

Playground

by Alex Acuff

<https://offthewallplays.com>

Copyright © February 2024 Alex Acuff and Off The Wall Play Publishers

This script is provided for reading purposes only. Professionals and amateurs are hereby advised that it is subject to royalty. It is fully protected under the laws of the United States of America, the British Empire, including the Dominion of Canada, and all other countries of the Copyright Union. All rights, including but not limited to professional, amateur, film, radio, and all other media (including use on the worldwide web) and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved; and any unauthorized use of the material may subject the user to any and all applicable civil and criminal penalties. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher or author, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other non-commercial uses permitted by copyright law. Although every precaution has been taken to verify the accuracy of the information contained herein, the author and publisher assume no responsibility for any errors or omissions. No liability is assumed for damages that may result from the use of information contained within. For any information about royalties or to apply for a performance license please click the following link:

<https://offthewallplays.com/royalties-and-licensing-of-plays-sold-by-off-the-wall-plays/>

Cast of Characters

DOUG.	<i>Child, male.</i>
JOSEPH.	<i>Child, male.</i>
KATIE.	<i>Adult, female.</i>
ENSEMBLE.	<i>A group of children.</i>

Scene:

Various places at a school.

Time:

2020.

*A (/) indicates where the next speech begins.

SCENE ONE
“Friends”

DOUG is playing basketball by himself. JOSEPH enters and stands nearby.

JOSEPH. Can I play with you?

A pause.

DOUG. Sure.

DOUG passes the ball to JOSEPH, who then shoots.

JOSEPH. Want to be friends?

A pause.

DOUG. Sure.

SCENE TWO
“I Like Frogs”

An ENSEMBLE of children are walking by each other across the stage, all carrying book-bags and notebooks.

ENSEMBLE. I’m voting for Doug because he cares about us.
I’m voting for Joseph because we need change.
I heard Doug’s parents know the principal.
I heard that Joseph pooped his pants at field day.
I like frogs.

Transition to a playground. A jungle gym with kids hanging around, playing on different things. JOSEPH enters. A group of kids run to him, surrounding him. DOUG enters, and a group of kids do the same. The kids all hype DOUG and JOSEPH up, who then step forward out of their respective huddles.

JOSEPH. Hey Doug.
You ready to lose the debate on Friday?

DOUG. I never lose.

A pause.

ENSEMBLE. *(exiting.)* Come on, somebody do something!

JOSEPH. There’s no reason we can’t be civil, Doug.
We both want what’s best for the school.
I remember when we used to be friends...

DOUG. See you on Friday, pussy.

SCENE THREE

“The Debate”

Backstage in the school auditorium. JOSEPH and DOUG stand on opposite sides. KATIE enters. The hum of a crowd is heard.

KATIE. Ready Joseph?

JOSEPH. Yeah.

KATIE crosses to the other side.

KATIE. Ready Doug?

DOUG. *(throwing her a bottle of juice.)* Born ready. Hey, can you give this to Joseph? Tell him it's a peace offering.

KATIE. *(crossing to the other side, tossing the juice to JOSEPH.)* Present from Doug. He says “good luck.”

JOSEPH takes a big swig. KATIE takes her place at the podium. The lights in the auditorium go down. DOUG and JOSEPH take their places on stage.

KATIE. Hello students. Our first subject is the student assembly. Doug, you nominated Amy Shipwash to the vending machine committee over the weekend. You say the school handbook is clear about your obligation and the Assembly's to consider a nominee for the position. Joseph, you say that this is an effort by the President to take Skittles out of the vending machines, in what you call an abuse of power.

DOUG. We have the Assembly, we have the student lounge, and we have a phenomenal nominee respected by all. And by the way, if Joseph could get who he wanted, and put Skittles back in, they wouldn't even think about not doing it.

JOSEPH. *(holding his stomach.)* He wants to get rid of Skittles in our vending machines. And the Amy Shipwash, I'm not opposed her, she seems like a very fine person. But she's written, before she went in the bench, which is her right, that she doesn't like Skittles.

DOUG. The bigger problem that you have is that you're going to get rid of M&M's.

JOSEPH. Number one, he knows what I proposed. What I proposed is that we expand Skittles in the vending machines and we increase it. We *do not* get rid of M&M's. And one of the big debates we had with two of the other students in primaries, trying to win the nomination that I won, were saying that I wanted to keep M&M's.

DOUG. Joe, you agreed with Billy Smalls, who wants to take away the vending machines all together.

JOSEPH. The fact of the matter is I beat Billy Smalls in a pick up game, one on one.

DOUG. Not by much.

JOSEPH. Forget him. Who won our last pick up game?

DOUG. You got lucky.

JOSEPH. The fact is that everything he's saying so far is simply a lie. I'm not here to call out his lies. Everybody knows he's a liar.

DOUG. You're the liar. You didn't get an A in cursive writing, you got a B in cursive writing.

KATIE. Can you let him finish, Doug?

JOSEPH. No, he doesn't know how to do that.

DOUG. Listen, you agreed that—

KATIE. Please let him speak, Doug.

DOUG. You agreed with Billy Smalls on a plan that you absolutely agreed under that plan, they got rid of / vending machines.

JOSEPH. I'll tell you what, he is not for any help for people needing candy.

DOUG. I gave them candy, the / Halloween dance.

JOSEPH. He has never offered a plan.

KATIE. Gentlemen, you realize if you're both speaking at the same time.

DOUG. Skittles are no good. Listen, this is the way it is. But more importantly, I want to help students. Okay. I said, “You’ve got to get some real candy bars.” And I just had a meeting with them. They said the problem is, no matter how many real candy bars you get, there’s no where to put them. There’s just no room, and you’ve got six different slots for Skittles on the same row. Regular, sour, tropical - who needs that many?

KATIE. Joseph, if Assembly members go ahead and confirm Amy Shipwash, there has been talk about ending the free period after lunch. You call this a distraction by Doug, but in fact, it wasn’t brought up by him. It was brought up by some of your classmates. So my question to you is, you have refused in the past to talk about it, are you willing to tell the students tonight whether or not you will support the ending of free period?

JOSEPH. Whatever position I take on that, that’ll become the issue.

DOUG. Are you going to end free period?

JOSEPH. Vote now.

DOUG. Are you going to end free period?

JOSEPH. (*nauseous again.*) Make sure you...make sure...

DOUG. He doesn’t want to answer the question.

KATIE. Are you alright, Joseph?

DOUG. He just doesn’t want to answer the question.

JOSEPH throws up all over the stage. The kids in the crowd erupt, some laughing, some screaming. JOSEPH runs off.

DOUG. What a loser!

KATIE. We are going to take a break. Everyone, sit down and be quiet please. We will resume this debate at a later time.

SCENE FOUR
“Bully”

The next day. The students are all on the playground, in their separate camps.

ENSEMBLE. Joseph threw up everywhere.
Yeah, because Doug gave him some old juice.
Doug wants to give us chocolate bars.
Yeah, and he’s going to raise the prices.
I like frogs.

DOUG enters, then JOSEPH. They square off center stage.

DOUG. Feeling better, Joseph?

JOSEPH. Why’d you do it?

DOUG. Do what?

JOSEPH. You know...

DOUG. Can’t say that I do.

JOSEPH. You put something in my drink.

DOUG. That’s quite the allegation. Do you have any proof?

JOSEPH. I know you did.

DOUG. Don’t blame me because you can’t handle the pressure.

JOSEPH. You’re a bully!

DOUG. I am?

JOSEPH. Yeah.

DOUG. You go behind my back.
You turn my friends against me.

DOUG(Cont.) You tell people how terrible I am.
After we were friends,
And then as soon as I run for school president,
You turn everyone in the school against me.
And I'm the bully?

JOSEPH. Don't start playing the victim, Doug.

DOUG. You just don't want to admit that you lost.

JOSEPH. You're lucky I'm not telling the principal.

DOUG. Go ahead - be a tattletale.

ENSEMBLE. Somebody do something!

JOSEPH. Shut up, Boris. You don't even go to this school.

DOUG. (*getting in his face.*) Go ahead.
Throw the first punch.

JOSEPH. (*pushing him.*) I'm not afraid of you.

A pause.

DOUG. Ouch.
You've always been a big fat pussy. You know that?
I'm going to DOMINATE YOU.

SCENE FIVE
“Round Two”

DOUG and JOSEPH are backstage on their respective sides. An ENSEMBLE member helps both of them get ready.

ENSEMBLE. All the feedback suggests that you’re coming across too strong.

DOUG. There’s no such thing as too strong.

ENSEMBLE. You’re coming across too weak.

JOSEPH. I don’t want to play into his game though.

They both take their place at the podium. The auditorium goes hush.

KATIE. Boys, welcome back. Joseph, glad to have you back. We’ll now continue where we left off the other day. This next segment is about the school budget. We’re going to get to your economic plans going forward in a moment, but first, Doug, there’s a new report that for all five years here, you paid a total of seven dollars in school fees.

DOUG. I paid tens of dollars in fees, tens of dollars.

JOSEPH. Show us your student file.

DOUG. You’ll get to see it.

KATIE. Joseph, you want to respond?

JOSEPH. Yeah, I do want to respond. Look, the school code that put him in a position where he pays less fees is because of him. He says he’s smart because he can take advantage of the school code. I want to make sure that we invest in the students who in fact need the help. Students out there who can’t afford notebooks.

DOUG. Hey, Joseph, let me just tell you, Joe. Next year, I’m going to do more than you’ve ever dreamed of doing.

*An **ENSEMBLE** member enters as a hooded figure. They walk through the audience towards the back of the stage. They go backstage, take out a laptop, then plug it into the system. They spend some time typing away.*

KATIE. In the last segment, you each are going to have one last chance. I'm going to ask each of you - why should students elect you president?

DOUG. Because there has never been a student who has done more than I've done in a school year. And I've been attacked. People who I thought were my friends, they have been ruthless. They've attacked me. And yet, they claim to "take the high road." Despite going through all of these things where I had a fight, both flanks and behind me and above there has never been a student that's done what I've done. And by the way, there was unity going to happen. But now we're planning on building it back up again. A rebuilding of the playground, including a sweet rocket ship being added next year.

A pause.

JOSEPH. When I was hall-monitor, we inherited a really bad problem of people running in the halls. I was asked to fix it. I did. With regards to my popularity, I don't care about that. He's just jealous of all the friends that I have. The truth is, he just wants to beat me. He could never beat me in basketball, or in anything else, and this whole thing for him is about his fragile ego, and the fact that he wants to win. That's all he cares about is beating me, not helping you. And if he wins, what message does that send? After what he's done - he's a bully. Should we really elect a bully as the head of our school?

*A video starts playing on the back wall. It's of **JOSEPH** at summer camp, a group of students surrounding him and laughing. All of the **ENSEMBLE** start laughing. **JOSEPH** runs off, embarrassed. The hooded figure exits.*

SCENE SIX
“Fight”

ENSEMBLE. I heard that Doug set up the video.
I feel so bad for Joseph.
I heard there’s going to be a fight...

*To the side, **DOUG** sits eating a candy bar. **JOSEPH** enters and sits beside him. **DOUG** offers him a candy bar, but he refuses.*

DOUG. Hey man...
I want you to know that I didn’t play that video.
I don’t know who did.

JOSEPH. Meet me on the playground in two minutes.

***JOSEPH** exits. The **ENSEMBLE** is still going at each other. **JOSEPH** enters and everyone surrounds him, patting him on the back. He makes the rounds shaking hands and talking to people. **DOUG** enters.*

DOUG. I want everyone to know that I didn’t play that video.
I’m not a bully.
Just because I’m strong, doesn’t mean I’m a bully.
Tomorrow, the results will speak for themselves.

*A pause. **JOSEPH** walks up to **DOUG** and punches him in the face. **DOUG** tries to fight back, but **JOSEPH** gets the better. The **ENSEMBLE** cheers them on as they fight, **JOSEPH** having no mercy. Blackout.*