

THE YES-YOU-HAVE-TO, MULTIPLE-CHOICE, TERRIFYINGLY-SIGNIFICANT, BIGGEST-OF- THE-BIG-DEAL EXAM!

By Alan Haehnel

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**THE YES-YOU-HAVE-TO, MULTIPLE-CHOICE,
TERRIFYINGLY-SIGNIFICANT, BIGGEST-OF-
THE-BIG-DEAL EXAM!**

A One Act Comedy

By Alan Haehnel

SYNOPSIS: Sixteen students nervously gather to take a test. Their anxiety increases ten-fold when the mysterious, disembodied proctor tells them, “You are here for the biggest examination of your life. How you do on this test will determine absolutely everything. Try to relax.” As the exam proceeds, it only becomes more confusing (and, for us, amusing!). The questions are strange; the answers are arbitrary. To make matters worse, the test-takers find themselves occasionally getting electric shocks! Finally, the truth comes out: the test - in all its unfairness, chaos and shifting rules - is life itself.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(4 females, 3 males, 14 either, 0-5 extras; gender flexible)

- KID 1 (m/f)Middle/high school student. *(14 lines)*
KID 2 (m/f)Middle/high school student *(10 lines)*
KID 3 (m/f)Middle/high school student *(16 lines)*
KID 4 (m/f)Middle/high school student *(12 lines)*
KID 5 (m/f)Middle/high school student *(17 lines)*
KID 6 (f)Very cooperative middle/high school student. *(18 lines)*
KID 7 (m/f)Middle/high school student *(14 lines)*
KID 8 (f)Middle/high school student she’s the first to understand the nature of the test. *(28 lines)*
KID 9 (m/f)Middle/high school student *(13 lines)*
KID 10 (m/f)Middle/high school student *(10 lines)*
KID 11 (m/f)Middle/high school student *(13 lines)*
KID 12 (m/f)Middle/high school student *(15 lines)*
KID 13 (m).....Middle/high school student named Ben. *(21 lines)*
KID 14 (m/f)Middle/high school student *(15 lines)*
KID 15 (m/f)Middle/high school student *(19 lines)*

KID 16 (m/f)	Middle/high school student (<i>16 lines</i>)
VOICE (f)	Test administrator who appears in silhouette through most of the play. Speaks loudly, god-like, with an amplified voice. (<i>95 lines</i>)
NEW VOICE (m/f)	A mysterious voice. (<i>1 line</i>)
PROCTOR, MOTHER (f)	Proctor is aggressive, roughly assist the kids. The mother of Kid 13. (<i>2 lines</i>)
PROCTOR, FATHER (m)	Proctor is aggressive, roughly assist the kids. The father of Kid 13. (<i>2 lines</i>)
PROCTOR, BOYFRIEND (m)	Proctor is aggressive, roughly assist the kids, Kid 6's boyfriend. (<i>1 line</i>)
EXTRAS (m/f)	0-5; Proctors. A group of aggressive characters who roughly assist the kids in taking the test. (<i>Non-Speaking</i>)

DURATION: 35 minutes.

SET: 16 chairs for students, Constructed silhouette with removable sheet (see production notes), Microphone (can be held or on stand placed for Voice to speak into).

SOUND EFFECTS

- Buzzing (electric shock)
- Beeping Tone (signifying a countdown)
- Loud Ugly Sound (signifying the test beginning)

COSTUMES

KIDS 1-16 – Have their numbers hanging around their necks or embossed on their shirts.

VOICE – Everyday wear.

PROCTORS – Dressed in all black.

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PRODUCTION NOTES

To create the silhouette of Voice you can hang a removable sheet over a structure then backlight the Voice. This structure could be made of PCV pipe, wood or anything you have that is taller/wider than the actor playing the Voice.

Do Not Copy

AT RISE: ALL KIDS are seated, waiting nervously, quietly, looking around at one another now and then. After a few seconds, VOICE appears in silhouette behind the kids. VOICE always speaks into microphone unless otherwise notated in script.

VOICE: Good afternoon.

Many of the KIDS jump.

VOICE: You are here for the biggest examination of your life. How you do on this test will determine absolutely everything. Try to relax. Are there any questions?

KID 1: Does this count?

VOICE: Yes.

KID 4: How much does it count?

VOICE: Yes.

KID 7: Will other people know how we do?

VOICE: Yes.

KID 16: Can we choose who gets to know?

VOICE: No.

KID 8: How do we study?

VOICE: You don't.

KID 2: Are there any study guides?

VOICE: Too numerous to count.

KID 3: Which ones are the best?

VOICE: Generally speaking, the cost to accuracy ratio is approximately as reliable as the effort to commitment ratio, which is to say 25 to one according to some sources, which is to say no one the heck really knows.

KID 9: Do we need a pencil?

VOICE: Maybe.

KID 12: A calculator?

VOICE: Perhaps.

KID 11: Scratch paper?

VOICE: Might be a good idea.

KID 15: A wireless device?

VOICE: In some circumstances.

KID 5: Do you publish a list of requirements?

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VOICE: No.

KID 10: What happens if we forget something we need?

VOICE: You're in extremely deep do-do.

KID 5: Is it better to guess or to leave a question blank?

VOICE: Guess.

KID 13: Is this...

KID 5: Wait, do you mean I should guess at the answer to my question or guess is the answer to my question?

VOICE: Guess.

KID 13: Is this a timed test?

VOICE: Yes.

KID 6: How long does it last?

VOICE: As long as you last.

KID 14: Can I get extra time?

VOICE: No one gets extra time. Ever. When the time is up, you're done. Finished. Utterly and finally, completely and inexorably...done.

Pause.

KID 1: Can I get extra time?

VOICE: We will begin.

General ad libs from ALL KIDS: "Wait, wait!" "Hold on a sec!" "We're not ready."

KID 14: Look, do we really have to take this exam?

VOICE: No.

General ad libs as ALL KIDS start to get up, readying to leave: "Well, forget it, then." "That's a relief." "I'm not doing this."

VOICE: But if you don't take it, you're dead.

ALL KIDS sit back down quickly.

KID 7: Um...are the questions hard?

VOICE: That depends.

KID 11: On what?

VOICE: On how hard they are.

KID 6: How do we know?

VOICE: You can't. Just don't overthink the easy ones nor under think the hard ones.

KID 13: How do we know the difference?

VOICE: You don't. The test will begin in 15 seconds.

SFX: Beeping tone, ALL KIDS panic.

KID 3: Wait, wait! What if we're not ready?

KID 9: What if we're feeling anxious?

KID 14: What happens if we fail?

KID 15: When do we get the results?

VOICE: The test will begin in five...four...three...two...one.

SFX: Loud ugly sound. The lights change, focusing on an area in front of the seated kids. Silence. After a beat, KID 4 leans over to KID 10.

KID 4: How does this work?

KID 10: Sh. I don't want them to think I'm cheating.

KID 4: Yeah, but how does....

Several KIDS around KID 4 say "Shh." KID 4 quiets.

VOICE: Participant 13, step forward.

KID 13: What, me?

VOICE: Step forward.

KID 13: I'm not...do I have to?

VOICE: Participant 13, step forward.

KID 2: Go, go!

KID 13: Go where? To do what?

VOICE: Participant 13...

KID 13: I heard you! This is supposed to be a test, not a...stepping forward kind of thing. I just want to sit here and take the test, okay?

KID 8: You're gonna get in trouble.

KID 13: How do you...?

VOICE: Participant 13, the Proctors will assist you.

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KID 13: Proctors? What...?

ALL PROCTORS enter and grab KID 13 out of his seat and haul him into the more lighted area downstage.

KID 13: Hey. Hey! Get your hands off me! You can't...who said you could...what kind of a test is this, anyway? Stop it!

After PROCTORS have dumped KID 13 in place, they move to side of stage.

VOICE: Question 1. You come in late from a party which you were not supposed to attend. Your curfew was 11:30 p.m. It is now 12:45 a.m. Your parents are waiting for you.

PROCTORS who play MOTHER and FATHER step forward.

MOTHER: We've been worried sick.

FATHER: Where have you been?

MOTHER: You said you were at Frank's. You were not at Frank's.

FATHER: We called the parents of all of your friends.

PROCTORS who play MOTHER and FATHER return to side of stage.

VOICE: Your reply should be A. Rebellion.

KID 13: Look, I'm not a child anymore. I need my independence! Get off my back! What do you think, I'm three years old? Come on!

VOICE: B. Contrition.

KID 13: I'm sorry. I violated your rules. I will accept whatever punishment you dole out. I live under your roof, so I should adhere to your policies.

VOICE: C. Prevarication.

KID 13: Yeah, um, I should've called but...I lost my phone. I dropped it and--now this is hard to believe, but it's true--a squirrel picked it up and I've been climbing trees for the last hour to get it back.

VOICE: Participant 13, return to your seat and make your selection. All other participants, do the same.

KID 13, dazed, walks back to his seat.

KID 12: How did you know what to say?

KID 13: I...that happened to me last week.

KID 16: This is such a weird test!

KID 9: Uh, excuse me, uh, creepy, disembodied voice person? Um, you just said we should all do the same as...

KID 13: I'm Ben. Number 13.

KID 9: You said we should all do the same as Ben Number 13 did, but you told him to return to his seat and make his selection, but since we didn't all leave our seats like he did, we couldn't all return to our seats like he did...

KID 2: We're just supposed to make our selections, A, B or C.

KID 10: On what? Where's the answer sheet?

KID 9: *(To KID 2.)* Are you sure? How can you be sure? He said we were...

KID 12: I don't even remember what the selections were anymore.

KID 6: You should pay better attention.

KID 12: You should kiss my...

KID 7: Choice A was to get all touchy, B was to be all sorry, C was to lie like crazy.

KID 16: Those weren't the words. They were bigger words than that.

KID 11: Rebellion, Contrition and... some other SAT vocab word I had last year.

KID 10: Where are we supposed to write down the answers?

KID 1: You guys, I cannot concentrate in an environment like this. Can I do this in a quieter space?

KID 9: I'm still not 100% clear on the directions. How can I return to my seat if I never left my seat?

KID 10: I don't have an answer sheet!!

ALL KIDS devolve into a mass of noisy questions and worries. After several seconds, SFX: Buzzing. ALL KIDS jump in pain and surprise.

VOICE: We will continue.

KID 3: Dude, did you just shock us? I think we just got shocked! I'm not going to sit here and get shocked!

VOICE: Order is necessary in order for the test to proceed.

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KID 3: Okay, I get that. Order is necessary. But shocking us is, like, abuse! You can't...

KID 8: Listen, maybe it's not a good idea to get her mad.

KID 3: Do you think it's a better idea to sit here and get shocked?

KID 8: If we don't get her mad we won't get shocked.

VOICE: The time is up for Question 1. All of those selecting option A, raise your hands.

KID 15: Raise our hands? You mean, we have to go public with our answers? That's unconstitutional! I think.

VOICE: Last call for reply A.

KIDS 1, 2, 4, 6, and 10 raise their hands tentatively.

KID 2: What am I voting for again?

VOICE: All of those choosing option B, raise your hands.

KID 13 raises his hand, along with KID 5 and KID 8.

KID 11: *(Suddenly raising hand.)* Oh, yeah, count me in!

KID 7: How are you suddenly so sure?

KID 11: Because that guy's voting for B. He's the one who lived through it!

KID 7: Yeah, but how do you know if he's voting for what he did or if he's voting for what he should have done?

KID 11: Crap. I didn't think of that. Can I change my answer?

VOICE: Continuing on. Who chooses option C?

KID 11: Guess not.

KIDS 3 and 16 raise their hands.

KID 4: You're voting C? You're voting for lying?

KID 16: Because I think that's probably what he did.

KID 13: How do you know what I did? Are you calling me a liar?

KID 16: Your eyes are kind of squinty.

KID 13: That's a genetic trait. I get squinty eyes from both sides of my family. It doesn't mean we're liars.

KID 16: I'm going with my gut.

KID 5: *(To KID 14.)* You didn't vote.

KID 14: I know. I have no idea. We never found out if it's better to guess or just not to answer.

VOICE: Five of you have abstained from answering.

KID 14: Yeah, I was wondering if...

SFX: Buzzing. KIDS 7, 9, 12, 14 and 15--jump in their seats, shocked.

KID 14: Hey! Ow!

VOICE: Abstention is not an option.

KID 5: Guess it's better to guess.

KID 14: No kidding.

VOICE: The correct answer to Question 1 will be announced momentarily.

KID 6: Oh, we get immediate feedback. I love that.

KID 12: I hate that.

KID 6: Then we can adjust our strategy as we go along.

KID 12: I'd rather delay feeling terrible about myself. Besides, I abstained. I got shocked. I won't abstain again; I won't get shocked again. What's to learn?

VOICE: The correct answer is...

KID 1: I gotta get it right, I gotta, I gotta, I gotta!

KID 8: Why do you gotta?

KID 1: Because I have a reputation as a very good test taker, and I value that reputation, and if I get this question wrong, it could be the beginning of my decline, the beginning of my slide down a slippery slope, my precipitous drop from being considered a very good test taker to being considered an abject failure.

KID 8: That's more of an answer than I wanted.

KID 1: Please let it be A!

VOICE: The correct answer is C.

General ad lib from ALL KIDS react to this revelation, some cheering, most complaining.

KID 15: Hey, hey, Voice out there! I have a question.

VOICE: The time for questions is past. The correct answer to Question 1 is C.

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KID 15: Yeah, C, I know, but we have a right to know who's doing the grading here. Who decides that it's C?

KID 1: I liked A very much! Couldn't it be A?

KID 14: The kid the question was about didn't even choose C. How come it's C?

VOICE: The correct answer is C.

KID 15: Who says so?! Who says so? Who says so?

The others pick up on the chant until everyone is saying "Who says so?" over and over. SFX: Buzzing, ALL KIDS then quiet down.

KID 2: Ow! I forgot about that. Just for the record, I don't care who says so; I hate being electrocuted through my butt. Please don't do it again!

KID 15: Stand up, everybody! Stand up! Who says so? Who says so?

ALL KIDS stand and begin chanting again. SFX: Buzzing. They all get shocked again.

KID 2: (To KID 15.) You know what? I'm not joining your revolution anymore! They've got this whole place wired, and I don't like getting shocked through my butt or through my feet. Hey, voice, pay attention, please! I am behaving myself. Take me off your shock list.

KID 15: Go ahead, shock us again! We're not putting up with this!

KID 7: Uh, dude, speak for yourself. I'm out.

ALL KIDS agree with KID 7 and KID 2, acquiescing and sitting back down.

KID 15: Come on! What's the worst they can do?

KID 4: Well, I envision them having some sort of device where they can turn up the electricity and eventually shock me until I'm nothing more than a smoking pile of charcoal. The thought does not thrill me. I am also out.

VOICE: The correct answer to question one was determined by participant #16.

ALL KIDS turn to KID 16.

KID 16: Who, me?

KID 9: How did you get to be in charge?

KID 16: I have no idea. Like I said, I just went with my gut. I didn't know I was...making the answer key.

KID 1: I am so confused.

KID 7: This is messed up.

VOICE: We will proceed to Question 2.

KID 5: Hey, now that we know how this works, that #16 there is going to have the right answers, we're good! We just see how #16 votes and follow along, right?

KID 12: That sounds like cheating.

KID 5: How is it cheating? The whole thing's out in public.

KID 16: I'm not real comfortable...

VOICE: Participant 6, step forward.

KID 6: (*Jumps out of seat and goes to the lighted area in front of the chairs.*) No problem! No problem at all. I am here for you, Voice Without a Body. Whatever you need, I will do it. No need to call out your proctors to manhandle me; no need to administer electric shocks that make me feel like I might soil my pants. I'm here; I'm available; I'm ready. Hit me.

VOICE: Question 2. Your boyfriend is speaking to you...

KID 6: Oh, no.

VOICE: Clearly intimating that he no longer wants to be your boyfriend.

PROCTOR who plays BOYFRIEND steps forward.

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