

## = Secrets of a Successful Marriage =

" Secrets of a Successful Marriage " is the twenty @-@ second and final episode of The Simpsons ' fifth season . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on May 19 , 1994 . In the episode , Homer fears he may be a little slow , so he goes to the adult education center . While there , he decides to teach a class of his own on the secrets of a successful marriage , since that is the only class he is qualified to teach . However , to keep his students interested , he is forced to tell personal secrets about his wife Marge , which she dislikes , leading up to Homer getting kicked out of the house .

The episode was written by Greg Daniels and directed by Carlos Baeza . It features cultural references to the plays *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and *A Streetcar Named Desire* , and the films ... *And Justice for All* , *A Few Good Men* , *Patton* , and *Chinatown* . The episode has been analyzed in books such as *Leaving Springfield* and *Education in Popular Culture* . Since airing , the episode has received mostly positive reviews from television critics . It acquired a Nielsen rating of 9 @.@ 8 , and was the second highest @-@ rated show on the Fox network the week it aired .

## = = Plot = =

After Homer realizes that he is " slow " , Marge recommends that he take an adult education course at the annex center . Down at the center , however , Homer changes his mind and decides to become a teacher . He talks to the administrator and accepts an opening to teach a class on having a successful marriage . Despite being confident that he can pull it off , he is frightened on his first day and is unable to help his pupils with their relationship problems . The class collectively gets up to leave , but when Homer mentions his conversation with Marge in bed , the class decides to stay , eager to hear gossip . Marge soon discovers that everyone in town knows her personal secrets , reacting by confronting Homer about it and he promises to stop . He instead continues telling her secrets anyway . Homer then takes the night off teaching class by having his class observe the family over dinner .

Marge finally loses her temper and sends Homer and the class out of the house . When Homer tries to get back in , Marge stops him , saying she can no longer trust him , and refuses to let him back in . Homeless , Homer stays in Bart 's tree house . Marge tries to reassure Bart and Lisa that she and Homer love the children , despite their current situation , but Lisa and Bart are worried their parents will get divorced . Marge tries to get advice from Reverend Lovejoy , who tells her to get a divorce .

While Homer longs for his wife , Moe comes by the Simpsons ' house to declare his interest in Marge , who turns him down . When Homer comes into the house with flowers he picked for Marge , Moe sees him and jumps out the window . Standing before her in rags , Homer professes his total and utter dependency on Marge , and she tells him that that is not a good thing , but Homer then makes his winning argument : he loves her , he needs her to love him , and can not afford to ever lose her trust again or he will end up dead . Marge is won over and allows Homer to return to the house . The family is glad that he has returned , although Moe is less than thrilled .

## = = Production = =

The episode was written by Greg Daniels and directed by Carlos Baeza . It was the second script Daniels wrote for the show . He thought the staff had previously done many episodes where Homer " wasn 't good at anything " , so he tried to figure out something Homer was really good at , and he came up with the idea of Homer being a good husband . While Bart had been the star of the show during the early years , by Season 5 , the focus had clearly shifted to Homer . Writer / showrunner Al Jean stated that because Homer is an adult character , he has more depth to him and thus storyline possibilities . Showrunner David Mirkin commented : " Bart , to write him accurately as a child , he can only have so much depth at a certain age . With Homer , we try to explore all levels of adulthood . There are just more places to go . Writing Homer properly is the trick , he 's our main rock of the whole series . Homer 's IQ is fairly flexible , he won 't necessarily understand how to open a door at

some point , but he can name the Supreme Court justices . Finding that balance is key to making the show work and making it surprising and making it believable and emotionally grounded . " Mirkin was very fond of the fact that Homer and Marge have the biggest fight they have ever had on the show in the episode , and he thought it was a " really great " exploration of their marriage . He noticed that because Homer is thrown out of the house , the audience really worry about their relationship . Mirkin had been asked many times why Marge and Homer are still together , to which he replied that all people stay together even if they argue , " there 's some sort of connection " .

= = Cultural references = =

Homer sings the end of the theme song to Family Ties while talking to an administrator at the annex center . Smithers 's recollection of his marriage parodies the two plays *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and *A Streetcar Named Desire* , both written by American playwright Tennessee Williams . Homer 's bedroom rant to Marge is a parody mishmash of four popular films : ... *And Justice for All* ( 1979 ) , *A Few Good Men* ( 1992 ) , *Patton* ( 1970 ) , and *Chinatown* ( 1974 ) . He says : " Look Marge , you don 't know what it 's like . I 'm the one out there every day putting his ass on the line . And I 'm not out of order ! You 're out of order . The whole freaking system is out of order . You want the truth ? You want the truth ? ! You can 't handle the truth ! ' Cause when you reach over and put your hand into a pile of goo that was your best friend 's face , you 'll know what to do ! Forget it , Marge , it 's *Chinatown* , " all of which are lines from those films .

= = Analysis = =

It was revealed in a flashback in the episode that Smithers was briefly married to a woman , but the two split up when he devoted too much time to his boss Mr. Burns . Smithers 's relationship with Mr. Burns has long been a running joke on *The Simpsons* . His sexual orientation has often come into question , with some fans claiming he is a " Burns @-@ sexual " and only attracted to his boss , while others maintain that he is , without a doubt , gay . Matthew Henry wrote in the book *Leaving Springfield* that this episode is " perhaps the best " example of an attempt to portray an actual gay lifestyle on the show . Henry added that the flashback is a " wonderfully rendered parody of scenes from two of Tennessee Williams 's most famous plays , *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and *A Streetcar Named Desire* . To fully appreciate it , one must know something of not only the two plays cited but also of Williams himself , of his own struggles with both heterosexual and homosexual desires and the way in which these struggles were incorporated into his art . The creators of *The Simpsons* offer what I think is a perfect parallel for the relationship between Smithers and Mr. Burns by combining Williams 's two most notable male characters and their defining characteristics : the suppressed homosexual desire of Brick and desperate dependence of Stanley . "

In their book *Education in Popular Culture* , Alma Harris , Roy Fisher , Ann Harris , and Christine Jarvis analyzes the adult education aspects of this episode that portrays adult learners as " stupid and lazy " . After Homer is appointed as a teacher , he feels immensely proud and boasts to all his acquaintances about it , initially making it seem like if the show is indicating that adult education tutors have a relatively high status in society . " However , " the authors added , " Homer 's pride is undercut for the audience by the awareness of how he came to be appointed and by the subsequent representation of the adult education center . It seems that anyone can become a tutor . [ ... ] Homer 's fellow tutors are drunks , incompetents and down @-@ and @-@ outs , adult education is therefore presented as an amateur business staffed by the dregs of society . " The writers of the book thought the whole idea of storytelling and building on experience that Homer uses , and that many adult education tutors uses in real life , is represented in the episode " simply as an excuse for gossip and prurient curiosity " . They also thought that statements like " I can 't believe I paid ten thousand dollars for this course . What the heck was the lab fee for ? " imply that adult education is " exploitative and poor value for money , and that the students themselves contribute to this by demanding an essentially recreational service . " The authors concluded that the episode " certainly sustains a popular view of adult education as pointless and recreational . Similarly , no value

whatsoever is attributed to the extensively researched , proven through practice and well @-@ argued perspective that adult learners do best when the curriculum builds on and values their experience . "

= = Reception = =

In its original American broadcast , " Secrets of a Successful Marriage " finished forty @-@ third in the ratings for the week of May 16 to May 22 , 1994 , with a Nielsen rating of 9 @.@ 8 . The episode was the second highest @-@ rated show on the Fox network that week , following Melrose Place .

Since airing , the episode has received positive reviews from television critics . 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 " confident finale " to the fifth season , which " had seen the series become progressively more surreal and self @-@ aware . " DVD Movie Guide 's Colin Jacobson wrote that he thought the episode ended the season with a " high note " , and that Homer 's insensitive gossiping about his relationship " presents lots of good bits . It completes this excellent year well . " Jacobson 's favorite line of the episode was " This is a place of learning , not a house of hearing about things ! " , which Homer tells his class after they demand him to reveal more secrets about him and Marge . Patrick Bromley of DVD Verdict gave the episode a grade of A ? , and commented that episodes focusing on the relationship between Homer and Marge can " never fail " , and there are " numerous opportunities for some classic Homer @-@ isms " in the episode . Bill Gibron of DVD Talk gave the episode a score of 4 out of 5 . One @-@ time Simpsons writer and comedian Ricky Gervais named " Secrets of a Successful Marriage " his fifth favorite episode of the show , and commented that Homer 's line to Marge , " I know now what I can offer you that no one else can . Complete and utter dependence , " is " so sweet , because he 's right ! " It was placed at number seven on MSNBC 's top ten The Simpsons episodes list . They felt the episode embodied Homer 's qualities of being " stupid , good @-@ natured and mildly pathetic , [ ... ] from his conversations with his brain [ ... ] to his final proclamation that the one thing he can give Marge that no one else can is ' complete and utter dependence ' . "