

= Pilot (The Cosby Show) =

" Pilot " (also known as " Theo 's Economic Lesson ") is the pilot and the first episode of the first season of the American sitcom The Cosby Show . " Pilot " originally aired in the United States on NBC on Thursday September 20 , 1984 , at 8 : 00 PM Eastern time . This episode debuted the week before the official start of the 1984 - 85 United States network television season . The confrontation with Theo in this episode is seen again in a flashback in the series finale " And So We Commence " . The episode was directed by Jay Sandrich and written by Ed . Weinberger and Michael J. Leeson . The episode was a critical and commercial success , achieving both high ratings and positive critical feedback .

Theo 's (Malcolm @-@ Jamal Warner) report card contained four Ds , which upset his mother , Clair (Phylicia Ayers @-@ Allen) . Theo attempts to pacify his father , Cliff (Bill Cosby) , by letting him know that since he did not intend to go to college , his low grades did not matter to him . His reasoning was that it is his destiny to be a " regular person . " In an attempt to guide his son by analogy , Cliff gives fatherly advice using Monopoly money as a teaching tool about the blue @-@ collar economic facts of life for the everyday American . Although the lessons seem harsh , Cliff makes it clear that his instruction is an attempt to convince him that it is important to try his best . Cliff is troubled upon meeting Denise 's (Lisa Bonet) latest admirer (Todd Hollowell) who is a former merchant marine and Turkish prisoner .

= = Plot = =

Clair Huxtable , an attorney , and her children are having dinner at home . Clair is upset with Theo due to the poor grades on his recent report cards . His younger sister Vanessa was trying to get Theo in trouble for throwing food at her as well . Dr. Cliff Huxtable comes home from a long day at his job as an obstetrician / gynecologist just after the meal .

Cliff confronts Theo about his poor grades and asks how he plans to get into college with such grades . When Theo replies that he 's not planning to go to college , Cliff replies " Damn right . " Theo explains that he just plans to get a job after school as a regular person . Cliff uses play money from a Monopoly game to show just how far a " regular person " ' s income would actually go in the adult world . Cliff gives him an amount of money representing a generous monthly salary for a " regular person " . He then takes money out of Theo 's hand in amounts representing various costs such as housing , food , clothes , transportation and finally a girlfriend , until there is nothing left .

Cliff also meets Denise 's earring @-@ wearing beau , who had recently been in a Turkish prison . When Cliff tells his daughter about what time he expects her home and what attire she should wear , she scoffs at the notion since it is a Friday night and thus , " not a school night . " Cliff responds by asking her if she went to school that day and that it was a " school night . "

Theo responds that he should accept his son 's weaknesses and love him unconditionally because they are father and son ? a typical sentimental idiom in family sitcoms of that time , and one which generated the typical applause from the studio audience . Cliff , however , to the audience 's surprise and amused approval , immediately and angrily calls this sentiment " the dumbest thing I 've ever heard in my life " . He completely rejects the notion that loving his son means he must quietly and willingly accept it when the boy does not give his best effort in school , and famously threatened him with the often quoted line , " I brought you in this world , and I 'll take you out . " Cliff then tells his son that he expects him to work to his potential and tells Theo that he loves him .

At the end of the day , Clair and Cliff settle into bed . As he becomes amorous , she reminds him that was how they got all those troublesome kids . This puts him off for a few seconds . Then Vanessa and Rudy knock on the bedroom door because Rudy was scared of " the Wolf Man " in their closet . Clair invites the kids to sleep with her and Cliff .

= = Cast = =

Bill Cosby as Dr. Clifford " Cliff " Huxtable , OB @-@ GYN (the only episode for which he was

Clifford rather than Heathcliff)

Phylicia Ayers @-@ Allen as Clair Olivia Huxtable , Esq .

Malcolm @-@ Jamal Warner as Theodore Aloysius " Theo " Huxtable

Keshia Knight Pulliam as Rudith Lillian " Rudy " Huxtable

Tempestt Bledsoe as Vanessa Huxtable

Lisa Bonet as Denise Huxtable

= = Production = =

Taping of the pilot took place in May 1984 , prior to being green @-@ lighted as a full series for the NBC fall schedule . Although this episode was written by Weinberger and Leeson , the headwriter for the series was Earl Pomerantz . The episode , which was filmed in two live performances , was based on Cosby 's real life conversation with his son Ennis about " regular people " , but included elements of Cosby 's stand @-@ up comedy routine . Rather than producing the show in Hollywood , the show was produced in New York City . During the 1983 ? 84 United States television season , no sitcoms had finished in the top 10 in the rankings and only one sitcom (AfterMASH) was renewed . As the networks battled to preempt each other 's thunder for the 1984 ? 85 United States television season , the Cosby Show became one of seven NBC shows (along with Punky Brewster , Miami Vice , Hunter , Highway to Heaven , Partners in Crime , Hot Pursuit) to debut prior to the September 24 date that marked the official beginning of the season . In the show , Bill Cosby is an obstetrician with his office located below his family 's residence in a brownstone home . Less than three months before the show debuted , its producers had not yet decided whether the brownstone would be set in Brooklyn or Manhattan .

The set used for the pilot episode of The Cosby Show was notably different than the one used during the remainder of the series . In the first episode , the first floor has extra rooms that it does not have in the rest of the series . In the pilot , Cliff and Clair Huxtable have only four children . The fifth child , Sondra - who was the eldest child - was not introduced until the tenth episode of the first season , entitled " Bon Jour , Sondra " . Her being away at college is the reason given for her absence in the earlier part of the season . In this episode , the plaque outside Cliff 's office lists his full first name as " Clifford . " In the rest of the episodes , however , his name is Heathcliff .

= = Reception = =

= = = Ratings = = =

Cosby was a three @-@ time winner of the Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Lead Actor in a Drama Series , but Tom Selleck was the incumbent winner and Cosby had had three failed series since his success with I Spy . Cosby 's sitcom was slotted against Selleck 's Magnum , P.I. , which had dominated the time slot for years . The show placed first in the Nielsen Media Research ratings for the week with a 21 @. @ 6 million person viewership . This placed it ahead of runner @-@ up 60 Minutes , which had an audience of 20 @. @ 7 million . It was the most popular premier for NBC since the 1977 premier of What Really Happened to the Class of ' 65 ? .

= = = Critical review = = =

John J. O 'Connor of The New York Times wrote that " With only the premiere to go on , The Cosby Show is by far the classiest and most entertaining new situation comedy of the season . " After the pilot aired , David Bianculli wrote in the Sunday Philadelphia Inquirer that " This sitcom will lose to CBS 's Magnum , P.I. , but it 's too funny , and Cosby is too good , for NBC to dump it . " In a separate article in the same edition , he spoke more glowingly describing it as " the best TV sitcom since Cheers , and a good bet to become an instant classic . Cosby is delightful , and his series is both funny and intelligent . " He also described the family as " amazingly real " . According to

Associated Press syndicated writer Jerry Buck , in the episode , " Cosby handles his son in a manner that is not only funny but intelligent . " Mike Boone of The Gazette described Cosby and Ayers @-@ Allen as " credible parents " and Cosby 's fatherly advice as a " delightful confrontation " . Boone also noted that " understanding the special world of children " has always been a part of Cosby 's comedy , and that this was present in the comical scene where Cliff and Theo discuss serious matters using play money . Star @-@ Banner said " The dialogue is typically Cosby ? easy and funny ? and you can just see yourself getting to like these people very much . " According to Associated Press writer Fred Rothenberg , the response to the opening episode was glowing with the Los Angeles Times praising the show as " the best comedy of the fall season by a long , long , lonnnnnnnng shot . " ; The New York Times saying " by far the classiest and most entertaining situation comedy . " ; and The Washington Post calling it " the best , funniest , most humane new show of the season . " He also noted that marketing executives were not surprised at the reaction to the show .

= = = Awards = = =

Weinberger and Leeson won the Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Writing for a Comedy Series for this episode at the 37th Primetime Emmy Awards on September 22 , 1985 , where the series won three of its eight nominations . Jay Sandrich won the Directors Guild of America Award for Outstanding Directing ? Comedy Series at the Directors Guild of America Awards 1984 for this episode .