carries force)

Frankie, can you tell Grammar Gopher the error on her card?

He stops drumming and looks to Miss Amy with a 'what do I know' look. Miss Amy looks desperate. She looks toward RICHIE's raised hand. He is conservative in dress, or rather, plain; he looks like he'd be a good student but he's not a stereotypic nerd. He wears glasses.

MISS AMY (cont'd)

Richie?

RICHIE

Miss Amy, I could do a song for Grammar Gopher, you know, like jazz.

MISS AMY

Fine, Richie, but do you know the answer?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RICHIE

I'll try. Now, what was the question,
again?

Miss Amy sees LOVEY's raised hand; then the hand of SHANIQUA,
seated next to Lovey. One white, one black, the girls are
amazingly similar in appearance and attitude.

MISS AMY

Shaniqua. What?

SHANIQUA

I don't know, Miss Amy. But if Lovey
knows, ask me again.

Lovey drops her hand.

MISS AMY

The Man?

THE MAN

What? I wasn't doin' nuthin'. Johnny dun
it. I was jus' sittin' here and...

MISS AMY

Never mind, The Man.

Miss Amy looks around the room. Kids are saying "I dunno,"
even without being called on.

Grammar Gopher is holding up a card on which is written,
"ALRIGHT NOW, WHO IS WE GOING WITH?" The kids are supposed
to correct the error on the card.

GRAMMAR GOPHER

Okay, kids, there is only one error: what
can it be?

There is "I dunno" and "I dunno" and then silence. Real
silence now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JOSE
 (the silence getting to him)
 Okay, let's get on with it. I'll do it!

The assembly gets quiet.

BRANDON
 Oh, no, now you're really in trouble,
 Jose.

GRAMMAR GOPHER
 (beginning with deep voice)
 Great.

The assembly breaks into laughter, for Grammar Gopher, dressed as an old woman, has revealed himself to be a very hot, sweaty, man.

GRAMMAR GOPHER (cont'd)
 (as if nothing has happened,
 continuing with slightly
 British 'cultured' accent,
 affected for the role)
 Yes, uh, yes, young man?

Miss Amy looks concerned, but she would never deny a raised hand or voice.

MISS AMY
 Yes, Jose?

JOSE
 (quickly)
 It should read, to be most correct, 'With whom are we going?', Because 'is' doesn't go with the plural 'we' and 'whom' goes with 'with', and you shouldn't end a sentence with a preposition anyway.

There was an excited hush: surely this is a joke on the Gopher. Several BIG GUYS giggle.

BIG GUY 1
 Right on, Josie. Rich!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Grammar Gopher is shocked, totally shaken. He/she looks at the answer on the back of the card to check. The answer there is "Alright now, who are we going with?" Grammar looks, puzzled, at what is written there: all the kid said wasn't written there, but it sounded correct.

GRAMMAR GOPHER
 (composing him/herself, happy
 for an omission to point out)
 And you left out the word 'alright'. So
 it would be 'Alright, with whom are we
 going?'

Miss Amy beams.

JOSE
 I decided to leave that out.

Miss Amy gets worried.

JOSE (cont'd)
 (continues, talking fast)
 I decided to leave that out, because it's
 actually two words, 'all' and 'right' not
 one, 'alright'.
 (pauses for air, then
 continues)
 and it didn't seem really necessary for a
 good sentence. Well, for the best
 sentence possible.
 (to Brandon, softly)
 And now can we go play kickball?

Grammar Gopher is flustered, and embarrassed. He/she looks at the front of the card and then the back and then the front. Miss Amy beams. And she doesn't care any more about Grammar Gopher's feelings. Someone starts to applaud, then more and more join in, though someone says "Is this for real?". Jose looks surprised, then proud.

MISS AMY
 Well, now Grammar Gopher, that shows just
 how much we enjoyed the assembly. Thank
 you. Now, students, let's quietly file
 outside.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

The students stand up. They leave with some excitement, the girls whispering to one another and the boys touching each other and making some of the same noises they make about kickball, "Hey, see. " and "Man, I coulda done that. " Jose flows with the stream of children as they wash onto the playground and kickball field. Jose and The Man head for the outfield.

THE MAN
(mutters quietly)
Way ta go, Josie.

JOSE
Whatever. let's play.

EXT. SCHOOL/KICKBALL FIELD - SOMEWHAT LATER

The kids in Miss Amy's class are playing against those in the class of MISS FORTUNE, a rather bossy teacher of perhaps forty.

Miss Amy is encouraging four of her kids, Frankie and Richie and two girls, who stand before the bleachers, to lead the cheering more enthusiastically. The girls are ELIZABETH and MEREDITH, blonde twins dressed in non-identical outfits.

Miss Fortune's cheerleaders, dressed identically and often primping and posing, are generally ignored by Miss Fortune's students in the bleachers and by their team's players.

MISS AMY
You're only designated cheerleaders for one day, so do your best. You need to get the rest of us yelling for our players.

The students who are neither playing nor cheerleading sit and sprawl on the bleachers, looking around the field and speaking amongst themselves, and not paying much attention to the cheerleaders. Meredith and Elizabeth seem very frustrated with the lack of participation.

Lovey and Shaniqua sit in the bleachers side by side, but with significant space between them.

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CONTINUED:

Shaniqua is pulling out her Barbie dolls, one by one, from her book bag. A number of the dolls are lined up on the bleacher seat, many dressed in outfits that she has made to resemble those of her classmates. There is also a Barbie that resembles Miss Amy and one that is dressed as a homeless person.

SHANIQUA

And here is Miss Amy. And here is a homeless woman. With a bag. And...

She reaches back into her bag.

LOVEY

Dolls are silly.

Lovey, however, picks up the latest doll Shaniqua has removed from her bag. It is dressed in an elaborate evening dress with a very full skirt. Shaniqua sneaks a peak at Lovey and smiles, as Lovey seems to admire the doll. Then Lovey tucks the doll into her cap, spreading out the doll's skirt-covered legs as a hat brim against the sun.

Shaniqua frowns at Lovey and starts to yank the doll back but then lets it be, as both girls look toward the now-more-audible cheerleaders.

Miss Amy has stood up to cheer with the cheerleaders.

MISS AMY

(leading the cheer with actions)

Two bits, four bits, six bits, a dollar.
All for Miss Amy's class stand up and holler!

Some of the students stand up.

MISS AMY (cont'd)

Come on Lovey and Shaniqua: let's hear it!

The cheerleaders join in for the next three repetitions of the cheer, encouraged by Miss Amy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The twins are consistently strong, and the boys go from a whisper to a conversational tone.

Then Frankie takes up the beat, banging on the lowest bleacher seat. Richie adds some jazzy "do-wah" sounds and gets into the rhythm.

The cheering becomes somewhat louder, as more stand up.

EMILY, who is sitting by herself reading a book, looks up at Miss Amy and halfheartedly pretends to join in, really mouthing some of the words to the cheer.

Jose looks up at Emily from the home plate and she looks back at her book. Then he kicks the ball very far and everyone cheers. Emily does not look up from her book.

Frankie looks up when he hears a rise in the voices of Miss Amy and the other cheerleaders, even Richie, as Jose gets to first base, and he drums excitedly.

Jose comes in for a home run, bringing a GIRL STUDENT and SCOTT, a student with purplish hair that stands up and several tattoos, in ahead of him. Emily peeks up from her book, expressionless.

MISS AMY (cont'd)

Okay, Lovey and Shaniqua: you're cheerleaders next time. And the Man and Billy. We need you, too, Frankie, for the beat.

Frankie beams.

MISS AMY (cont'd)

Great job, cheerleaders!

All four cheerleaders smile as well. Then all head back toward the school, the players red-faced and happy.

On the way in, The Man shoots the kickball a very, very long way to a basketball hoop to the side of the schoolyard. and it goes in.

INT. SCHOOL/MISS AMY'S CLASSROOM - IMMEDIATELY AFTER

MISS AMY

Time to go home, guys. Great game. Oh, Jose, we have the other Grammar Gopher assembly next week. I'm sure you'll do us proud.

Jose beams, but then several kids snicker, and he controls his expression, trying to appear only slightly interested.

MISS AMY (cont'd)

Let's all show that Grandma, I mean Grammar, Gopher what we can do next week!

The kids gather their books and belongings to go home, paying little attention to what Miss Amy has said.

MISS AMY (cont'd)

Oh, and Scott, don't forget your plate. Thanks for the cookies - great as usual. Let's all thank Scott.

CLASS

Thank you, Scott, for the great cookies.

The class leaves the room.

MISS AMY

(softly, to Emily, who is slowly leaving)

Maybe you can play one day: learn the game of kickball.

EMILY

I know how to play, Miss Amy; I just don't like competition. I don't like one person winning, being better. We're all special.

MISS AMY

I know Emily, and I try to teach that, but. Oh, well, see you tomorrow.

EXT. SCHOOL - LATER

The busses are seen pulling off, full of students. Jose and The Man, with their bookbags, walk off together. Billy, on his bike catches up.

THE MAN
You were good, Joz.

JOSE
Yeah, I was surprised I could kick so far, like you do, The Man.

The Man doesn't answer Jose at first.

THE MAN
Nah, I don't mean that. At assembly, with that Grandma dude.

JOSE
Oh, that. I just, you know, wanted to go outside. For kickball.

THE MAN
Yeah, but you know that stuff, the rules and all, it's cool.

The boys walk in silence.

THE MAN (cont'd)
(starting to rap)
I kinda like language. Kinda like the beat, like using words. It sure is neat.

JOSE
The Man, you don't pass a lot of school stuff but you do know lots of language things. How come you don't show it much at school? Ah, it's none of my business.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THE MAN

I dunno. I mean I ain't good at school
and I can't see why it matters and all
but I kinda like this stuff and it's okay
if you're good at it. But, I don't know.

The boys continue in silence.

BILLY

Rets go fastly, now, you guys. Us going
two or three slowly, so I home late.

THE MAN

(enunciating)

Let's go quickly, fellows. We are going
too slowly. I will arrive at home late.

JOSE

That's great, The Man. Like translation
from one way of speaking to another.

BILLY

Out a sight, men. We be going to da hood
slow-like.

The boys laugh at this outburst of Black English Vernacular
from Billy.

THE MAN

Billy, my man, you got the gift of gab.

JOSE

William, my son, you have a charming
style of communicating.

THE MAN

Birry, you lide bike now, and us lun?

All three laugh uncontrollably as Jose and The Man run and
Billy rides his bike.

INT. SCHOOL/GYM - DAY

It is assembly day again. The Man sits next to Jose. Brandon sits on Jose's other side, pulling at the strings hanging from his shorts legs. There is a sign at the front of the gym noting that this is the second and final Grammar Gopher assembly.

Grammar sort of hops into the room.

THE MAN

Not much research goin' on 'bout how gophers move. I mean they move like gophers. Like...

GRAMMAR GOPHER

Let's go-for it, kids, get it? Let's gopher it with Grammar Gopher! Come on, kids, you say it. Let's gopher it with Grammar Gopher!

There is not much response from the kids.

Elizabeth and Meredith join in. Emily pretends to.

BRANDON

Let's go far away from Grammar Gopher!

JOSE

(whispering to The Man and
Brandon)

Hey, let's help him.

Brandon gives a look like "You've gotta be kidding." Emily hears Jose and kind of looks in his direction, listening to him. The Man sits up but remains silent.

JOSE (cont'd)

No, I mean it, let's help him. He's just tryin' to help us learn something.

The Man and Brandon give no positive response

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOSE (cont'd)

You know how bad we feel when it's our team to cheerlead, and nobody helps. And no one joins in.

THE MAN AND BRANDON

(still, not very loud or enthusiastic)

Let's gopher it with Grammar Gopher.

A number of others notice Jose's cheer, and they give "oh, what the heck" looks and join in. The Man gets louder and louder and the others do too.

Grammar looks somewhat relieved, but as sweaty as ever.

When the first card is raised, the kids look expectantly at Jose. He frowns back, then lowers his gaze, not sure if he likes the attention and the expectation that he will answer.

INSERT - CARD: "WHO DONE BRUNG THEM THINGS TO JIM AND I?"

Miss Amy looks at the card and decides to bring others into the action.

MISS AMY

Any hands?

BILLY, a Chinese-American student, raises his hand.

BILLY

(in Chinese accent, trying hard)

Whom done brung them things to Jim and I?

The crowd is silent then cracks up, even the ones with hardly a clue know this isn't the best answer. Emily looks concerned that people are making fun of Billy. Billy looks startled, then cracks up also. He is new to this language, but he is game.

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BILLY (cont'd)
Let me try again, Miss Amy. How 'bout
"Whom brought them things to Jim and I?"?

The crowd breaks up again; this is fun. Scott is sitting in the row in front of Jose.

SCOTT
Who brought these things to Jim and I?

Everyone is impressed.

SCOTT (cont'd)
Is that right, Joz?

JOSE
Yeah, sorta.

MISS AMY
But what, Jose?

JOSE
Should be "Who brought them to Jim and me?"

FRANKIE
(with a rap beat)
Who brought them to Jim and me?

The assembly repeats this and enjoys it.

Miss Amy and Grammar Gopher look bewildered. Then Miss Amy smiles and joins in. Grammar Gopher looks very relieved.

INT. SCHOOL/GYM - DAY - SOMEWHAT LATER

The kids swarm from the assembly, excited. They talk as they go swiftly down the school hallway.

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CONTINUED:

BRANDON

(pouting)

Miss Fortune's class don't know so much.
And Jo really did know all the answers.

JOSE

No, I didn't. Not all. Maybe next time,
though.

BRANDON

There's no next time, dude. Grammar
Gopher he ain't gonna come back.

INT. SCHOOL/TEACHER'S LOUNGE - LATER

Miss Amy is sprawled on a sofa, a soft drink perched on its
arm. She has the telephone to her ear and some papers on her
lap.

MISS AMY

(on the telephone)

There's almost a competition to it,
Brian. The kids were feeling some
interest in grammar. It was almost
exciting. It was exciting! Like varsity
basketball was for me, the competition
thing, like I could be their coach. And
it's like high school cheerleading was.
Like I can cheer them on. Sure wish there
were some kind of alternative to Grammar
Gopher to keep this thing going. Okay,
see you later. I gotta do some more, too.
Maybe I'll be out of here before 6
tonight. Love you, too.

Miss Amy hangs up the telephone and then gets up to get her
mail from the faculty mailbox labeled with her name. There
are some routine notices and a copy of a magazine, "ENGLISH
IS OUR MOTHER TONGUE: INFORMATION FOR THOSE INTERESTED IN THE
ENGLISH LANGUAGE". She reads aloud the names of the articles,
as she flips through the magazine's pages, though no one else
is in the room.

MISS AMY (cont'd)

Keeping English Alive. Participle
Principles.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MISS AMY (CONT'D)

The Ten Commandments of Grammar. How I
Became an English Teacher. Speaking More
Distinctly (laughing) No, I mean
'Speeken Mur Diztenct'.

Miss Amy laughs at her own joke, made to lighten up the mood,
as she has found nothing of interest in the article names.
Then her eye fall upon an advertisement.

MISS AMY (cont'd)

Editorial Competition. Competition. This
is it. Editorial Competition: Saving the
English Language. ECSEL. Excel. Cute.
Editorial competition involving written
sentences and paragraphs. New this year
oral segment. That are corrected by
proofreading as well as complex
grammatical problems.

(screams, then starts a cheer)

Yeah. Two bits, four bits.

The principal, DR. BAREFOOT, a woman in her late forties
dressed in a flowing Indian print skirt, looks in the door,
curious but with a suggestion of criticism, though smiling.

Miss Amy chooses to ignore Dr. Barefoot's suggested censure.
She smiles at her and continues to read aloud. Dr. Barefoot
continues down the hall.

MISS AMY (cont'd)

Many entrants are members of the
newspaper or yearbook staff. Hum, we
don't even have a newspaper or yearbook.
Oh, well. Deadline. Eee. I better call
now.

Miss Amy reaches for the phone and dials the number.

MISS AMY (cont'd)

(on the telephone)

Yes, I'm calling to register a group for
the Editorial Competition. No, I'm not a
journalist; I'm a teacher. Oh, no, I'm
not entering the competition for myself.
for a group of students. From Grady A.
Brown School. No, we're not a community
college - a public school.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MISS AMY (CONT'D)

No, not a group of teachers. Yes, some students. Grady. A. Brown school. Yes, sure. I can register with the voice mail. Sure. Okay. So, we send a team of 8 people. Yes. Grady A. Brown School. 2000 Grady Brown School Road, Hillsborough, North Carolina 27278. Amy Smith. And thank you, too, machine. See you in...
 (looks at a calendar on the wall)
 nine. Weeks.
 (hearing a BEEP)
 Machine.

Miss Amy pushes down on the receiver to disconnect.
 (screams)
 We're going to be in a competition!

Miss Amy dials the phone. She waits a minute, for the answering machine message to end, the phone to her ear.

MISS AMY (cont'd)

Brian, I think you'll get this before you leave. I am so excited. We're going to be in an Editorial Contest. The kids. It'll be great. Love ya, see you soon.

Miss Amy hangs up the phone.

INT. SCHOOL/MISS AMY'S CLASSROOM - START OF NEXT SCHOOL DAY

MISS AMY

...and we're going to be in a contest.

The Man enters the room as the bell rings.

THE MAN

All right. a kickball contest! We'll kick that ball so far. Who with, Miss Amy? Miss Fortune's class?

MISS AMY

(with a twinkle in her voice)
 That's "With whom, Miss Amy", The Man.
 (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MISS AMY (CONT'D)

Not kickball. It's a competition in editing. You know, correcting errors in English. In grammar and spelling and such.

The class stares at her, quiet for a few moments.

FRANKIE

Like what's the prize, Miss Amy?

MISS AMY

Oh, I don't know, Frankie. But, I'll find out. It'd be great if it was. Were. A scholarship to college. I'm sure it's not. But it'll be fun to be in it no matter what the prize is.

JOSE

(to The man, next to him)

Yeah, sure. Like I'd be lucky enough to get a scholarship.

THE MAN

You really want to go to college, Josie? Gee, I never even thought about it. About goin'.

JOSE

(a little irritated,
uncharacteristically)

Well, maybe you should think of something like that, The Man, 'cause you're smart.

THE MAN

Well, maybe I will think 'bout it. I mean I could think about it if I'm goin' to be doin' any thinkin'. Which I might.

MISS AMY

(speaking to the class while
The Man is responding to Jose)

And we're going to start a club to get ready for the competition; it'll be an Editing Club.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The class turns blank faces toward Miss Amy.

EMILY

I'll help you out, Miss Amy, but I don't want to, you know, compete.

SHANIQUA

We gotta go to art, Miss Amy.

MISS AMY

Scott, thanks for making those snacks for the class. They were dee-lish. Don't forget your plate.

INT. SCHOOL/MISS AMY'S CLASSROOM - END OF THE SCHOOL DAY

The announcements are concluding on the public address system.

MISS SCARLET

(announcement over the loud speaker)

One last announcement: there will be a meeting of the Editing Club tomorrow afternoon. This is a new club and everyone interested in the English language is invited to attend this first meeting. The goal of the club will be to do well in the ECSEL Editing Competition in late November. Since the meeting is after school, Miss Amy will give a ride to anyone who needs one, if they bring a note from their parent.

JOSE

(to himself but audible)

"To anyone who needs one, if he or she will bring a note from his or her parent".

MISS AMY

(hearing Jose)

Or "to those who need one if they will bring notes from their parents". Right, Jose?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MISS AMY (CONT'D)
 (mouths the words)
 See you there?

JOSE
 Sure, Miss Amy, I'll come. Once.

Several students hear Jose say this and look at him, puzzled at his interest.

THE MAN
 (quietly)
 You're My Man, Jose. See you there.

INT. SCHOOL/MISS AMY'S CLASSROOM - END OF SCHOOL DAY

A number of students have shown up for the Editing Club: Jose, Emily, Lovey, Shaniqua, and Billy.

LOVEY
 Shaniqua, I'm just here cause you are.
 Why are you here, anyway?

BILLY
 She here for the rove of the ranguage
 (laughing)
 or the rove of someone in palticural.

Shaniqua hits Billy with her backpack inscribed "Barbie".

Shaniqua is glad to see The Man enter the room (she has come because she thinks he will be there), but she does an obvious double-take, as if surprised to see him.

THE MAN
 I jus wanna ride in Miss Amy's
 convertible. Like it's so fine. It's got
 leather seats and a great CD player
 and...

SHANIQUA
 Yeah.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THE MAN

Well, I...

MISS AMY

I'm glad to see you all.

Billy pulls a small paperback book from the pocket of his jeans.

BILLY

You like my book, Miss Amy?

The book is "A Pocket Guide to Correct English".

MISS AMY

Oh, Billy, that's great. It's the exact same one I want to get everyone. I've got copies of another one for everybody now, about spelling, what with the school spelling bees about to start.

Billy beams.

MISS AMY (cont'd)

Billy, you can hand them out.

Billy gives each student in the room a copy of "A Pocket Guide to Spelling" and he hands one to Brandon as he comes in, then also to Frankie and Richie and Scott, each of whom looks around the room before entering, to see who else showed up before committing themselves.

MISS AMY (cont'd)

When we know everything in this book, we'll be great editors. For spelling at least. Then we'll go to the other book, well actually other books. But we'll start with spelling because the spelling bees are coming up anyway.

BRANDON

Other books, Miss Amy?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

There is an interruption by the P.A. system.

MISS SCARLET

This is Miss Scarlet in the office.
Teachers, don't forget: the all-school
spelling bee will be the assembly Monday.
All fifth, sixth and seventh grade
classes are to report to the multi-
purpose room, in that order.

SHANIQUA

Spelling bee, huh? That's 'b-e-e'!

LOVEY

No, that's 's-p-e-l-l-i-n-g-b-e-e'!

SHANIQUA

No, it's 'a-l-l- - s-c-h-o-o-l-s-p-e-l-l-
i-n-g-b-e-e'!

SCOTT

Okay, guys, spell something hard, why
don't you? How about 'cacophony', huh?

SHANIQUA AND LOVEY

(at exactly the same time)

C-A-C-O-P-H-O-N-Y

Shaniqua and Lovey look at each other, then laugh and give
each other a 'high 5'.

SHANIQUA AND LOVEY (cont'd)

(at exactly the same time)

All right, girlfriend!

MISS AMY

Great! Spelling's a big part of editing
and proofreading, you know.

Shaniqua and Lovey beam at each other, in sync for once.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MISS AMY (cont'd)

So we've got to all work on spelling, and then we'll add punctuation, correct usage of pronouns and verbs, and some other things we need to review. Or learn for the first time.

The group chatters excitedly amongst themselves.

MISS AMY (cont'd)

And paying attention, and paying attention. 1 - 2 -

The group knows this way Miss Amy gets their attention. Getting to '3' is bad news. They get quiet.

MISS AMY (cont'd)

So, let's all start working on spelling, to get started. Now when is the contest?

THE GROUP

In nine weeks.

MISS AMY

(louder, becoming a cheerleader)

When is the contest?

THE GROUP

In nine weeks.

MISS AMY

Now, when is the contest?

THE GROUP

(louder)

In nine weeks!

MISS AMY

And what are we gonna do?

THE GROUP

Win the contest!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

MISS AMY

What are we gonna do?

THE GROUP

Win the contest!

The group and Miss Amy all repeat the cheer of the kickball game.

ALL THE BOYS

Two bits, four bits, six bits, a dollar.
All for the Editing Club, stand up and
holler.

Dr. Barefoot looks into the room, smiling but firm.

DR. BAREFOOT

(frowning)

Let's take our sports out to the field,
people.

She goes away, oblivious.

The group laughs and packs up to leave. Emily hangs back to talk with Miss Amy. Frankie is still in the room. The Man and Jose are talking to one another in the hall.

MISS AMY

Emily, you look concerned. What is it?

EMILY

Miss Amy, I want to help, but it's that
competition thing again.

Jose comes back into the room. Emily looks up at him and then decides to continue to speak to Miss Amy.

EMILY (cont'd)

I just don't like contests. Everyone is
special. Everyone should win. And we all
talk well enough, to communicate I mean.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

EMILY (CONT'D)

I mean I like to find mistakes in what I read, but I don't want to tell anyone they're wrong, and editing is telling somebody they're wrong.

MISS AMY

Hey, guys, Emily has a point. What do you think?

JOSE

I think competition is good when it helps us be our best, or try harder. And I guess when we don't even know how good the others will be, we might try real hard. That's what I think.

FRANKIE

(to rap beat of his hands on the desk)

Well I think competition is really neat. It doesn't mean you're wrong, just you've got the beat: the beat of the words and the beat of the spelling. You can teach the others so they can do so well...ing.

(laughs)

I better work on it.

(yells out)

Help me, The Man, you're the word person.

Frankie wanders out of the room in search of The Man.

MISS AMY

Emily?

EMILY

I'll think about it, Miss Amy.

EXT. SCHOOL - IMMEDIATELY AFTER

The Man and Frankie hang out outside the school for awhile, working out a rap together about competition, The Man supplying most of the words and Frankie the rhythm.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Emily, Jose, and Miss Amy exit the building, enjoy the rap, and then all five get in Miss Amy's car.

EXT. MISS AMY'S CAR - LATER

Miss Amy is driving her car, with Frankie in the passenger seat. Emily, The Man, and Jose are in the back seat.

MISS AMY
See anything wrong, guys?

FRANKIE
What da ya mean, Miss Amy?

MISS AMY
I mean, let's look for mistakes around us, things that are written wrong.

THE MAN
Miss Amy, we aren't gonna find nuthin'.
Grown-ups write signs.

MISS AMY
Well, how about that? See that sign in the window there.

Miss Amy points to a sign in a shop window, as they pause at a red light in the street in town: "Lose leaf notebooks".

MISS AMY (cont'd)
Now does that mean they lose their pages, or is it "loose" spelled wrong?

JOSE
And that sign: "UNC cups .55c": are they really only a little more than half a penny each, rather than 55 cents each?

MISS AMY
Yes, that is proofreading and editing. It is needed everywhere.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The group notices errors and unclear usage on trucks, restaurant window signs, a tailor's sign ("Change the style, size or color of you're old clothes." and "We specialize in work with dying."), hair dresser window signs, tee shirts on people, newspapers and magazines, signs on buses or vans, classified ads, school newsletters, billboards, skywriting, and on the arm of someone working on the road.

THE MAN

That construction guy had a tatoo that said "Born too loose", I swear it. I gotta tell Scott.

They drive into the country, past a sign on a fence, "Be ware of bob war fence" that cracks up Miss Amy.

MISS AMY

(laughing)

That's what we used to call it, bob war!
It's really barbed wire. And beware is one word.

They avert disaster even, when errors on a road sign might have failed to caution them. (Slow drivers: stop a head. Road close.)

When they get to country without signs, Miss Amy puts in a tape.

MISS AMY (cont'd)

Now, listen to this kids.

The kids look at one another as Miss Amy's tape plays: "I Broke My Bones". They laugh at it, but then come to really enjoy it, and sing along, Emily only listening as she is too inhibited to sing along as yet.

Miss Amy drops off the kids: The Man at a small brick house, Emily at a tall white house, Frankie at his trailer, and then Jose at his family's apartment in an apartment complex

INT. SCHOOL/MISS AMY'S CLASSROOM - AFTER SCHOOL

It is an Editing Club meeting, and the members are muttering to one another.

MISS AMY

You're right; we have a lot to cover in eight weeks and we're not organized. I think this book may help.

Miss Amy hands out copies of "A Pocket Guide to English".

BRANDON

We do talk English already, don't we Miss Amy?

THE MAN

You think we speak Portuguese, Brandon?

MISS AMY

(looking through the book)
This book is divided into sections. Maybe that will help us.

There is a pause as they all look through the book, looking more and more overwhelmed.

EMILY

(talking quickly as she is shy
and needs to get it out)
Miss Amy, I think we are a sort of team here and I've never been on a team but I think we probably could use a captain to sort of lead us and I nominate Jose.

MISS AMY

Emily, that's a great idea, and Jose did speak up so well in the Grammar Gopher meetings. What does everyone else think?

Everyone nods agreement.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALL THE KIDS
Yeah, Captain Jose!

THE MAN
Beams we up, Captain Jose!

JOSE
Miss Amy, I'll be the captain and all,
and I think we should divide up the work,
like you said, so that we can teach each
other.

THE MAN
I'm gonna finally be a teacher. Oh happy
day. I'm gonna be so strict, I'm gonna.

MISS AMY
We need to really be serious now.

THE MAN
Sorry, Miss Amy, you the teacher. Now.

JOSE
But I'll need your help, Miss Amy, like
in knowing the different things we need
to learn. And deciding who should take
which part.

MISS AMY
(as she writes on the
blackboard)
Well, Jose, I think Shaniqua and Lovey
are our spellers, they are
extraordinarily good at it.

SHANIQUA AND LOVEY
E-x-t-r-a-o-r-d-i-n-a-r-i-l-y. g-o-o-d. a-
t. i-t.

The girls do their high five, loudly.

SHANIQUA
I get A through L.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LOVEY

No, I get A through L, cause Lovey starts with L. You get M through Z, cause Shaniqua starts with S.

MISS AMY

And you two girls can review homonyms for us.

THE MAN

All that spelling and hominy, too.

MISS AMY

Homonyms are words that sound the same. But mean different things and may be spelled differently, like...

LOVEY

(writing it on the board)
borough, a town

SHANIQUA

(also writing the word)
and burrow, a hole an animal lives in

JOSE

(also writing the word)
And burro, the donkey.

MISS AMY

Great! And for you, The Man, because you like words and how they fit together in rap. How about the **rules** of spelling, and how about pronouns. And the problem adjectives and adverbs that we sometimes don't know how to use right, like "well" and "good".

THE MAN

(acting like this is a huge burden for him)
Oh, man, oh, man. This don't look so good...well... for me. I.
(laughs)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MISS AMY

For punctuation, our beat man, our rhythm section, because punctuation gives our sentences rhythm. So you, Frankie. Oh, and capitalization and indentation of paragraphs is like rhythm, too, so that's yours also.

FRANKIE

Yes comma Miss Amy comma I, I mean capital I, can do that period.

MISS AMY

For proofreading for typos and such we've got Scott, who we know is a great cook, so he knows about how important details are in recipes, and he's the one who knows also about changing recipes like to make more or less. So let's give him proofreading symbols of all kinds. Okay, Scott.

Scott nods.

MISS AMY (cont'd)

Now, Richie knows the importance of creativity, of change while appreciating the rules over all.

RICHIE

Miss Amy, I wanna be part of things, and learn, but I just don't think I can do all this, can I hang around and do something.

MISS AMY

It's okay with me if you others think so. You can still do the things I said, without competing on the team.

The team seems to agree.

MISS AMY (cont'd)

Emily, you're quiet and you sit back and observe, but you see what's going on.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

MISS AMY (CONT'D)

I think you can help with what these books call "common faults" and "words and phrases frequently misused".

Emily seems to agree.

MISS AMY (cont'd)

Billy, I want you to take subject and verbs, like whether to say "I do" or "I does", and irregular verbs, like "bring": I bring, I brought, I have brought.

THE MAN

What you bring, Miss Amy?

MISS AMY

Oh, and, Billy, learn the subjunctive, like "If I were a man. "

THE MAN

Miss Amy, if you were a man, you'd still be sweet!

MISS AMY

Brandon, you're already doing a great job as manager. So, this should narrow down our work some. And, Jose, Captain Jose, you can oversee everyone and make our writing clear and logical and consistent. You have a feel for how things should sound in English.

JOSE

Guys, how about if you all make charts of your area so we can all know this stuff?

INT. JOSE'S APARTMENT - SOMEWHAT LATER

An excited Jose enters the door, slamming it behind him. His grandmother is in the kitchen. Hearing him come in, she turns from the stove and smiles at him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GRANDMOTHER

You late. Stay at school late?

JOSE

Yeah, for a meeting, grandmother.

GRANDMOTHER

(turning to the stove)

Yeah, for the sports. You was always so good with the sports, Jose.

JOSE

Not for sports. For language, Grandmother. Speaking right - correctly. And writing things right.

GRANDMOTHER

You speak fine, Jose. Don't you forget that ('you speak the beautiful language of your ancesstors', in Spanish.)

Jose sort of smiles, starts to explain, but doesn't.

JOSE

That smells bueno, Abuela.

INT. SCHOOL/GYM - DAY

There is a spelling bee in progress between Miss Amy's class and Miss Fortune's class. The students are sitting on the floor, some at the front of the room, those who have not missed a word.

Elizabeth is at the microphone. MR. JORDAN, the assistant principal, is calling out the words and sentences from a paper he holds.

ELIZABETH

Dictionary. D-I-C-T-I-O-N-A-R-Y.
Dictionary.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. JORDAN

Fine, you may sit back down, up here,
Elizabeth.

Shaniqua walks from her place to the microphone and Mr. Jordan looks at his spelling word list for the next word.

MR. JORDAN (cont'd)

Shaniqua, spell "pristine".

The crowd laughs.

BIG GUY

Yeah, spell pristine, like you're a
prissy teen, Shaniqua.

Some laugh. Shaniqua for once looks stricken.

THE MAN

You dumb guys, "pristine" don't mean
that. It's like pure.

The Big Guys think this is a joke. Then they see The Man start to stand up, angry in defense of Shaniqua.

Shaniqua holds her head up.

SHANIQUA

Mr. Jordan, pristine is p-r-i-s-t-i-n-e,
pristine.

She walks to sit back down at the front. The Man applauds. He looks around. All applaud, too.

MR. JORDAN

Fine, but this isn't a sports event. We
can't applaud for everyone. Let's
continue.

MISS AMY

Why, not, Mr. Jordan.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MR. JORDAN
Why not what, Miss Amy?

MISS AMY
Why can't we applaud everyone?

Mr. Jordan is nonplussed. He thinks and scratches his head and looks for assistance for his point of view. There is none forthcoming.

MR. JORDAN
Okay, Billy, spell "embarrassed". We do not embarrass others.

BILLY
E-m-b-a-r-a-s-s-e-d. Embarrassed.

MR. JORDAN
That's not correct. sit down with the rest. Do we applaud Miss Amy!

MISS AMY
(at first, uncertain)
Yes. yes, we do.

MR. JORDAN
Very well, Emily, let's continue.

Emily has known that she would be next, sitting next to Shaniqua, who has returned to her place, so she is nervously approaching the microphone.

MR. JORDAN (cont'd)
Emily, spell "stationery". We write letters on stationery. Stationery.

EMILY
Stationery. S-t-a-t-i-o-n-e-r-y.
Stationery.

MR. JORDAN
That doesn't seem right. But it says it here. Do you know, Miss Fortune.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MISS FORTUNE

Stationery is with an 'a': stationary.

Lovey and Shaniqua raise their hands at the same time. Mr. Jordan ignores them. Miss Amy does not.

MISS AMY

Lovey and Shaniqua?

LOVEY AND SHANIQUA

Stationery, writing paper, is s-t-a-t-i-o-n-e-r-y. Stationary, not writing, is s-t-a-t-i-o-n-a-r-y.

MISS AMY

Thank you, Lovey and Shaniqua. I'm sure you're right.

Miss Fortune looks angry, but is silent.

Jose starts the applause for Emily, as she sits down at the front.

INT. SCHOOL/MISS AMY'S CLASSROOM - DAY - AFTER SCHOOL

The Editing Club is meeting, obvious by what is written on the blackboard. An announcement comes on.

DR. BAREFOOT

(over public address system)

First, congratulations to the spelling bee winners. The top performers, those undefeated, were Lovey Cooper and Shaniqua Brown, students in the class of. I don't have that here. Students in the sixth grade, however. Now, remember your computers have spellchecks, so if you don't know how to spell it, the computer will. Or you can ask Lovey and Shaniqua, if you can find them, Hee hee. A reminder, or really a rule we have not been enforcing: Teachers, all students must be out of the building within thirty minutes of the close of school.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DR. BAREFOOT (CONT'D)

Our teachers need not to be bothered while preparing their lessons and classrooms for the next day. That means all students should leave the building by 3:30 p.m. Excuse me.

(pause in announcement)

Mr. Jordan has reminded me that the sports teams are of course allowed to be in the building as necessary and as part of their training.

The club members and Miss Amy look very distressed. Miss Amy gets up to leave the room, an angry look on her face. The classroom clock reads 3:25.

Miss Amy is gone. And gone. The clock ticks on.

BILLY

These books are hard.

THE MAN

Why are we doin' this stuff, again?

Sounds of a basketball game in the gym travel to the room.

Some big guys come by, looking in the open doorway for The Man.

BIG GUY 1

The Man, come on and shoot some. What you doin'?

THE MAN

Nuttin'. I mean I'm sittin' here with my frens. We're starting a club. With Miss Amy. And...

BIG GUY 2

Come on, Ain't no teacher here now.

THE MAN

Yeah, I can go. I can go. Let's do some hoops.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The Man leaves the meeting. The others look at each other. They sit quietly, hearing voices of other kids laughing in the hallway. They hear Miss Fortune's voice.

MISS FORTUNE
Okay, students, time to clear the building; you heard the announcement.

The students in the hall get quiet and are heard leaving the building.

Miss Fortune looks in the doorway to Miss Amy's room.

Miss Fortune (cont'd)
Time to go, folks.

Miss Fortune proceeds down the hall.

The club members look at one another.

JOSE
We don't have to.

EMILY
Yes, we do, Jose; we have to obey her; she is a teacher.

Emily gets up to go. The rest shrug, and then they get up to slowly leave as well. They are quiet.

More time passes.

Miss Amy comes back to the room, but she finds the room empty. Her face falls. She quietly gathers up her papers to go home.

INT. SCHOOL/MISS AMY'S CLASSROOM - NEXT DAY

MISS SCARLET

(announcement on the p.a.
system)

I want to - Dr. Barefoot has asked me to announce again that the winners of the spelling bee were from Miss Amy's class, Lovey Cooper and Shaniqua Brown. let's give them a school-wide applause. Second, Miss Amy asks that all members of the Editing Club. No, all who came to the Editing Club meeting last Thursday come to a short meeting after school today.

The ten look around at each other. Miss Amy busies herself with paperwork and will not look at them.

INT. SCHOOL/MISS AMY'S CLASSROOM - AFTER SCHOOL

MISS AMY

Look guys we'll only meet a minute; I know some of you have to get the bus, but guys, are you going to be there for me, for us--or not?

The class room is silent.

MISS AMY (cont'd)

This Editing Club can be great. At least we can try.

The class room is silent.

MISS AMY (cont'd)

Jose? Shaniqua? If you're not interested, I can get some new members of the club?

The students think about that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THE MAN

Well, now, Miss Amy, if we don't do it, nobody will. It ain't exactly the most popular thing around here. I mean it should be and it is very exciting and all, but, well... And where we gonna meet anyway?

JOSE

We're in with you, Miss Amy.

Emily nods toward Miss Amy, shyly quiet.

SHANIQUA AND LOVEY

Yeah, Miss Amy. And we like the applause. For the spelling. A lot.

BILLY

I am with we, Miss Amy.

SCOTT

I'll do it, Miss Amy.

FRANKIE

(drumming on the desk)

Yeah, Miss Amy, I'm with you; cause we are the best that you can do.

MISS AMY

(interrupting, but smiling)

Great, Frankie. Brandon?

Brandon doesn't answer at first, coloring with a marker on his hat.

BRANDON

(looking down, continuing to color in the band of his hat)

Miss Amy, I really want to be the manager; can I please? I don't think this other stuff is my thing. But I can carry stuff and help with lots of things and...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

THE MAN

Yeah, Brandon, you can handle the chicks, the groupies, those girls who love to hear us talk and see us write, ever so correctly and...

Shaniqua turns and glares at The Man and he gets quiet.

MISS AMY

Great, Brandon. We'll need a manager. You can help me handle Dr. Barefoot, too; at least she's scheduled a meeting for me with her. The Man? Are you in or out?

THE MAN

Well, Miss Amy, I was never out, I mean I was just playing ball, no, I was just sitting here and those guys wanted to play ball and I thought ball would help us. Yeah, like we can shoot a basket when we get something right. I was just thinking that.

MISS AMY

That's actually a good idea, The Man. Richie?

RICHIE

I'm in. For music relief. And creativity and all that.

JOSE

Miss Fortune told us to go home, Miss Amy. The other day.

Miss Amy looks shocked but says nothing. She nods, as to say, "Oh, I see."

MISS AMY

So, we're all in. Great. Two, four, six, eight.

The team cheers and then a bell signals the need to leave for the bus.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MISS AMY (cont'd)
Tomorrow after school, okay. I'll take
home those who need it; bring a
permission slip.

INT. SCHOOL/HALLWAY - IMMEDIATELY AFTER

A Big Guy sees The Man leaving Miss Amy's classroom.

BIG GUY
The Man, what ya doin'? You don need no
club. Specially bout dat. Dat Edit stuff.

The Man generally ignores him and walks down the hall to the
exit door.

THE MAN
Gotta go.

INT. SCHOOL/MISS AMY'S CLASSROOM - NEXT DAY

The students have made charts of their areas of
concentration. They sit at the desks, on which are piled the
spelling and grammar books, looking somewhat bored.

Someone has written on the blackboard "Homonyms: different
ways to spell words that sound the same", with the meanings
of each. And there are sentences explaining when to use 'you'
versus 'I', 'they' versus 'them' and 'we' versus 'us'.

Miss Amy is not in the room.

JOSE
Guys, let's get some more fun ways to
practice. Maybe we can come up with
something before Miss Amy comes back from
her meeting. The Man, what were you
suggesting last time?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THE MAN

Ah, I was jus jiving Miss Amy. I said I thought we could shoot a basket when we was. I know. When we were right. Funny, huh?

To The Man's surprise the others do not laugh at this. Shaniqua and Lovey start to sneer, ready for the verbal attack. until Jose speaks.

JOSE

Well, then, shall we adjourn to the gym, friends?

The students gather up their belongings to move down the hall to the gym.

INT. SCHOOL/PRINCIPAL BAREFOOT'S OFFICE - DAY

Miss Amy and Dr. Barefoot are sitting, Dr. Barefoot behind her desk. Miss Amy looks very angry but is silent.

DR. BAREFOOT

Now, calm down, Miss Amy; I'm just wondering if you know what you're doing here. The other teachers are having trouble with this. I mean we have English and language classes.

MISS AMY

Yes, Dr. Barefoot.

DR. BAREFOOT

(proudly)
And since I was in college. the late 60's you know, my hippy days I call them.
(adds abruptly))
Though I was always this side of the law on all things, make no mistake about that.

MISS AMY

Yes, Dr. Barefoot.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DR. BAREFOOT

But since then I've believed that we're all different and shouldn't be made to do things the same way. Why, many of our students just aren't interested in Standard English, anyway. It's not so important, if they stay in their own neighborhood their whole lives.

MISS AMY

Yes, Dr. Barefoot. Yes, Dr. Barefoot. But you and I didn't stay near our homes, did we?

DR. BAREFOOT

(silent at first, then)

Well, yes, our differences make us unique and special.

MISS AMY

I know our differences are important; I did suggest the International Day. To celebrate our differences.

DR. BAREFOOT

And it's a great idea, Miss Amy; you can help with the food. Now that will look good on your review.

MISS AMY

But we can compete, can't we, Dr. Barefoot? The competition isn't even on a school day. It's the Friday after Thanksgiving.

MISS SCARLET

(sticking her head in the door)

Oh, Dr. Barefoot, you're needed out here.

Miss Scarlet gives Miss Amy a sympathetic look.

DR. BAREFOOT

Okay, Miss Amy, just be forewarned.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MISS AMY
(to Miss Scarlet)
Thanks, O'Hara.

DR. BAREFOOT
Miss Amy, you must have noticed I
announced the spelling bee again. Um.
Miss Scarlet did, I mean - at my request.

MISS AMY
Yes, thank you, Dr. Barefoot, that's all
I wanted.

Dr. Barefoot leaves the room.

DR. BAREFOOT
And you'll have to finish your meetings
by 3:30 every day. But I'll take your
objections under consideration.

Miss Amy is clearly disappointed, as she had hoped for a
waiver of this rule.

INT. SCHOOL/MISS AMY'S CLASSROOM - SOMEWHAT LATER

Miss Amy rushes back into the room. and no one is there. Her
face falls. She seems in shock. Then she gathers up her
belongings. She pauses to listen, as she hears a voice,
unmistakably Billy's.

BILLY
(O.S)
Is it "with me and she"?

THE MAN
(O.S.)
Nah, Billy, "with me and her"; no, better
is "with her and me".

Miss Amy is delighted and runs toward the sounds.

INT. SCHOOL/GYM- IMMEDIATELY AFTER

The kids are in the gym sitting on the floor. As Miss Amy enters, The Man shoots the basketball from his spot farthest from the goal - and it goes in. Everyone cheers.

JOSE
Here's another one.

They don't see Miss Amy, until she begins her cheer.

MISS AMY
Two bits, four bits, six bits.

They all groan, then join in, jumping up and cheering.

JOSE
Miss Amy, we have to get back to work again.

EMILY
No, Jose, she's a teacher.

MISS AMY
It's okay, Emily, Jose doesn't mean any harm. Back to work, kids. You're doing great without me. I have to leave soon, anyway. I'll just sit and watch awhile.

INT. SCHOOL/GYM - SOMEWHAT LATER

Miss Amy smiles at the club members and gets up to leave, happily waving to them. The kids continue their practice.

INT. SCHOOL/GYM - SOMEWHAT LATER

MR. JORDAN, the assistant principal, looks in and shakes his head.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. JORDAN

It's time to close the gym. we're only open when the basketball team has practice.

(seeing the Big Guy, who wears a basketball uniform)

Oh, okay, I'll come back and lock up later.

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - DAY

There are signs up signifying that this is International Day and that students are to dress in the costume of a country of their ancestors.

Groups congregate talking about what they are wearing. Elizabeth and Meredith stand together in costumes of many sort of mismatched parts.

ELIZABETH

See, my sister and I have backgrounds in several countries. Our shirts represent Poland, our skirts are Scotland, and our socks are Greek.

The Man talks with Scott, who is dressed in a flag suit.

SCOTT

I don't even know where I came from, so I am dressed as an American. Doesn't go well with my hair, though, does it?

THE MAN

At least my color helps me, cause most Americans with darker skin come from Africa or the islands. I'm dressed like I'm from both. Which I am, in fact.

There are students dressed in Japanese and in Chinese costumes, in Native American garb, and in many variations of national costume. Jose is in Mexican attire, Billy in Chinese.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

There is a long table with foods the students have brought. They are labeled with the name of the food and the country of origin. Scott has baked an elaborate apple pie, and Billy has brought dom yam gai. Jose's grandmother has made chili con queso and the others have brought many dishes of many lands.

THE MAN (cont'd)

I have brought the favorite food of my family, a taste developed over years of culinary. Of culinary development. And refined until the current version is good.

The Man uncovers a plate of Big Macs.

The kids taste the foods, at first seeming to make fun of some, and then enjoying them and the names of them as well. The Man leads the singing of a song about foods of the world: "Buono Appetito".

INT. SCHOOL/MISS AMY'S CLASSROOM - AFTER SCHOOL

The Editing Club is talking amongst themselves, in their costumes from International Day to the sound of the music to "You say Tomato, and I say Tomato", being played on piano by Richie next door. The kids decide to take their charts with them to the music room to work on them there.

INT. SCHOOL/MUSIC ROOM - IMMEDIATELY AFTER

EMILY

(looking over Richie's shoulder
at the music)

What is this, you say tomato and I say
tomato, what does that mean.

RICHIE

No, it's like this.

Richie sings the song "YOU SAY TOMATO AND I SAY TOMATO" as he plays it on the piano. Others come to read the words over Richie's shoulder and join in and laugh.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRANDON

Okay, guys, back to workColas. Whatever you want to call 'em.

FRANKIE

My aunt says "pe-can", and I say "pe-cahn".

LOVEY

And Shaniqua and I say that a-word different: I say ant.

SHANIQUA

(interrupting)

Like an insect! Your relative The Bug!

LOVEY

Shaniqua says aunt like you do Frankie.

THE MAN

My momma says "cool" and I say "chillin'". Grandpa says "copasetic". Now everyone says "bad"; well, not everyone (laughs).

(gently poking fun)

Frankie, you say "neat", don't you?

RICHIE

And so many of your words are part of the language of music.

FRANKIE

And really part of the English language, even becoming Standard American, I think. It's so neat - so chillin - you know where they come from.

LOVEY

Television is full of words that aren't Standard English. Fun words. But Shaniqua always says,

(enunciating prissily)

"That word is derived from an African word and you can't use it."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SHANIQUA

I'm just pickin', girlfriend.

LOVEY

(in a mock-elitist tone)

My Southern background claims "pickin".
but you may use it.

There is a silence.

EMILY

(speaking up softly)

Sometimes I feel kinda, almost jealous
about that, about how I don't know which
parts of our Standard English are from
Scotland or Ireland or Wales, where my
ancestors came from.

As Emily finishes, Brandon noisily enters the room, keys
jangling and soft drink cans clanking together.

BRANDON

I think my people always spoke English,
at least when they came to the U. S.

Brandon hands out the drinks.

BRANDON (cont'd)

And I still can't get the rules.

All laugh, but nicely.

JOSE

I know there are some Spanish sayings in
American English now, but it doesn't seem
like so many.

THE MAN

Si, cowboy, lasso that doggie and let's
take a hacienda.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JOSE
(laughing)
That's a siesta, The Man!

Richie plays LA BAMBA. The kids dance and smile. Jose' sings some of the words.

Miss Amy comes in.

MISS AMY
Music!

JOSE
And we've been talking, too, Miss Amy,
about language and stuff.

Shaniqua raises her hand.

MISS AMY
What is it, Shaniqua?

SHANIQUA
Miss Amy, about this editing stuff. Me
and Lovey talk different at home from
each other.
(seeking Lovey's correcting
look)
Lovey and I speak differently from one
another at home. And our families like
how they talk and both are okay, right?

MISS AMY
Sure, Shaniqua. We all have different
ways of speaking; we as a nation are very
wealthy that way.

THE MAN
Healthy, wealthy, and wise!

BRANDON
In your dreams.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

SHANIQUA

So how does this editing stuff come in, like one way is right, isn't it?

MISS AMY

Well, we're using Standard English for our editing. It's actually Standard American English, I guess, because we speak English differently from how they do in England.

THE MAN

(affecting a British accent)

You commoners do make a mess of your ver-bag.

SHANIQUA

Bag it, The Man. Anyway, it's 'verbiage'.

The Man laughs, self-mockingly. Then he gets serious.

THE MAN

This Standard English thing. Like we all need to know Standard English.

The group expects a joke.

BILLY

Rike you're standard anything, you ain't arr that, The Man.

MISS AMY

Wait a minute, guys; The Man has something to say. I think.

THE MAN

It's like this country has one standard, way of communicating that everyone can learn and use to understand one another.

Miss Amy beams approvingly. The others are silent a moment.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

FRANKIE

My pop calls it "Cash English", like how to talk to make money.

THE MAN

Your 'pop'?

Miss Amy frowns slightly at The Man, stopping his banter.

MISS AMY

Yeah, 'Cash English', that's one way of looking at it. You'll notice the people who are politicians and teachers, and on t.v. and in lots of important jobs, where they are paid But well, it does seem to make sense to speak Standard English so everyone will understand you.

RICHIE

How about if we call it Understandable English. I could write a jazz tune for piano.

Richie takes out a piece of paper and begins to scribble on it.

THE MAN

Miss Amy, I think it's like this, I know the rules of basketball and I know the rules of kickball, and they aren't the same. But I have to use one set of rules with one game or one place or, well I think standard English is like the rules. I can use it or not. But when I need to, I need to.

Richie looks up from his music paper.

RICHIE

Like I don't like to play music by the rules; you know I like to change it. That's what jazz is.

Richie plays a jazzy phrase on the piano.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

RICHIE (CONT'D) (cont'd)
But I learned to play classical first,
where people notice if you make mistakes.

Richie plays a few classic bars, with a significant error.

RICHIE (cont'd)
So I have to know which I'm playing,
jazz, where I can play the way I want.
Or...

Richie plays the classical selection correctly.

RICHIE (CONT'D) (cont'd)
(chuckling)
American Standard Piano. Actually, I
guess that would be.

Richie plays AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL, with flourishes and
rifts. The group mocks it, dancing mock-formally and
saluting. Then Richie changes the song somewhat, to a jazz
rendition. The group dances and then falls tiredly to the
floor, applauding Richie.

MISS AMY
That was great, Richie. On an editorial
note. One last thought, guys: this
Standard American English may be closer
to what some people speak at home. So
it's easier for those people. But, no
matter, we can all learn it. However the
folks at home talk.

The group is quiet, interested.

THE MAN
Just like we can all learn the rules of
basketball whether we grew up playing
hoops or not.

EMILY
(venturing a comment)
And we can all get along, even if we do
talk differently.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

MISS AMY

Sure, I think we should all know how to write Standard English, and how to talk it, too. But we don't have to use it all the time. And English is always changing, to match more of the ways we talk at home - in each culture.

THE MAN

(laughing)

We ain't got no culture, Miss Amy.

All laugh.

Miss Amy continues, ignoring The Man, who regains a serious look.

MISS AMY

Each culture adds not only words, but expressions too. They're called 'idioms'.

THE MAN

(looking around, mock-wisely,
at the group)

I know a few idiots with a lot of idioms.

The group starts to laugh, but then they all settle down again in response to Miss Amy's look.

MISS AMY

Like, I'm from North Carolina. Now and I've learned to say to my niece, "Hey, baby, give me some sugar, and then I'll carry you to the baby-sitter". That's colorful, but not everyone understands it.

THE MAN

(enunciating)

Let me kiss you, young female child, and then I'll give you a ride to your caregiver in my automobile.

They all laugh, including Miss Amy. Then she looks up at the clock and indicates that it is time to go.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

MISS AMY

After while, crocodiles.

Richie begins to play SEE YOU LATER, ALLIGATOR on the piano, as the kids exit.

THE MAN

Catch you later.

LOVEY AND SHANIQUA

Outta here.

EXT. SCHOOL - LATER

Jose and The Man, with their bookbags, exit the school and walk off together. The Big Guys are shooting some hoops on the outdoor concrete court. They look up and see The Man.

BIG GUY 1

The Man, you ain't no fancy talker. You don't need that Edit Club. That a waste of time.

THE MAN

(to Jose')

I just ignore 'em. Like "Go jump in a lake", guys. Bet they can't swim.

(getting a mental image and laughing)

Without a coupla big old yellow ducky floats.

The Man turns to the Big Guys.

THE MAN (cont'd)

Enjoy your water fowl, men.

The Big Guys look at The Man and know they have been themselves had, but they're not at all sure how. They sort of slink off.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Billy hears The Man and Jose laughing and rides up on his bike.

JOSE

To go fly a kite, it's also, mandar a freir esparragos, one of those idiom things.

BILLY

Is that, make asparagus?

JOSE

It's the Spanish way to say the same thing as 'go fly a kite', but in English it means, I guess, 'go fry an asparagus'.

BILLY

Cool. Copasetic. What is another one?

JOSE

Americans say "He's pulling their leg" and mean he's fooling them. In Spanish we talk about hair, el pelo, not legs. Les esta tomados el pelo. That's he's pulling their hair. And there is contodos sus pelos y senales. That means, in greatest detail. Not really about hair.

BILLY

In all the goly detairs.

JOSE

Yes, in all the gory details!

The boys walk awhile.

JOSE (cont'd)

(thinking, then blurting out)

And to get all upset. Over nothing: He got all upset over nothing: Se ahogo en un vaso de agua, it's about a glass of water.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

THE MAN

A tempest in a teapot. Start a tempest in a teapot.

JOSE

That's cool. How do you know that?

THE MAN

Read that someplace.

The others look impressed.

THE MAN (cont'd)

Yeah, I read.

The other two still look at him, admiringly.

THE MAN (CONT'D) (cont'd)

Now I got the bighead. Come on, let's git with the program, let's git down, let's...

JOSE AND BILLY

Okay, okay!

The three boys begin to jog.

INT. SCHOOL/HALLWAY - DAY

Billy is running to Miss Amy's class, several books twisted up in his T-shirt sleeves. Miss Fortune stops him.

MISS FORTUNE

Bill, slow down. We do not run in the hall.

BILLY

Sorry, Miss Fortune. I don't want to be late for class.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MISS FORTUNE

We do not keep books in our sleeves. And we do not allow books at school that are not appropriate. That is a paperback and I am sure it is not appropriate. We use our textbooks at this school. At least in my class.

Billy unrolls one sleeve and discloses the book there: "A Pocket Guide to Correct English". The teacher flushes.

Miss Fortune (cont'd)

(covering up)

Oh, just as I thought.

Miss Fortune realizes she is defeated and continues down the hall.

Miss Fortune (cont'd)

You have other books as well. I'm sure they are very appropriate..as well. The real problem is you need a book bag. We here in the U.S. of A. carry a book bag, Bill.

BILLY

Yes, Miss Fortune.

Bill walks off.

BILLY (cont'd)

(to himself)

We here in the USA carry book bags.

Miss Fortune goes towards him, thinking he has said something disrespectful, but he smiles at her and she thinks better of it and continues to her room.

Billy walks quickly into Miss Amy's room, where he takes the other books from his sleeves and piles them on his desk. They are "A Pocket Guide to Correct English" as well as "A Pocket Guide to Correct Grammar", "A Pocket Guide to Correct Spelling" and "A Pocket Guide to Correct Punctuation".

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

There are also "Kung Fu Secrets" and a comic book with Chinese characters and a picture of a beautiful teenage girl on the cover. He puts all the books in his desk as Miss Amy asks the whole class to turn in their homework.

BILLY (cont'd)

Oh, no.

He bangs his head on his desk.

MISS AMY

Billy, you need to turn in your homework.

BILLY

I was studying all that editing stuff,
Miss Amy, and...

MISS AMY

You still need to do your regular work,
Billy. Hand it in tomorrow, but it'll be
one letter off the grade.

Billy looks defeated.

INT. SCHOOL/TEACHERS' LOUNGE - DAY

Miss Amy is checking her mail in the teachers' lounge. A student looks in. Miss Amy looks up and smiles, starting to carry a pile of papers and books out of the room.

STUDENT ASSISTANT

I'm helping Dr. Barefoot. Miss Scarlet is
home sick. Hum. She wants to see you.

Miss Amy puts down her mail and the papers and books and follows the student.

INT. SCHOOL/PRINCIPAL BAREFOOT'S OFFICE - DAY

Miss Amy is standing. Dr. Barefoot is sitting behind her desk. Miss Amy again looks very angry but is silent.

DR. BAREFOOT

I'm glad I caught you, Miss Amy; Billy Yu's mother wanted to know why he didn't get an "A" on one of his homework papers like he usually does.

MISS AMY

He just forgot to do it, what with all he's studying for the contest.

(realizes she has made a
mistake)

I mean he can do both.

DR. BAREFOOT

This may be a problem, here. We can't encourage our students to neglect their normal studies to pursue something... unattainable...like this competition.

Student assistant sticks her head in.

STUDENT ASSISTANT

Oh, Dr. Barefoot, announcement time.

MISS AMY

(to the assistant)

Thanks, Mighty Mouse.

She hums the tune to "Here I come to save the day".

Dr. Barefoot strides, Miss Amy behind her, to the microphone on the counter in the outer office, as the student helper pushes down the "on" button, handing the microphone to her.

DR. BAREFOOT

(offhand remark, not intending
for it to be picked up)

And Miss Amy, about this editing
competition.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DR. BAREFOOT (CONT'D)

It's such a long shot for your kids. Miss Amy, you're a dreamer. And you have the review to think about. Dreaming will not get you another year of teaching at Grady Brown. Something solid, like coaching or bulletin board chairman, that will look good. Now let me turn this thing on. Oh, it's on already.

(announcement voice)

Teachers, be sure to turn in your attendance sheets for the grading period.

STUDENT ASSISTANT

Oh, Miss Amy, they heard Dr. Barefoot say the thing about dreamer. I'm sorry; I turned it on too soon.

Miss Amy looks stricken, but smiles.

MISS AMY

Oh, well, the school knows it anyway.

Miss Amy goes back into the teachers' lounge to get her papers and books and her mail. A thought occurs to her.

MISS AMY (cont'd)

Oh, no, the club's waiting for me in my room. They heard Dr. Barefoot!

INT. SCHOOL/HALLWAY - IMMEDIATELY AFTER

Miss Amy walks quickly down the hallway to her room, passing several groups of teachers who seem to be whispering about the principal's remark. Miss Fortune sees Miss Amy coming.

MISS FORTUNE

The Editing Club awaits you. Perchance to dream, huh?

Miss Amy enters her classroom.

INT. SCHOOL/MISS AMY'S CLASSROOM - IMMEDIATELY AFTER

The kids are all standing up, facing away from the door.

MISS AMY

Kids, it's okay. Dr. Barefoot doesn't.

EDITING CLUB

Two bits, four bits, six bits, a dollar,
all for The Dreamer, stand up and holler.

The kids scream a hurrah. Miss Amy is in shock and deeply appreciates the cheer.

MISS AMY

(sadly)

Thank you so much, guys, but this is
bigger than all of us.

INT. SCHOOL/HALLWAY - IMMEDIATELY AFTER

Outside the classroom, in the hallway, several notice the cheering and look questioningly toward it. Then all see Miss Fortune coming, pointing to her watch and all scurry out the door. Miss Fortune looks in the classroom and points to her watch.

INT. SCHOOL/MISS AMY'S CLASSROOM - IMMEDIATELY AFTER

MISS AMY

(frowning at Miss Fortune, who
goes on down the hall)

Guys, we need to talk. And decide what to do. Whether to go on. But we have to leave now. I know, I'll be outside at the bleachers at 3:30 tomorrow afternoon. You don't need to come if you know this thing is just too big and too hard. I can always look around out there. Maybe coaching cheerleading should be my thing.

Miss Amy looks very sad.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Miss Fortune looks again in the doorway. All leave quietly, Miss Amy staying to stare into space.

EXT. SCHOOL - LATER

Jose, The Man and Billy are talking with Emily, Shaniqua and Lovey.

THE MAN

Miss Amy is under some pressure. She has to prove she's good. Why, she's great!

SHANIQUA

What can we do?

EMILY

We'll just have to do well on this competition thing. Even me. If even Miss Amy is in competition for a teaching job, well, then, I can compete to help her.

JOSE

Yeah, let's do it. For her. And for us. And let's help her be happier. First we'll...

The other Editing Club members join them and they talk together.

EXT. SCHOOL/KICKBALL FIELD BLEACHERS - AFTER SCHOOL

The kids walk toward Miss Amy, who sits on the bleachers, from all directions of the playing field, in pairs and singly. They are all silent, even doleful. When they get to the bleachers, several kneel before Miss Amy, the others standing behind them.

Then they begin to sing, led by The Man, to the tune of the oldie "Whenever I want you all I have to do is dream".

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EDITING CLUB

When we want to, at our school
 when we want to, to learn a rule
 whenever we want to, all we have to do is
 dre-e-am, dream, dream.
 We have made you ours, for so many hours,
 anytime through the day;
 Only problem is, gee whiz, we're dreaming
 our lives away.
 We thank you so, and yes we wish,
 to tell you so, please teach English
 so whenever we want you, all we have to
 do is dre-e-am, dream, dream

Shaniqua and Lovey present to Miss Amy a T-shirt with
 "DREAMER" on the front.

Miss Amy stares at them and then laughs and hugs them.

MISS AMY

Does this mean you're all in?

EDITING CLUB

Yes!

Then they start the song again and Miss Amy sings it with
 them.

EXT. SCHOOL/BLEACHERS - SOON AFTER

MISS AMY

So, we're all under pressure. You have
 the pressure of your classmates and the
 other teachers and I have the review.
 Every first-year teacher at this school
 has to be reviewed. They're telling me I
 need to show them I'm a good teacher, and
 I choose the Editing Competition as a way
 to show them!

EDITING CLUB

Yeah! Yeah!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MISS AMY

We don't have to win, but we'll show them something!

EDITING CLUB

Yeah!

THE MAN

Why, Miss Amy?

MISS AMY

Why? You mean why do this? Maybe you all aren't really sure. I was so excited. Maybe I pushed you, or misunderstood. Oh, you don't have to go to the contest. It's okay, and I can...

THE MAN

No, Miss Amy, why don't we have to win? Let's win this thing!

EDITING CLUB

Yeah! Yeah! Yeah!

THE MAN

We got nothin' better to do between Christmas and New Years. And we gotta do this while we can. The new millenium is approaching.

INT. THE MAN'S HOUSE/BEDROOM - DARK

The Man's clock radio, next to his bed, comes on at 4:00 a.m., as seen in its large red digital numbers and letters. He opens his eyes and rises up, tired, and then falls back to his bed, eyes closed.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

It is very cold out now, even unseasonably so. And did I mention it's early? Oh, I said that, John. I know the newspaper delivery people are up now, and the milk men. Are there still milkmen, John? Yeah?. Anyway, anybody up now, believe me, has a reason to be up, or they would never be up at 4 a.m. Especially to hear me, John says.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Man opens his eyes.

THE MAN
(echoing and correcting the
radio voice)
Anybody up now, believe me, has a reason
to be up, or he or she would never be up
at 4 a.m. to hear you.

The Man reaches to turn off the radio. He gets up.

The Man goes to the small refrigerator in his room, viewed
from the other side. There is a glass atop the refrigerator.

The Man removes eggs from the refrigerator one by one and
deftly cracks five into the glass. He then removes a
container of plain yogurt from the still-open refrigerator
and dumps it into the blender that is atop the refrigerator.
Then he adds a banana and blends the two together.

The Man reaches for the blender and drinks the yogurt-banana
drink straight from the blender. He then picks up the glass
of eggs and reaches down to pour them into a pet food dish,
which his dog comes to wolf down.

THE MAN (cont'd)
Eggs for your shiny coat, Eugene, not
mine.

The Man shudders at the thought of drinking the eggs.

The Man grabs his coat with UNC insignia.

THE MAN (cont'd)
I'll wear a dull, yet magnificent, coat.

EXT. THE MAN'S HOUSE - DAWN

The Man steps outside. He pulls up the coat's hood and puts
on gloves. It is very dark.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He begins running down the center of the deserted street. A newspaper truck is seen driving by.

The Man passes the school and veers to the river. He pauses, heaving great gusts of exhausted breaths. He calls out some spelling facts and then walks a while with his hands on his head, having had trouble with the grammar lesson. A boy delivering the morning papers observes with amusement. The Man forces himself to begin running again and speaking.

Heading along the river, The Man pushes the button for the recorded commentary about the history of the region, the Haw River. It plays as he runs and he begins to mimic its proper language and correct pronunciation, but not very well.

He meets the two friends, Billy on his bike and Jose. They run and bike along together, talking back and forth with effort about the competition and then doing some translations back and forth. They make mistakes.

The two on foot climb up the school steps with much difficulty.

Billy can't ride up the steps on his bike, so he speaks in the others' ears by headphone walkie-talkie.

So they call out the answers as they run, to the same input from Billy, who circles on his bike below, stopping to look in his book for questions to ask. They are not too good, neither at the editing content nor at the running.

EXT. SCHOOL/BLEACHERS - AFTER SCHOOL

Miss Amy stands before the students, who sit on the bleachers. She wears the shirt with "DREAMER" printed on the front. There is a sign nearby "No Trespassing on new grass", which has been corrected, one 's' crossed out, the other missing 's' inserted with a caret. A "dont walk here" sign has the apostrophe inserted, and someone has added a "please".

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MISS AMY

Thanks for the shirt, guys. I'll wear it to the competition. Okay, Billy, what is... (grammar question)?

BILLY

(right answer)

Billy moves up the bleachers one level.

The camera angle widens and we see that the members of the Editing Club are all at about the same level, The Man a few steps below. Brandon, pockets of his jeans and shirts stuffed with things, walks amongst the players wiping the sweat from their faces and offering them water.

MISS AMY

Lovey, what is (grammar question)?

LOVEY

Uh...

SHANIQUA

(correct answer)

MISS AMY

All right, Lovey. And Shaniqua. Hmm. go up one-half level. No, for helping one another both go up two levels.

CUT TO:

Dr. Barefoot, in her office on the telephone, looks out the window and is surprised to see the students at the bleachers with Miss Amy. It begins to sprinkle, and the students are seen opening their umbrellas and holding them over their heads, Brandon helping. Dr. Barefoot notices the football team, running into the school building to the school. Dr. Barefoot looks apologetically thoughtful.

Dr. Barefoot puts down the telephone. She notices that it is 5:00 on her wall clock.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The Editing Club is still at the bleachers. She also notices the sign that has been corrected for faulty spelling.

BACK TO:

EXT. SCHOOL/KICKBALL FIELD BLEACHERS - AFTER SCHOOL

MISS AMY

Okay, time to go, but first.

Miss Amy turns on her portable tape player: "I Broke My Bones". The club members groan and then all sing the song, ending happily.

CUT TO:

Dr. Barefoot looks out her window and sees the team dispersing, hugging Miss Amy and smiling. She picks up the phone and dials.

DR. BAREFOOT

Mr. Jordan, let Miss Amy's group use the gym until 5:00. No, not today, it's 5 already. No. Any day they want it.

INT. SCHOOL/GYM - DAY

Jose and the others are sitting on the floor of the gym practicing. There is a moveable blackboard, on legs, and a few basketballs on the floor of the gym. There are a number of charts with grammar, spelling, and punctuation rules and proofreading symbols and copies of the books they use.

When the door to the outside opens it can be seen that it is raining outside. The kids are working on written work. They see who is right.

BILLY

Okay, let's do a speed round out loud, to keep us interested. I'll ask each of you in turn.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BILLY (CONT'D)

If you don't know it, say "pass". Okay, what's right, (grammar option one) or (grammar option two), Jose?

JOSE

(correct answer)

Jose then takes a basketball and shoots, and makes, a basket. Billy then asks the others, who get to shoot if correct.

BILLY

Emily, what is (grammar question)?

EMILY

(correct answer)

BILLY

Now, shoot, Emily.

EMILY

You know I don't like competition actually.

JOSE

Come on, Emily, you said you could do this. For Miss Amy. Okay?

Emily pauses, thinking.

JOSE (cont'd)

(frustrated)

You're really smart, Emily. But we need more than your brains. We need you. To care about something. About this competition. About trying to do better. About standing up for this.

Emily takes the basketball and shoots it. Into the basket.

Everyone is silent. Then they cheer.

Emily is embarrassed, though proud.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

EMILY

Go ahead, guys, please.

BILLY

Okay, Jose, what is (grammar question)?

JOSE

(correct answer)

Jose shoots. And misses the basket. There is a pause.

EMILY

(pausing, then applauding)
Yeah, we should applaud everyone.

Everyone claps.

The Big Guys look into the gym, hearing the noises. They come in, ready to play. When they notice what is going on, they nudge each other and are ready to poke fun. Then they pause and watch, especially The Man, seeing that he is enjoying himself.

BILLY

Frankie. (Grammar question)

FRANKIE

(correct answer)

The group cheers, The Man the most excitedly.

THE MAN

That was a hard one, Frankie. Great, man!

Frankie shoots for the basket and misses, but The man continues his cheer. The Big Guys look questioningly at The Man, shake their heads disgustedly, then leave. Then Big Guy 2 makes a gesture to Big Guy 1 and turns back toward the group. He stays, perplexed, sitting out of view to watch.

SERIES OF SHOTS - THE CLUB PRACTICING OVER A SERIES OF DAYS, IN EACH SHOT MORE AND MORE CLASSMATES ARE WATCHING AND THEN CHEERING AND THEN MR. JORDAN IS WATCHING, FIRST QUESTIONINGLY, THEN WITH SOME RESPECT AS WELL.

INT. SCHOOL/MISS FORTUNE'S CLASSROOM - DAY

The students usually in Miss Amy's class are in Miss Fortune's classroom.

MISS FORTUNE

We're switching teachers today to give us all a new perspective. You students have been doing very well, grade-wise with Miss Amy in her. Unusual class. But she has neglected to teach you some things that I routinely teach my classes.

The students bristle in defense of their teacher.

Miss Fortune (cont'd)

All learning is not...fun. Some you have to work at it - as I did in school. Now you are to write a one-page essay, nonfiction or fiction, about school and education. You must fill up the paper, and you must use your best cursive writing. Now you may begin.

The students begin to write on their lined paper before them on their desks.

INT. SCHOOL/MISS FORTUNE'S CLASSROOM - SOMEWHAT LATER

The Man is squirming around in his desk, trying to get his long body comfortable.

MISS FORTUNE

The Man. No, I need your given name. I will not call you such a slang name as The Man.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MISS FORTUNE (CONT'D)

Now, a nickname such as Billy for William or some other name that is the first part of a name, is acceptable to me. My given name is Louise. I have even been called Lou, and taken it feeling no disrespect, of course by those who have known me well and mean no disrespect. So, what is your given name? Come on, tell me.

THE MAN

I don't want to tell you, Miss Fortune. Everybody calls me The Man. I don't take no offense. They mean no disrespect. If they did I would take care of them. Ma'am.

MISS FORTUNE

You must tell me, The Man, so we can give you a new name, a derivative of your given name, a proper nickname.

THE MAN

(very softly, inaudibly)
My real name is Emmanuel.

MISS FORTUNE

Repeat it, so we can hear.

THE MAN

Emmanuel. My name is Emmanuel. Man, The Man. My preacher called me that, The Man. When I was a baby, at church, when I was baptized.

The students look up, amused at The Man's given name. He stares them down; they go back to writing.

Miss Fortune

(defeated, embarrassed,
overcome)

Very well, okay, well, let's get on with things. I've seen you around the school. I know you like to talk and carry on, but you probably don't write well. As well as you could. I know you can do somewhat better if you'd try but I won't require too much. So, give me your paper.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

THE MAN

Okay, Miss Fortune, I was through, and I think I did pretty well. I've gotten much better with my writing since Editing Club. Since I became a member of the Editing Club.

MISS FORTUNE

Very well, The Man, um. E-man, well, here is a dictionary.

She selects the easiest dictionary from a row of dictionaries on a shelf.

Miss Fortune (cont'd)

That's great: that you will look up the word. That's the kind of effort I encourage in MY classes.

The Man looks though the dictionary. He can't find the word.

THE MAN

Miss Fortune, I can't find the word.

MISS FORTUNE

(condescendingly)

Surely, it's here. Let's figure out the letters. Together.

She smiles smugly,.

Miss Fortune (cont'd)

What is the word, Emmanuel?

THE MAN

It's trap.

MISS FORTUNE

You mean "trap", with a short 'a' sound, Emmanuel. Trap, that's a good word, very sophisticated. I'm proud of you. We can find it here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

THE MAN

Nah, Miss Fortune, it's "trepidation",
like "fear". How do you spell it.

MISS FORTUNE

(shocked)

Oh. Trepidation. T-r-e-p-p-i-d-a-t-i-o-n.
trepidation.

Shaniqua and Lovey raise their hands excitedly.

Miss Fortune (cont'd)

No, girls it's not quite time to go to
lunch. The lunch bell, as I told you
before, and those who were listening
heard me say it, will be a little late
today.

LOVEY

No, Miss Fortune, it's one "p".

MISS FORTUNE

Bathroom passes are available if you're
though with your work, girls. Please
have some decorum.

SHANIQUA AND LOVEY

(in unison)

No, it's one "p" in trepidation, Miss
Fortune.

The class smiles and tries to control themselves. The bell
rings.

Miss Fortune recovers sufficiently to say a final word.

MISS FORTUNE

I'll see you after lunch, students, and
we'll read some of our papers. To the
class.

The students exit the classroom, some turning their eyes to
the ceiling in silent criticism.

INT. SCHOOL/MISS FORTUNE'S CLASSROOM - AFTER LUNCH

MISS FORTUNE

Folks, now we need to calm down. That was a fine lunch but we need to settle down now. Billy, let's hear your paper.

BILLY

I come to this country when young, two years ago. It very hard to understand what people say. I not such good student. I unhappy very much. People make fun.

MISS FORTUNE

Billy, that's a good start. You don't have to read more. We can go on to someone else.

BILLY

No, Miss Fortune, that part it has commas, like I say it, in quotes. There's more.

MISS FORTUNE

Okay, proceed, Billy.

BILLY

That's how I spoke until recently. I didn't speak very well, and I tried not to care about my speech. Then I entered Miss Amy's classroom. She let me be in the Editing Club and now I know that there are rules for Standard English that I can learn, too. I can speak a standard way that is right for this new country. I may never learn to talk with the color that The Man does, or know the idioms of Mexico, but I can speak Standard English to them, while I can also say, (Hello, friend, in Chinese). That is "hello, friend."

The class applauds. Miss Fortune realizes she can't do anything about it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MISS FORTUNE

Good. Sit down, Billy. Try to get your handwriting better next time. Next, let's hear from Jose. Jose, please come to the front and read your paper.

Jose walks to the front of the room and looks down at his paper for a few moments, silent. Then he begins to read.

JOSE

I hope you will understand this, Miss Fortune.

MISS FORTUNE

I am sure I will, Jose. Unless it's in Spanish, of course. We can't have that. Now read it, please.

JOSE

(reading from his paper)

I don't see any use in learning to speak and write correctly. I believe the way I speak is fine no matter how I speak. We all speak differently at home, each of us has color in our richness from other languages or from other regions. We have different idioms. Why can't we all continue to speak like that? Let's throw out our language books, our speech classes, our spelling, our grammar texts.

MISS FORTUNE

Enough of that, Jose, go to the office.

JOSE

But, Miss Fortune.

MISS FORTUNE

There is no discussion of this. You are to go to the principal's office and wait for the principal to see you. I will not have insubordination, even if Miss Amy allows it.

The class is shocked. Jose gets up to leave.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Emily, who holds a purple marker in her hand, looks angry.

EMILY

(furious and loud, for the first time ever)
Miss Fortune. That is not right. You didn't listen to Jose's whole report. He is a great student and he deserves to be heard.

MISS FORTUNE

(shocked, then authoritarian and enjoying it)
Well, I can see you are a trouble-maker, Emily. Probably always have been. I should have had you in third grade so I could straighten you out. Emily, you will stay after school in my room for twenty minutes. However, Jose you may finish, but I will not tolerate any profanity. Then you can go to the office and wait for Dr. Barefoot to deal with you.

JOSE

May I start from the beginning, Miss Fortune?

Miss Fortune nods, in a superior manner.

JOSE (cont'd)

I don't see any use in learning to speak and write correctly. I believe the way I speak is fine no matter how I speak. We all speak differently at home, each of us has color in our richness from other languages or from other regions. We have different idioms. Why can't we all continue to speak like that? Let's throw out our language books, our speech classes, our spelling, our grammar texts. However, I write this in parody, of many of us before we see the sense of standard ways of communicating within our one country. Had I written this in the style of the language of my neighborhood, or of the neighborhood of Billy's parents or of the neighborhood of The Man (looks to Miss Fortune) of Emmanuel many would not understand me.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JOSE (CONT'D)

So I write in the Standard American English taught us by our teachers, who appreciate our differences and our interest in preserving them while teaching us one shared way of communication. For it is only through use of this one standard language that we can ensure that all will hear what we are trying to tell, or trying to ask, or trying to ourselves teach.

The class sits quietly, impressed. Miss Fortune shows no expression. Then she smiles.

MISS FORTUNE

I can see the early English training in our third grade class did pay off. Very well, it is time to go, so pack up your things. You will be back in Miss Amy's room tomorrow. I will report to her about my views of your work - and attitudes.

The class leaves, Emily remaining in her desk. Miss Fortune knows she is there but says nothing to her. After exactly twenty minutes by the clock, she speaks.

Miss Fortune (cont'd)

Emily, you may go.

EXT. SCHOOL/TRACK AROUND FIELD - AFTER SCHOOL

Emily exits the school and puts her books on the ground. She goes to the track and begins running and jumping hurdles alone. She is pretty good at it. She notices a teacher leaving the school and stops her running and jumping until the teacher is out of view and she thinks she is alone. Then she begins again.

Jose steps from behind the shed marked "GAB team members sport's equipment", having clearly been there all along. The sign has been corrected with a purple marker, adding an apostrophe to the end of "members" and crossing the apostrophe from "sport's". Emily is embarrassed to see him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOSE

(embarrassed)

I wasn't spying. I was waiting for you to come out and I sat down to do my homework and I didn't realize you had come out. You were so quiet...and then I didn't know what to do. So finally I let you see me. I am sorry.

EMILY

You were waiting for me. Oh. Why?

JOSE

To thank you. Thank you.

EMILY

You are welcome. Anyway, I did what I needed to. Luckily, I've always been a troublemaker.

They both laugh. Then Jose points to the sign Emily has corrected.

JOSE

Trouble again.

They laugh again.

JOSE (cont'd)

Well, I'll run over there.

He walks about one-quarter of the track and begins to run there. He stops after running another quarter, and runs back to his start.

Then he runs again, this time pausing as if to stop at the same stopping point, but, instead, continuing until he runs next to Emily. They both run and jump, side by side, getting used to it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Then they run together, first one ahead, then the other, competing to get one and then the other to go faster and higher, both around the entire track, ending up at the hurdles again, which they jump side by side. The music is "With Two Wings".

They come to a stop.

JOSE (cont'd)
Want some help with all those books?

EMILY
(looking down at her few books)
No, I'm okay.

JOSE
Well, see you tomorrow.

EMILY
Sure. See you.

Emily and Jose walk off, in opposite directions.

EMILY (cont'd)
Tomorrow I'll have bigger things to carry: my history project is very big.

JOSE
Well, I'll be glad to be of assistance.

EMILY
Well, okay. See you.

Jose goes off whistling "With Two Wings". Emily goes off quietly, then hums "With Two Wings", taking a leap over a rock as she walks.

INT. SCHOOL/MUSIC ROOM - DAY

Frankie enters the music room, looking for Billy, who is in the room playing his violin, " classic number ".

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANKIE

Come on, Billy, we've got Editing Club.
We've got to get to the gym.

Billy starts putting up his violin. Richie has been standing at the doorway and has heard the last of Billy's playing. Richie comes into the room. He sits down at the piano and begins to play.

RICHIE

Hear this, guys.

Frankie comes by the doorway and comes in. He begins to drum with Richie's playing. Billy takes his violin back out of its case.

The Man comes by the doorway on his way to the gym for practice, hears the others and comes in. He adds words to what the others are playing, and there is a great rap (STET RAP, to be composed by someone for this film) with great music, about grammar and editing, composing, and proofreading, The Man providing the words, Frankie the drumming, Richie the piano, and Billy the violin.

The rest of the team, and Miss Amy, hear the music from the gym and come in. Soon Lovey and Shaniqua dance to the music. Emily and Jose sit near each other at desks, enjoying it all and smiling at each other a few times. Miss Amy loves it.

Then they all stop and go to the gym to practice.

EXT. ROADWAY/MISS AMY'S CAR - LATER

Jose sits in the back seat with The Man, Emily and Brandon. Frankie sits in the front.

The Man points excitedly to a car in front of them on the Interstate.

THE MAN

Look at that, guys. Now, I don't like people smoking around me, but I ain't had no particular problem with coal miners.

INSERT - CAR'S BUMPER STICKER: DON'T SELL CIGARETTES TO MINERS!

The group laughs.

MISS AMY

Let's stop for some ice cream, if you guys have time. On me. There's a little restaurant up here I know; I want you to see it.

EXT. RESTAURANT - IMMEDIATELY AFTER

The group halts at the restaurant door, as Miss Amy points out to them the signs on the door.

CUT TO:

SIGN PROCLAIMING "WE SERVE BREAKFAST AND LUNCH ACCEPT SUNDAY"

BACK TO:

MISS AMY

What's wrong?

EMILY

It means we serve breakfast and lunch and we accept that there is Sunday, because accept means like to receive, like a compliment. It should be 'except' Sunday. But I don't want to embarrass them.

MISS AMY

It's okay; we won't tell them. Now who sees something else?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THE MAN

This means they may accept Sunday but they keep holes in it.

CUT TO:

SIGN: WE KEEP SUNDAY HOLEY"

BACK TO:

JOSE

This means they have no service, I guess, really.

CUT TO:

NO SHIRTS. NO SERVICE.

BACK TO:

THE MAN

Maybe they don't wear shirts either. Oh, oh.

JOSE

They mean really "If you don't wear a shirt, we won't give you service."

INT. RESTAURANT - IMMEDIATELY AFTER

The group sits down and opens the menu. Emily spies on the menu "barely" (rather than barley) soup and a price of 1.09 with the cents sign for a scoop of ice cream (rather than \$1.09). There is a note that "we do not charge exuberant rates for our food, that is home-maid".

A sign posted on the wall notes "Try our chicken hot dogs: no meat, totally foul" and "If your order is not O.K."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

to you, we will replace it with a smile." A sign in the unisex rest room reminds "Employees must wash your hands." We see the group members responding with suppressed glee to these signs.

Miss Amy explains to the group that "roast beef with au jus" means roast beef 'with with' juice, a demonstration of why you should know what a foreign phrase means before you use it.

The group sit and eat ice cream and then get up to leave.

EXT. RESTAURANT/MISS AMY'S CAR - AFTER

MISS AMY

Okay, guys, who wants to go home first?

No one says anything. Then Emily feels she should say something.

EMILY

I guess I can go first, Miss Amy.

JOSE

No, I kinda think Brandon or The Man should go first. Uh. .they probably have more homework left to do.

Miss Amy senses that Jose would like to ride a while with Emily but the guys are oblivious and she doesn't say anything, just kind of smiles at Jose in the rear view window. Jose sort of smiles back and then looks out the window, embarrassed.

JOSE (cont'd)

Or maybe not.

MISS AMY

Okay, the Man, then Brandon, then Emily and then Jose.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

At the end of the trip, Jose walks Emily to her door, then comes back to the car to sit with Miss Amy. Then Miss Amy takes Jose home.

INT. SCHOOL/PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Dr. Barefoot is typing on the computer.

DR. BAREFOOT
 Okay, newsletter done! Spellcheck done!
 Print one for each staff member! Done!
 Ready, Miss scarlet.

Miss Scarlet places one copy in each teacher mailbox. She also posts one copy on the hall bulletin board opposite the door of the office.

INT. SCHOOL/HALLWAY IN FRONT OF PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Dr. Barefoot looks up. The Man is writing on the posted newsletter.

DR. BAREFOOT
 Don't vandalize our bulletin board, young man.

She looks down again at her work. Another student marks on the newsletter. Dr. Barefoot rises and strides toward the bulletin board. She stares at the corrections and then quickly takes down the paper.

INT. SCHOOL/TEACHERS' LOUNGE - DAY

Miss Amy reads a letter.

MISS AMY
 Oh, no.
 (reads)
 (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MISS AMY (CONT'D)

"There is a problem with your registration... Your group does not meet our requirements." Oh, no!

DR. BAREFOOT

(overhearing Miss Amy)

Miss Amy, I'm sure there are other competitions. You know this is an older person's thing. I'm going to the conference anyway, for the linguistics. Why don't you come? You did some work in that area, didn't you?

MISS AMY

Maybe I did. I need to. I have an appointment.

Miss Amy dashes from the room.

INT. SCHOOL/MISS AMY'S CLASSROOM - SOON AFTER

Miss Amy walks into the classroom. The Club members are chatting, some seated in desks, some standing, some yelling out the window at friends outside. She as-if smiles.

MISS AMY

Look, guys we have a problem with the competition.

FRANKIE

(stops his drumming)

I can be quiet, Miss Amy, I didn't mean nuthin', I'll be quieter. I won't drum at the competition.

Non-seated club members scramble to sit in desks.

MISS AMY

No, you guys are fine. It's the competition. They say we don't meet the requirements. They sent me a letter.

All are silent.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THE MAN

We're not smart enough, Miss Amy?

MISS AMY

(pulling herself together)

Oh, no, I mean, yes, you're smart enough. They just say. Well, we'll just have to find another competition. Somewhere. That we can go to!

Miss Amy looks away for a couple of seconds. The kids are silent.

BILLY

Ret's rook at the lures, Miss Amy.

MISS AMY

(so sad she can't comprehend his accent)

Rook at the lures?

Silence. Then laughs.

SCOTT

Yes, he's right, let's find out what the rules really say. Hand over the recipe.

Miss Amy hands him the letter.

SCOTT (cont'd)

(looks at the letter)

Well, there're no rules here. But there's a number. Let's call them.

Everyone shouts in assent.

MISS AMY

Well, then let's go to the phone in the teachers' lounge.

The whole group troops to the teachers' lounge and stands around while Miss Amy phones.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MISS AMY (cont'd)

(on telephone)

Amy Smith. Yes, I entered the competition by telephone seven weeks ago, but I've just received a letter that says we are not eligible, and they've been working so hard. You have had students? Yes, well we're a school, Grady A. Brown School. no, we're not a community college. No, not Grady A. Brown High School. They're sixth graders. Excuse me a sec. Jose, get that magazine over there for me in my mailbox. The new issue of "English is Our Mother Tongue". It has the contest in it too.

Jose hands her the magazine and she rapidly leafs through it until she finds the advertisement for the competition.

MISS AMY (cont'd)

(on the telephone)

I'm back. It doesn't say here in the advertisement that there is a required age. The person on the phone didn't ask our ages. Well, she didn't say she was new. Well, will you check the rules to be sure. Well, I just need you to. Sure I'll hold.

(long pause then smiling)

Okay, then we'll see you there. Thank you. No, we won't expect any special privileges.

Miss Amy hangs up the telephone. Everyone except Emily screams and then they cheer Miss Amy's cheer. Mr. Jordan looks in; all get quiet.

MR. JORDAN

Students are not allowed in the teachers lounge, and there is a penalty.

MISS AMY

(firmly, with a stern face)

That will be all, Mr. Jordan.

Mr. Jordan gulps, then gives up, and leaves.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Miss Amy looks down at the magazine.

INSERT - PHOTOGRAPH IN MAGAZINE OF SMILING COLLEGE STUDENTS
WITH THE CAPTION: EXSEL WINNERS: PHI BETA KAPPA GROUP EXCELS
AGAIN

It hits Miss Amy how big this thing is.

MISS AMY

They'll take us. But we don't have to do
it, guys. There's stiff competition out
there. I don't know.

(Miss Amy is wavering)

THE MAN

Miss Amy, get yourself together. We are
in this thing!

MISS AMY

Okay, it's in two weeks, guys. Are we
going?

ALL

Yes we are, Miss Amy!

THE MAN

And we gonna win!

BILLY

And we are going to win!

All laugh and look happy.

JOSE

Okay, team we have our work cut out for
us.

BIG TIME SHOT OF EARLY AM PERFORMANCE: MUCH BETTER

The Man steps outside his house. He is dressed in a well-worn sweat suit with a hood, gloves, and sneakers. It is very dark.

He begins running down the center of the deserted street, much more quickly than before. A newspaper truck is seen driving by.

The Man passes the school and veers to the river. He calls out some grammar facts expertly, not needing to stop his running to rest. The boy delivering the morning papers observes with serious appreciation.

Heading along the river, The Man pushes the button for the recorded commentary about the history of the region. It plays as he runs and he expertly copies it, adding a sentence at the end that seems entirely appropriate, an improvement even.

The Man meets the two friends, Billy on his bike and Jose. They run and bike along together, doing translations back and forth. They make no mistakes. The two on foot jog up the school steps without difficulty. Billy asks them questions through an earpiece, first of one and then of the other. They answer. Then Billy asks both of them questions and they answer in unison. They are good. At the top they raise their arms in triumph and dance around in that manner.

Dr. Barefoot driving to school sees them, rolls down her window and hears them as well. She is impressed.

INT. SCHOOL/MISS AMY'S CLASS - DAY

SCOTT

(pointing to a symbol on his
proofreading chart)

And this "^" means 'insert what is above
into the sentence', and "stet" means
"leave it like it was".

JOSE

Like what? Why use it? Why change it in
the first place?

THE MAN

Like you change your mind and say leave
it like it was. Let it stand, they say.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MISS AMY

Now, let's use these marks to correct this.

Miss Amy brings out a large chart with paragraphs on it.

INSERT - CHART:

Where is mother

Mama them goin two town They done left.

When we goin to Were not hardly ready
I have began to get ready all ready

And whose goin with we

Knot Sam He be sick He catched the
flew He lay down to rest

I seen how you shooted the basketball
in the game Congradulations You a
animal You gone beat every one when
you're in college

I'll come see you in an university game
a UNC game at leased

MISS AMY

Here's a paper for each of you with these
same lines on it. Work on it yourself
and we'll see who is quickest and most
accurate. We can decide together how to
edit the big one.

The club members focus on their papers, working and feeling pressured.

Jose is the quickest but doesn't check his work well enough. Richie looks at Jose's paper and points out a major error, and Jose is appreciative.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Then there is proofreading of the big chart, Scott marking the errors with the proofreading symbols. There is discussion of the various errors and apparent errors.

INT. SCHOOL/PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

DR. BAREFOOT
 (speaking into microphone)
 And teachers get those forms in now.
 (pushing a button, turning to
 the student assistant)
 How do I talk to only one class. Oh, I
 think this is it. And, finally, Miss Amy,
 will a member or members of the Editing
 Club please come to the office. To
 proofread a letter for me. Thank you.

The announcement can be heard blaring from all classrooms.

Hearing the principal, the students in Miss Amy's class
 scream with delight.

Dr. Barefoot looks around at the incredulous student
 assistant.

DR. BAREFOOT (cont'd)
 Well, it's an important letter to the
 school board. And a computer spellcheck
 is just like a calculator. It can make
 things quicker but you still need to know
 how to add and subtract. And spell and
 keep your grammar perfect. Perfectly.
 Perfect.

EXT. SCHOOL/KICKBALL FIELD - DAY

The classes of Miss Amy and Miss Fortune again play opposite
 one another. The designated cheerleaders are Lovey, Shaniqua,
 The Man, and Billy. The cheer is quite better than those
 previously, as all get into it.

Then The Man, still in the cheerleading line, nods to Frankie
 and begins to move to the rap-like rhythm.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Then The Man begins to rap and soon the girls and then the other kids join in, with the rap about editing, composed in the music room.

Miss Amy joins in too. Soon the whole lot of Miss Amy's kids (not just the Editing Club members) are chanting and cheering and having fun, even those playing the kickball game, who come over to the bleachers, encouraging the kids in Miss Fortune's class to come as well. Finally all the kids from both classes join in this as well as they can, at first wondering and laughing at it and then joining in.

Then the rap turns to more of a cheering sound, still led by The Man, with different factions of the Editing Club translating the cheer to their own vernacular and the whole ending up cheering together in Standard English, and cheering **for** Standard English in the end.

We be da best oh yes us are; We are the best; oh, yes we are.

Everyone loves it. Miss Fortune watches disapprovingly until the music and spirit get to her and she mouths some of the words, having particular difficulty with the Black Vernacular words and phrases.

INT. SCHOOL/MISS FORTUNE'S CLASS - LATER

Miss Fortune is reading a book entitled, "Black English Vernacular (From 'Ain't' to 'Yo mama'): the Words Politically Correct Americans Should Know".

INT. HOTEL/BOYS' ROOM - NIGHT

The kids are spending the night at the hotel where the competition is to take place. There is a sign on the wall: "Boys' room". There are two sleeping bags on each large bed and another three on the floor for the seven boys: The Man, Billy, Scott, Richie, Brandon, Jose, and Frankie.

A knock is heard at the door.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MISS AMY

Come in.

A bellhop brings in three pizzas and some eggrolls.

BELLHOP

These three all for you and she?

ALL THE BOYS

(correcting him)

Are all these three for you and her?

BELLHOP

(oblivious)

That's what I wanna know. Does them girls want some: do I deliver a pizza to their room?

ALL THE BOYS

(correcting again)

Do those girls want some?

BELLHOP

Yeah, that's what I wanna know.

MISS AMY

It's okay. We'll call the girls in here.

The Bellhop leaves.

MISS AMY (cont'd)

Let's not embarrass anybody, guys.
Brandon, you're the manager. Will you please get the girls?

Brandon looks up. He is playing chess with Scott.

BRANDON

Sure, Miss Amy.

Jose goes to the room across the hall and knocks. Emily opens the door, and smiles at him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Inside the room there is a sign that reads "Girls' Room". There are two sleeping bags on one bed and one on the other.

JOSE

Is Miss Amy staying with you girls?

EMILY

No, she's got her own room.

BACK TO:

Emily, Shaniqua, and Lovey enter the room and join the pizza party. Brandon provides paper cups of ice to all and pours Coke from a large bottle. All chow down.

BRANDON

Miss Amy, I sure am glad you let me come. This manager stuff is really good for me. It teaches me to be responsible and even to check my work at school - from when I didn't have all the stuff you guys needed that time cause I didn't check. Now I remember to go back over things to make sure. Now, you guys better check your work tomorrow.

SCOTT

(pointing to the chess board)
Yeah, and I'm gonna put you in check.

BRANDON

In your dreams, Scott. I am all that when it comes to chess. And I never even knew I could learn to play chess. But I can. I know the rules and I like knowing the rules. I guess I never cared too much about rules before. Maybe I'll even get the rules of talking some day. And writing.

JOSE

Sounds like you've been getting them already.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

THE MAN

I never saw any reason to try at school before. I thought, "Who cares?" Also I'm always the best shooter at basketball, so I like to do that.

The others look approvingly.

THE MAN (cont'd)

And the best kicker at kickball.

OTHERS

(dissenting)

Right, yeah, sure, no way.

RICHIE

Now, Jose might just be the best at kickball.

Others nod and assent.

THE MAN

Okay, but I'm pretty durn good at kickball, too. So I tried pretty hard in basketball and kickball. I just wasn't brave enough to compete if I wasn't gonna win. I never told why I'm not on the basketball team. Cause I'm not sure I can be the best at passing and at defense and all that, just shooting. And kicking (with a look at Jose). That's not fair to everyone else. Now I know better. I've been working my butt off for this and it was **hard**. I wasn't good at it at all.

BILLY

I have been working diligently and it is onerous, as I am not proficient.

All laugh and pat both on the back.

EMILY

I have learned about competition from this.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

EMILY (CONT'D)

It stretches you, helps you do your best.
I might even try out for track and field
next year.

All are astonished.

THE MAN

(breaking the mood)

I be thinkin I gone do some runnin' or
somethin' next year show nuff.

All laugh. Except Emily. Then she laughs too.

BILLY

Hey, guys, look at this, they got it
wrong, this is so funny.

Billy points to Chinese writing on the eggroll container. Of
course, no one else understands it. There is silence. Then,
Jose speaks.

JOSE

I guess we have a lot more to learn.

Everyone breaks up, laughing.

INT. HOTEL/MISS AMY'S ROOM - SOMEWHAT LATER

Dr. Barefoot is standing in Miss Amy's room talking to her.

DR. BAREFOOT

Miss Amy, you've gotten together really a
nice field trip here. That'll look good
to the committee. And maybe the kids will
find the contest educational as well. The
other competitors are college-age and
above, you know, so our kids won't get
very far, but it's still nice they're
here. I congratulate you for that. Well,
I have a lecture tomorrow afternoon so
I'll most likely miss the early stages of
the competition.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DR. BAREFOOT (CONT'D)

I'll see the finals, but you know, they'll no doubt weed out the lower scorers in some manner first.

(seeing Miss Amy's face drop)

I mean recognize their efforts and all and encourage them. So, I mean if I miss seeing the Editing Club perform, I'm still glad they came. I mean you brought them here. and I'm sure it will be educational.

Miss Amy says nothing.

DR BAREFOOT (CONT'D)

Well, good night, Miss Amy.

MISS AMY

Good night, Dr. Barefoot.

Dr. Barefoot leaves the room.

As Miss Amy is walking from the door, there is another knock at the door.

Miss Amy turns, opens the door, and sees standing there a woman about Miss Amy's age but much more expensively and precisely dressed and made up.

YOUNG WOMAN

(speaking quickly, words in a rush)

Amy, I saw you were registered here. I wanted to see you. How are you? Are you in a linguistics program?

Miss Amy stares, somewhat shocked, at the woman, who continues speaking rapidly.

YOUNG WOMAN (cont'd)

I'm at Stanford but I don't get to come back east much. What program are you in? How close is the big Ph.D.? Mine is going so well.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MISS AMY

(embarrassed)

Oh, I'm teaching now. It's great to see you, Connie. It's late and I have a lot to do tomorrow.

YOUNG WOMAN

(offhand)

Me, too, I'm giving a lecture.
(clearly disappointed at Miss Amy's perceived academic success)

Oh, gee, you've finished your degree.
(pulling herself together)

Wow, where are you teaching?

There is another knock at the door. Miss Amy goes to the door and opens it. Jose stands there. He comes in, closing the door. Then there is another knock, and Miss Amy lets Billy and Richie come in.

JOSE

We just want to ask you a few questions before we go to bed.

YOUNG WOMAN

You've had kids, too!

(notices their ages, computes)

Oh, you must have married someone with kids. Somebody older.

There is another knock, and Miss Amy lets Scott in.

YOUNG WOMAN (cont'd)

(looking at Scott's purple, standing up hair)

Someone. Foreign.

MISS AMY

(pulling herself together and herself talking fast)

No, these are my students. We're here to compete in the editing competition tomorrow. We need to talk now, thanks for stopping by. We'll have to catch up later.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Miss Amy escorts the woman to the door. As she leaves all the club members rush in.

LOVEY AND SHANIQUA

Miss Amy, can we visit the competition room tonight? So we can sleep better.

INT. HOTEL/BALLROOM - SOON AFTER

The Editing Club members and Miss Amy stand in the Ballroom, decorated festively with banners and signs and covers on the tables. There is a big screen TV and blackboards and a podium. The Editing Club members look silently.

An ELECTRONICS TECHNICIAN of the competition is trying out the TV, and the big screen shows the club as they stand there now, on screen obviously a motley, young, scared group. He looks up at them and addresses them.

ELECTRONICS TECHNICIAN

Don't be worried. It doesn't matter how you do in this contest.

The members look puzzled.

ELECTRONICS TECHNICIAN(cont'd)

(looking down at his
screwdriving)

Yeah, you can be sure the people will get a kick out of seeing you here no matter what. Just seeing you kids here is enough.

The members leave the room silently.

CUT TO:

They are seen on the big monitor, looking desolate and young.

INT. HOTEL/ELEVATOR—SOON AFTER

In the elevator coming back up to their rooms, the club members are silent. They look down. They look almost despondent.

The doors shut, then reopen to allow two casually-dressed persons to get on.

PERSON #1

I hear they're having some sort of educational thing here.
 (looks around at the kids, then to friends with him)
 Guess they wouldn't know about that.
 (to The Man)
 Hey, I guess you play basketball, huh?

THE MAN

(looking around him as if he can't believe the question is to him, despite his height, then seriously)
 Nah, not me.

PERSON #1

Oh.

The doors open and the two persons depart. Our group is silent.

As they doors close, Shaniqua and Lovey read the agenda of the larger meeting posted on the elevator wall.

SHANIQUA

We're on at...

LOVEY

three.

The group is still serious. They are silent. Then the elevator stops again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A serious-looking SCHOLAR gets on the elevator, with several older students, also serious in demeanor.

SCHOLAR
 (to older students)
 Her linguistic work is positively
 antediluvian. She has a plethora.

The scholar exits the elevator with his companions.

THE MAN
 His aunt Diluvian got a plethora. Man,
 oh, man.

All crack up. They determinedly calm down, then fall silent again. The elevator stops.

Two conference participants, a PROFESSOR and a FEMALE GRADUATE STUDENT, get on the elevator.

PROFESSOR
 I find, as is so often
 (pronouncing the 't' in
 'often')
 the case, this conference is amusing, but
 puerile. There should be less discussion
 and more didacticism. And more
 encouragement to teach language, that is
 more encouragement not of the common
 teacher, but of us, who are learned, as
 indeed some of us are much more evolved
 in our knowledge of language than
 (nodding toward our group)
 the common man, and...
 (smiling patronizingly at his
 woman companion, trying to
 sound non sexist, as she
 maintains a determinedly
 serious silence)
 the common woman, can ever be, and thus,
 we should teach, effect those others who
 we know to be less learned.

A rather long silence follows; then Emily speaks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

EMILY

(quietly, looking down)
We should teach, affect those others whom
we know to be less learned.

PROFESSOR

(not really hearing what she
said)
Oh, a future teacher. What did you say,
young lady, you there in such a pretty
blouse?

EMILY

(embarrassed, but firm)
You meant to say 'We should teach, **affect**
those others **whom** we know to be less
learned'.

The professor looks shocked.

JOSE

(in an offhand manner)
And I think, you know, drop 'others': it
sounds better.

The professor looks even more shocked.

The door opens. Before the professor and the woman graduate
student can completely depart, The Man speaks.

THE MAN

I abhor didacticism myself, so I hate to
correct you, but I really prefer 'often'
without the 't' sound, as is correct
linguistically. But, go ahead, we can
understand you anyway. Now, you all have
fun.

The two exit the elevator, the woman smiling back
surreptitiously at the kids as she continues to walk
seriously with the professor.

Behind the closed elevator doors, our group breaks up, there
are various exclamations and high-5's.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

They calm down as a group of COLLEGE STUDENTS gets on the elevator. The two groups look at one another, both in their own ways trying not to appear too obvious.

COLLEGE STUDENT #1
(to other older student)
This conference is somewhat boring, but I think I'll like the competition tomorrow.

SCOTT
Us, too. I mean, we also think we'll like it. We think we'll like it too.

The college student who spoke turns to look at Scott and seems to stare at his purple hair. Scott looks down; the others are quiet, but look like they are ready to come to his defense, as they assume there is something negative in the college student's mind. The elevator stops at the college students' floor.

OLDER STUDENT #1
(as he and friends get off the elevator)
I was trying to figure out the color. Grape Kool Aid with Juicy Juice. Maybe not. My hair was about that shade last year, but not so great looking as yours. See you guys.

The tension is broken again with our guys, who are relieved and happy.

The group members arrive at their floor.

GROUP
Good night. See you guys tomorrow. Get your beauty sleep, creep. See ya later, alligator.

They start to leave the elevator. Then The Man does a double take and herds them back in the elevator with his hands.

THE MAN
Come on, Miss Amy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

MISS AMY

What?

THE MAN

Cheer, start your cheer!

Miss Amy smiles, looks around, shrugs happily, then leads the cheer. All cheer along, no one mocking it and all joining in, vociferously.

MISS AMY

Well we've got the...volume. And we've got the enthusiasm, and we've studied hard, so we sure should do well tomorrow.

THE MAN

At least on the oral part.

INT. HOTEL/HALLWAY - IMMEDIATELY AFTER

They exit the elevator to the curious look of other hotel guests in the hall.

INT. HOTEL/BALLROOM - NEXT DAY

The ballroom is full of people, and there is excitement in the air.

Miss Amy enters with the team of Emily, Shaniqua, Lovey, Jose, The Man, Scott, Billy, and Frankie. They are all in some state of shock.

They notice to the side of the room a group of people, all in their early twenties, dressed in tasteful sweaters with Phi Beta Kappa keys on them. They are nice, well-mannered, subdued, but make discrete glances at the kids.

MISS AMY

They won last year. And the year before.
 (noticing the group's fearful
 looks)
 (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MISS AMY (CONT'D)

We're here to do our best. We needn't be afraid.

SHANIQUA

Let's just try not to be too awful; I don't wanna go home embarrassed.

A well-dressed woman approaches Miss Amy.

WOMAN

(quietly)

Who are these kids? They don't belong here!

(to the Editing Club members)

Hey, where do you need to be, kids? There's a directory in the hall. Oh, that's kind of complicated. Ask at the desk about children's activities, why don't you?

MISS AMY

They're with me.

WOMAN

Oh, I beg your pardon. Your children have come to cheer you on.

MISS AMY

(pulling herself together)

No, these are my students.

WOMAN

Well, they can just sit here and watch you anyway!

MISS AMY

No, they're here to compete in this competition.

WOMAN

Oh.

The woman walks off.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Miss Amy looks around the room.

MISS AMY

Well, I don't recognize anyone. Okay,
guys, that's okay. We don't need anybody
but ourselves.

Everyone nods in agreement but looks glum. They stand, unsure of whether to look for chairs, where to put their hands, and whom to talk to.

Suddenly, people from Grady A. Brown School swarm in: Miss Scarlet , Elizabeth and Meredith, Jose's grandmother, BILLY'S MOTHER, EMILY'S FATHER and EMILY'S MOTHER with a SMALLER GIRL child looking like Emily in tow, FRANKIE'S FATHER, SHANIQUA'S MOTHER and LOVEY'S MOTHER (looking identical, though different colors in skintone), THE MAN'S VERY TALL MOTHER and THE MAN'S SHORT FATHER, BRANDON'S FATHER and BRANDON'S MOTHER (both carrying lots of things in his pockets, as per Brandon), and Dr. Barefoot.

They are greeted by The Editing Club members.

All who have come in to support our troupe have on yellow shirts with one letter on the front of each, the small child wearing a mark that looks like a comma. They speak to the team with encouragement and then line up, against the wall, thusly:

WE WHAT THE RED ERIE

The person wearing "!" (exclamation point), SCOTT'S FATHER, his hair standing up like Scott's but a natural, sandy color, arrives and thus:

WE WHAT THE RED ERIE!

Then person wearing "R" arrives, Mr. Jordan and the others scurry to arrange themselves, and thus:

WE DREW THE HAIR TREE!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Then the person wearing "M" arrives, Miss Fortune, and all scramble and thus:

WHERE WITH TED REAMER!

The people move around again and stop at:

WEREW ITH THED REA MER!

The letters separate correctly, as:

WERE WITH THE DREAMER!

Then, the small girl, who has wandered off and who is wearing the " ' "(apostrophe), returns and is placed on a chair to raise her level.

WE'RE WITH THE DREAMER!

Miss Amy loves it; her eyes tear up.

MISS AMY (cont'd)
For once, I am. Speechless. Thanks, guys.

Big Guy 1 and Big Guy 2 come in, acting for once out of place. They ask something we can't hear of an official standing at the door and are greeted with a polite "I beg your pardon", as the official does not understand their vernacular. However, they are clearly welcomed to the room.

The Big Guys then address a very attractive girl in a mini-skirt, who does not understand them either, but who clearly wants to. They give up.

BIG GUY 1
(to big guy 2)
Maybe we need to know this Standard
English stuff after all.

Big Guy 2 looks at him reprovngly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

BIG GUY 1 (cont'd)

Come on, man. For hot mommas like that
I'd speak British.

The Big Guys have lost their strut and look for unobtrusive chairs. Then The Man sees them and nods, and they nod back, all three clearly happy to see one another. Brandon sees the Big Guys and, with importance, directs them to seats with him and Richie, as there is an announcement about the competition beginning and all in the room fall quiet.

The teams who are registered for the competition all go to their assigned tables, each with signs with their school or professional group. There are eight chairs at each table, and one computer scanner.

ANNOUNCER

Now we're going to hear a reading of the
contest material, so listen, all
contestants.

JUDGE

(off-task discussion with a
colleague, while holding the
microphone and turning it on)
Yes, we need to write up the data,
irregardless of what it shows.

The judge turns to his paper to read the contest material.

The Man raises his hand and waves it wildly.

JUDGE (cont'd)

Yes, young man

THE MAN

(blurting it out quickly)
Yes, we need to write up the data,
regardless of what they show.

There is a silence in the room, then everyone breaks up. The Man looks around the room, bewildered.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

JOSE

That wasn't a test item, The Man.

THE MAN

I'm sorry, your, your, your, your honor.
I was mistaken, I thought this was the
oral contest. Sorry, please don't
disqualify my team, your honor.

JUDGE

(smiling)

That's okay. And you are quite correct in
your response, young man.

The whole room applauds.

JUDGE (cont'd)

Actually I guess all of you haven't
heard. The Board decided that we are not
going to have the oral portion of the
competition today, due to lack of
interest. Well, actually lack of
proficiency, within the college student
screening group.

Our troupe looks crestfallen. They can't believe they won't
get to compete orally.

JUDGE (cont'd)

Seems like it's a difficult thing to do,
to correct and play back spoken English.
except for you, young man, I congratulate
you.

Our team is pleased with the compliment to The Man but still
very unhappy.

JUDGE (cont'd)

One written essay will be the total
competition. When there is complete
silence, I will hand out the papers for
you to begin.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

After the members are in place and the silence is complete, an official hands out to each group nine papers, one for each team member and one extra.

HEAD JUDGE

You will prepare a corrected version of this paper, using standard proofreader's marks. You will then submit the corrected version to me by scanner, so that the papers can be viewed by all.

The other groups start talking to each other, increasingly loudly without any clear process for completing the exercise. Their interaction about the answers is unnecessarily pedantic.

In contrast, our team members work separately, each first employing his editing specialty, so they are at first silent. When the group members have completed their individual sheets they enter their changes, in pencil, on the ninth sheet, which they pass around.

Then they confer and pull all elements together on one sheet. The other teams have much more discussion and disagreement and get more frustrated. Our members concur on all but one item, which they discuss and finally decide on the compromise come to by Emily and Jose, who have most vehemently clashed in their answers.

Richie stands nearby with a reminder sign of "check" (as in check your work). The Man looks up at the sign, nods, and looks at the paper again, indeed finding a missing mark.

Brandon notices the group is finishing, and he approaches the judge. The judge nods, and Brandon approaches our group, taking their paper silently and putting it into the scanner.

When all have been scanned to the judge, the papers of the contestants are made visible to all through overhead projection.

The judge reads each paper in turn and marks errors, using proofreader's marks. All papers have one or more errors. Our team's paper is read last. There are no marks made on it, and the judge smiles. Our team smiles.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

Then the judge makes a mark. The item the team was in disagreement about is marked wrong. They are dismayed and try to keep their chins up. Then the judge looks again at their paper and thinks, consults his grading sheet, speaks with a colleague, and returns to the papers. He marks one error on the one paper with no errors. He changes the others; all have one or more errors. He arrives at our team's paper. He reads; he thinks. He writes and circles the word 'stet' above the edit and underscoring the selection with dashes. This signifies that the paper is perfect as submitted by the heroes.

We see the judges making their blue pencil marks on overhead projection on large television screens. This is the finale: the tension is broken, and the auditorium goes crazy with yelling and banners as the heroes hug and cry and scream! The other team members jump over the table to come and shake the hands of our members. The background music is terrific.

Emily finally screams a cheer; Jose holds Emily's hand, for a few seconds.

Still at their places, the team members yell, first one and then the rest "Miss Amy" (yes, as in Rocky yelling "Adrienne".)

Miss Amy finds her way through the crowd to her team, and they tearfully hug.

Dr. Barefoot screams her heart out! Connie the young woman screams too and Brian comes in. Dr. Barefoot calms down as several PROFESSOR-TYPES approach her and begin speaking with her, inaudible to us.

DR. BAREFOOT
(to the professor-types)
...and we felt that starting our students young was important. We want to see them compete locally, and we want them to compete annually in competitions such as this.

Our team approaches Dr. Barefoot and hears her speaking.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

DR. BAREFOOT (cont'd)

I think we can get that actor interested in this, in sponsoring editing competitions in the schools. You know, that actor who is obsessed with grammar. He's really famous, a great actor. You know, Wilton. Wilton. Will. Will Smith!

THE MAN

Yeah, that actor Will Smith. He's the man!

Richie sits at the piano in the ballroom and begins to play. The team happily performs their editing song as the film ends.

THE END

Over the credits a raucous, simple, repetitive song like "I Broke My Bones in Louisiana" plays loudly.

Oral translations are shown during the credits,
but backwards,
from Standard American English to other vernaculars,
in scenes excerpted from the movie
and in others added for the credits.