

POPULARITY

By Thomas Hischak

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CHARACTERS

Delia Connors	leader of the senior sorority
Patsy, Birdie, Candy	cheerleaders
Lizzy Bennet	a senior
Jane Gideon	a senior, Lizzy's best friend
Mary, Kitty, Charlotte	other members of the senior sorority
Gary	Delia's long time boyfriend
Fred 1, Fred 2, Ned	jocks
Will McHenry	part-time janitor
Dylan Atkins	a new student, a senior
Brent Thurman	his best friend, also new in school, a senior
Lydia Bennet	a freshman, Lizzy's sister
Caroline Thurman	a freshman, Brent's sister
Myron Collins	a rich transfer student, a senior
Ginny Atkins	Dylan's sister

PLACE

Ralph Waldo Emerson High School

TIME

Fall, Winter, Spring, 1957-1958

PROPS

3 Pompoms
Push broom
Head bandage
Posters and marking pens
5 Cafeteria trays with empty plates and milk cartons
Letter in envelope
Wheelchair
Bag of bread crumbs
2 1950s Telephones

Note: all students carry textbooks and notebooks in scenes at school. There were no school backpacks in the 1950s.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

The action of the play takes place in several locations in and around Emerson High School so scene changes should be avoided. A unit set with separate areas will work best: a row of lockers in one part of the stage, a table in the cafeteria in another, and an open space to designate the gym and the other places. The best solution is to keep things simple and open.

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ACT I

At Rise: Lights up on DELIA CONNORS who addresses the audience. SHE is a loud, talkative, lively and somewhat overbearing senior girl - a natural leader.

DELIA: It is common knowledge that the aim of every senior boy is to get a popular senior girl as his date for the prom. Unfortunately, most boys are creeps and don't know that this is their one and true aim during senior year. So we girls get stuck doing all the planning and end up making all the arrangements. It is a sad but true fact of life and, consequently, good preparation for marriage or jobs in the real world. Things being that way, the time to start is not a few weeks before the prom in May but on the very first day of school in September. Like it or not, it takes that long. So I say, girls face up to the fact and get busy or weep into your pillow forever after.

(DELIA exits as lights come up on the gym where PATSY, BIRDIE and CANDY, dressed in cheerleader uniforms, are practicing. They are attractive, lively senior girls. CANDY is less sharp than the other two.)

PATSY, BIRDIE, CANDY: "We're the girls from Emerson! We don't give up and we don't give in! Tonight our victory we dedicate, to the class of nineteen hundred and fifty-eight! Rah, Rah! Go, team, go!"

PATSY: Birdie, you put the wrong arm up again!

BIRDIE: Did not. We changed that part.

PATSY: You're thinking of the "sink 'em - stink 'em" cheer. You're supposed to put the right arm up on "dedicate."

CANDY: I liked it better when we put both arms up.

PATSY: We gotta save that for "fifty-eight." You can't give away the ending.

BIRDIE: I don't know what difference it makes. The team will lose anyway... now that Moose Wilkins has graduated.

CANDY: I think I was in love with Moose!

BIRDIE: Me, too!

PATSY: Will you two stop talking like a bunch of rejects! Don't you know that being a cheerleader is the highest level a girl can reach in high school aside from Student Council secretary? Where's your pride?

BIRDIE: The only reason we had a winning season last year was because of the Moose. We'll get clobbered this Friday night, I know it.

PATSY: Moose Wilkins was a hairy oaf with a glandular problem who took six years to graduate! Get over it! Now let's run the "class of fifty-eight" cheer again.

CANDY: I thought he was cute.

PATSY: "We're the girls from Emerson!"

ALL THREE: "We don't give up and we don't give in!"

CANDY: Patsy, does "don't give in" really rhyme with "Emerson"?

PATSY: It does in cheerleading. Now once again...

(CHEERLEADERS continue in silence as the lights fade on them and come up on DELIA with MARY, KITTY and CHARLOTTE in the cafeteria. MARY wears glasses and is never seen not reading a book. KITTY is dense but cheerful. CHARLOTTE is eager and excitable.)

DELIA: Where can Lizzy and Jane be? Kitty, didn't you tell them in math class that I had important news?

KITTY: I forgot.

CHARLOTTE: I told them! What is it, Delia? Tell us now! Those two slowpokes will take forever!

DELIA: I need the whole Senior Sorority here for news like this! Mary, put that book down and listen to me!

MARY: But you haven't said anything yet. Besides, I have to find out if Oliver Twist makes it to London.

DELIA: Oliver Twist! Sometimes, Mary, you worry me.

KITTY: Here comes Gary. Maybe he's seen Lizzy and Jane.

CHARLOTTE: Gary! Come here Quick!

(GARY enters. HE is a quiet, gentle senior with a wry sense of humor.)

DELIA: Gary, where were you this morning? Didn't I tell you to meet me before homeroom by the trophy case?

GARY: Did you? Sorry, Delia. I can't be expected to remember everything you tell me.

DELIA: Don't be silly. You're a national merit scholarship finalist. You can remember as much as you like!

GARY: Sorry to disappoint you, Delia. What did you want?

DELIA: I didn't want anything. It's just that with you taking all those scary college prep courses, we don't have any classes together this year. When else am I going to see you?

GARY: Maybe you can still get in the calculus class.

DELIA: I'd rather go bald. Just remember the victory dance Saturday night.

GARY: This Saturday? Okay. I guess I can make it.

DELIA: Good.

CHARLOTTE: Gary, have you seen Lizzy and Jane?

GARY: Lizzy and Jane? I don't think so. I can't remember. I gotta get to the library before physics. Bye, Delia.

DELIA: Don't forget Saturday! I'll call and remind you!

GARY: You always do. **(exits)**

DELIA: I swear, that guy knows the entire periodic table by heart but he can't remember anything important. We've been going together for three years now and I have to remind him of everything!

KITTY: I see Lizzy over there.

CHARLOTTE: **(stands on chair, shouts and waves)** Lizzy!

DELIA: And Jane is with her. Good.

CHARLOTTE: Jane! Lizzy! We're over here!

MARY: Why doesn't she just announce it on the PA system?

(LIZZY and JANE enter. JANE is strikingly beautiful, good-natured and sincere. LIZZY is not so attractive, has a quick mind and, at times, a sharp tongue.)

DELIA: What took you two so long?

CHARLOTTE: Delia's got news!

LIZZY: Is the home ec room on fire again?

KITTY: Very funny, Lizzy. That fire was not my fault! Everybody knows the timer on my oven was broken and -

LIZZY: Six months later the room still smelled like tuna casserole.

JANE: What is it, Delia?

LIZZY: Did Gary get another scholarship or did your parakeet get a date for the victory dance?

DELIA: Sometimes, Lizzy, you are too smart-alecky for your own good!

KITTY: Yeah!

CHARLOTTE: I want to hear the news!

JANE: Yes, Delia. I'm sure Lizzy can be quiet long enough to hear why you called this emergency meeting of the Senior Sorority.

LIZZY: I'll shut up.

DELIA: Thank you, Jane. Well, here it is only the second day of school and already there are some interesting developments regarding P Day.

MARY: P Day? What do you mean?

DELIA: Oh, Mary, get your head out of a book and get help.

KITTY: Prom Day!

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LIZZY: The prom? That's seven months away!

DELIA: And the time will pass like wild fire if we don't start planning now.

CHARLOTTE: The theme this year is "Love Letters in the Sand." There will be hearts and pink envelopes everywhere! Mr. Stanton won't let us bring sand into the gym but we're gonna have beach scenes on the walls...

DELIA: I'm sure you and the rest of the committee will do a terrific job, Charlotte, but we have more important issues to deal with than decorations. Now everyone knows that prom night is the culmination of four years of high school -

MARY: It is?

KITTY: Yes, it is, Mary! Look it up in a book!

DELIA: My older sister has always maintained that her prom night was much more fun than her wedding.

LIZZY: There's a terrific advertisement for marriage.

DELIA: So we must start the ground work now. I want every one of the Senior Sorority girls to have the dream date of all time for the prom, except for me, of course. I'll be going with Gary.

LIZZY: If we're aiming that high, I suggest we start looking for someone from another school. Emerson isn't exactly crawling with either the James Dean type or the Pat Boone model.

DELIA: But that's what I've got to tell you! It will be!

KITTY: James Dean is coming to Emerson?

CHARLOTTE: He's dead, Kitty. I've told you a dozen times.

LIZZY: But Pat Boone is registered for my British lit class.

JANE: Please explain, Delia. What is going on?

DELIA: I have found out that two boys from Hutchinson have transferred to Emerson!

CHARLOTTE: From the military school?

KITTY: Oh, I love soldiers!

DELIA: And that's not all! They're both seniors!

CHARLOTTE: No!

KITTY: Senior military boys! I can't believe it!

JANE: I'm sure they're not in any of my classes. I would have noticed two new boys.

LIZZY: Has anyone seen these two John Waynes?

DELIA: Marcia McCaffey has and she says they are both gorgeous!

CHARLOTTE: It's too good to be true!

KITTY: I've got to change my schedule! What classes are they in?

MARY: Hutchinson Military Academy is not known for its high academics. Perhaps they aren't all that smart.

KITTY: Who cares?

DELIA: I'm not promising anything but the prognosis looks very good.
Two dashing seniors -

CHARLOTTE: From military school!

KITTY: Brave young soldiers!

LIZZY: Fresh blood. That's the best we can hope for, I'm afraid.

JANE: What are their names, Delia?

DELIA: The tall blonde one is called Brent Thurman -

CHARLOTTE: Brent! What a romantic name!

MARY: I believe the Thurman family has money. I was reading in the newspaper that...

CHARLOTTE: Money!

JANE: Hutchinson is a very expensive school. Both boys must be very well off unless they had a scholarship of some kind.

DELIA: The dark-haired one is named Dylan Atkins.

CHARLOTTE: Dylan...

KITTY: It's just too, too wonderful!

CHARLOTTE: Dreamy!!

DELIA: They could be just the ticket to a perfect senior prom!

LIZZY: I hate to throw cold water on your cozy little plans, but has anyone asked themselves why these two Romeos are no longer at Hutchinson but at a public high school? **(pause)**

DELIA: Uh... maybe they got tired of an all-boys school.

MARY: Or... maybe they wanted a more rigorous academic program.

KITTY: Maybe they wanted a change of pace.

CHARLOTTE: Or maybe they got tired of rifle practice.

LIZZY: Maybe. Or perhaps their families went broke and they couldn't afford Hutchinson. Or they were kicked out for setting fire to a general or someone. Or maybe they transferred because they heard the Senior Sorority was looking for hot dates for the prom!

KITTY: Sometimes. Lizzy, you can be so... so...

MARY: Negative.

LIZZY: All I know is it seems pretty suspicious that these two war heroes are now coming to Emerson.

JANE: We shouldn't judge them on such little information. Once we meet the two of them and get to know them better, then we can see what they're like.

DELIA: Jane's right as usual.

CHARLOTTE: Okay then, how do we meet them?

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