

= Lisa the Iconoclast =

" Lisa the Iconoclast " is the sixteenth episode of The Simpsons ' seventh season . It originally aired on Fox in the United States on February 18 , 1996 . In the episode , Springfield 's bicentennial approaches , and Lisa writes an essay on town founder Jedediah Springfield . While doing research , she finds a confession revealing that Springfield was a murderous pirate named Hans Sprungfeld who never cared about the people of Springfield . Lisa and Homer decide to get the message out but instead anger the town council .

The episode was written by Jonathan Collier and directed by Mike B. Anderson . It was Anderson 's first directing role . The story was inspired by the 1991 exhumation of President Zachary Taylor . Donald Sutherland guest starred as the voice of Hollis Hurlbut , a part that was written specifically for him . The episode includes several references to Colonial and Revolutionary America , including Gilbert Stuart 's unfinished 1796 painting of George Washington . The episode features two neologisms , embiggen and cromulent , which were intended to sound like real words but are in fact completely fabricated (although it was later discovered that C. A. Ward had used " embiggen " in 1884) . Embiggen , coined by Dan Greaney , has since been used in several scientific publications , while cromulent , coined by David X. Cohen , appeared in the Dictionary.com 's 21st Century Lexicon .

= = Plot = =

As Springfield celebrates its bicentennial , Lisa 's class at Springfield Elementary School are assigned essays . Lisa goes to the historical society to research Jedediah Springfield , the founder of Springfield . While trying to play Jedediah Springfield 's fife , she makes the shocking discovery that the town 's founder was actually a villainous pirate and enemy of George Washington who kept his dark past hidden . He had written his confession on the back side of a portrait of Washington and hidden it in his fife . Meanwhile , upon Lisa 's suggestion , Homer is elected the town crier after he demonstrated that he was better suited to the position than Ned Flanders .

Lisa conducts further research about Jedediah Springfield , and finds out that he once lost his tongue to a Turk in a groghouse fight and had it replaced with a prosthetic silver tongue . The town , including Marge , does not agree with Lisa 's revelations , resulting in an " F " on a report about Springfield while Ms. Hoover deems her to be a " PC Thug . " Homer believes her , and sympathizes with her story , claiming he 's been called a " greasy thug " too . However , when Lisa attempts to show the town historian Horace Hurlbut the confession , he dismisses it as an obvious forgery , and when she presses him , he bans her and her descendants from the museum for three months . Lisa tries to convince the town her claims are true , but is met with outright hostility everywhere . However , she convinces the municipal government to disinter Mr. Springfield 's body to search for evidence of a legendary silver tongue . Despite Lisa 's suspicions , when they open the coffin , the skeleton possesses no silver tongue . Lisa is forced into admitting she was wrong and Mayor Quimby strips Homer of the role of town crier and reassigns it to Flanders .

That night , Lisa has a dream wherein the ghosts of Jedediah Springfield and George Washington appear . After seeing the incomplete portrait of George Washington in her classroom , Lisa soon figures out that the piece of paper upon which the confession is written is the bottom half of the portrait . She confronts Hurlbut with this piece of evidence . Hurlbut confesses that he stole the tongue while the dust cleared seconds after the coffin was opened and hid it in a cowboy maquette in the museum . He explained that he had done so to protect his career and the myth of Jedediah Springfield . After realizing the mistake of celebrating a pirate , the two decide to go public with their discovery . Just as Lisa is about to expose the " real Jedediah " to the parading townspeople , she realizes that Jedediah Springfield 's good image means too much to the town , and decides to keep the truth a secret , knowing they will lose hope and morale if the truth is revealed to the public . At the parade , Homer takes a tricorne and bell from Flanders and replaces him , marching through the parade with Lisa on his shoulder .

= = Production = =

The episode was written by Jonathan Collier and directed by Mike B. Anderson . The story was inspired by the real events surrounding the exhumation of President Zachary Taylor . In the late 1980s , college professor and author Clara Rising theorized that Taylor was murdered by poison and was able to convince Taylor 's closest living relative and the Coroner of Jefferson County , Kentucky , to order an exhumation . On June 17 , 1991 , Taylor 's remains were exhumed and transported to the Office of the Kentucky Chief Medical Examiner , who found that the level of arsenic was much smaller than would be expected if Taylor had been thus poisoned . The remains were then returned to the cemetery and received appropriate honors at reinterment . Then @-@ show runner Bill Oakley said " Lisa the Iconoclast " is " essentially the same " story but with Lisa in the role as Rising . At the end of the episode there is an ode to Jebediah Springfield playing over the credits . The music and lyrics for this piece of music were all written by Jeff Martin .

Donald Sutherland voiced Hollis Hurlbut in this episode . The script was specifically written with him in mind playing that part . Sutherland wanted to do the voice recordings as one would do a film and start in the middle of the script , so that he could get to know the character , but that idea was abandoned . In the episode , Lisa joked she was getting over her " Chester A. Arthritis " , a play on the word " arthritis " and the name of Chester A. Arthur . Sutherland ad @-@ libbed the line " you had arthritis ? " , and the producers liked it so much that they kept it .

The episode opens with an old documentary on Jebediah Springfield , starring Troy McClure as Springfield . The writers tried to make this documentary seem as lousy and low @-@ budget as possible . One of these tricks was to have post @-@ production add scratches to the animation . The animators added production errors that would come in a low @-@ budget film . For example , a man in the crowd looks at the camera , some of the people are wearing wristwatches , McClure 's stuntman does not have the same sideburns as he does , and a boom microphone can be seen entering the frame . In the Historical Society , the animators spent a lot of time decorating the walls . Besides numerous historical references , they also decorated the walls with The Simpsons characters set in the 19th century . The first painting shows Otto Mann (Springfield 's school bus driver) driving children in a horse @-@ drawn carriage . Another painting shows Marge Simpson in silhouette . The last one shows Professor Frink holding a kite in the manner of Benjamin Franklin .

= = Cultural references = =

The Historical Society of Springfield contains references to historical figures and facts . The episode features Gilbert Stuart 's unfinished 1796 painting of George Washington and tells a fictional backstory of how it came to be . In reality , the painting was unfinished and it did not have a part torn off . Hurlbut mentions the American revolutionaries William Dawes and Samuel Allyne Otis as equals to Jebediah Springfield . When Lisa passes out the " Wanted for treason " posters , it is a reference to those featuring John F. Kennedy , which were circulated in Dallas prior to his assassination . Hurlbut claims Springfield 's confessions are " just as fake " as the will of Howard Hughes and the diaries of Adolf Hitler , both of which are proven forgeries . The episode also contains references to popular culture . The opening couch gag shows the Simpson family in blue boxes similar to the style of The Brady Bunch .

Chief Wiggum is singing " Camptown Races " from 1850 by Stephen Foster ventriloquised with the skull of Jebediah Springfield . Lisa 's dream in which Washington and Springfield are fighting is a reference to Lethal Weapon . When Lisa is telling the people at Moe 's Tavern about the real history of Jebediah Springfield , they all sit with their mouths open . This is a reference to a scene in the film The Producers from 1968 . When Homer knocks over Ned Flanders in order to take over his job as town crier , it is a reference to the film National Lampoon 's Animal House from 1978 (in which Sutherland appeared .) Lisa 's decision to hide the truth to preserve the myth of Jebediah Springfield is a reference to the film The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance . In addition to these cultural references , at least one author has compared this episode to Friedrich Nietzsche 's short work On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life .

= = Embiggen and cromulent = =

The episode features two neologisms : embiggen and cromulent . The show runners asked the writers if they could come up with two words which sounded like real words , and these were what they came up with . The Springfield town motto is " A noble spirit embiggens the smallest man . " Schoolteacher Edna Krabappel comments that she never heard the word embiggens until she moved to Springfield . Miss Hoover , another teacher , replies , " I don 't know why ; it ? s a perfectly cromulent word . " Later in the episode , while talking about Homer 's audition for the role of town crier , Principal Skinner states " He 's embiggened that role with his cromulent performance . "

Embiggen ? in the context in which it is used in the episode ? is a verb that was coined independently by Dan Greaney in 1996 . The literal meaning is to make something larger , with the morphology (em- + big + -en) being parallel to that of enlarge (en- + large) . The verb had in fact previously occurred in an 1884 edition of the British journal Notes and Queries : A Medium of Intercommunication for Literary Men , General Readers , Etc. by C. A. Ward , in the sentence " but the people magnified them , to make great or embiggen , if we may invent an English parallel as ugly . After all , use is nearly everything . " The word has made its way to common use and was included in Mark Peters ' Yada , Yada , Do 'h ! , 111 Television Words That Made the Leap From the Screen to Society , but as of 2014 it was not included in the authoritative Oxford English Dictionary . In particular , embiggen can be found in string theory . The first occurrence of the word was in the journal High Energy Physics in the article " Gauge / gravity duality and meta @-@ stable dynamical supersymmetry breaking " , which was published on January 23 , 2007 . For example , the article says : " For large P , the three @-@ form fluxes are dilute , and the gradient of the Myers potential encouraging an anti @-@ D3 to embiggen is very mild . " Later this usage was noted in the journal Nature , which explained that in this context , it means to grow or expand .

Cromulent is an adjective that was coined by David X. Cohen . Since it was coined , it has appeared in Dictionary.com 's 21st Century Lexicon . The meaning of cromulent is inferred only from its usage , which indicates that it is a positive attribute . Dictionary.com defines it as meaning fine or acceptable . Ben Macintyre has written that it means " valid or acceptable " . The United States government used the word " cromulent " (and the alternate spelling " kromulent ") in a U.S. Supreme Court brief about trademark law .

= = Reception = =

In its original American broadcast , " Lisa the Iconoclast " finished 70th in the ratings for the week of February 12 to 18 , 1996 . The episode was the sixth highest @-@ rated show on the Fox network that week , following The X @-@ Files , Melrose Place , Beverly Hills , 90210 , Married ... with Children , and Fox Tuesday Night Movie : Cliffhanger .

The episode received positive reviews from television critics . DVD Movie Guide 's Colin Jacobson lauded it for the focus on Lisa , commenting that " Lisa @-@ centered episodes tend to be preachy , but I suppose that ? s inevitable given her character . I like the fact Lisa takes the high road here , though , as she proves she doesn ? t always have to be right . Homer ? s turn as the town crier brings mirth to a solid show . " In addition , John Alberti praised the episode in his book Leaving Springfield as " an especially cromulent example of the narrative fissuring and disruptive disclosure ... Lisa spends the entire episode uncovering the truth about Jebediah and courageously defending her findings against a phalanx of authority figures ... a symbol of honesty , integrity , and courage . All in all , a spectacular episode revealing the truth behind our society . " The authors of the book I Can 't Believe It 's a Bigger and Better Updated Unofficial Simpsons Guide , Warren Martyn and Adrian Wood , thought it was a " clever " episode , and highlighted Lisa 's fantasy of the fight between Springfield and George Washington as " fantastic " . Dave Foster of DVD Times thought Sutherland offered a " memorable " guest appearance . Total Film 's Nathan Ditum ranked Sutherland 's performance as the 14th best guest appearance in the show 's history . Michael Moran of The Times ranked the episode as the eighth best in the show 's history .

= = Merchandise = =

The episode was included on April 28 , 1997 on the VHS set The Dark Secrets of the Simpsons , alongside " The Springfield Files " , " Homer the Great " , and " Homer Badman " . On September 8 , 2003 the VHS tape was released on DVD under the name The Simpsons : Dark Secrets in Region 2 and Region 4 , but " Homer the Great " was replaced by " Homer to the Max " . It was released again on DVD on December 13 , 2005 as part of The Simpsons Complete Seventh Season . Bill Oakley , Josh Weinstein , Jonathan Collier , Yeardley Smith , Mike B. Anderson , and David Silverman participated in the DVD 's audio commentary .