

= This Little Wiggy =

" This Little Wiggy " is the eighteenth episode of The Simpsons ' ninth season . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on March 22 , 1998 . It was written by Dan Greaney and directed by Neil Affleck . The episode sees Ralph Wiggum becoming friends with Bart. Phil Hartman guest stars as recurring character Troy McClure .

= = Plot = =

At a museum the family are visiting , Bart runs into Ralph Wiggum , who is in the process of being pushed into a giant ear by Kearney , Jimbo , Nelson , and Dolph . When Ralph is freed by a center employee , Marge and Chief Wiggum are there to meet him . Marge observes that Ralph has a vivid imagination and learns that he has no friends to play with ; she arranges a play @-@ date for Ralph to spend time with a horrified Bart.

During their play @-@ date , Bart notices that Ralph 's father has a police master key capable of opening any door in Springfield . Bart and Ralph thus steal the key and decide to enter several closed stores at night . After encountering Nelson and his gang , the boys go to a condemned penitentiary . When Ralph objects because he is afraid , the bullies leave , but not before tossing the key into the penitentiary . Ralph and Bart enter the prison to retrieve the key , and in the process stumble onto a room housing an old electric chair . After testing out the chair , the two flee when an elderly guard approaches .

At the Simpsons ' home , Bart and Ralph learn the penitentiary will once again be used by the town , and remember that they forgot to turn off the power . Unaware that the power is active , Mayor Quimby straps himself into the electric chair in a publicity attempt . Ralph then tells Bart that Lisa can probably figure out a way to warn the Mayor . She decides to launch a model rocket with a warning message attached and aims it toward the penitentiary . However , the rocket is blown off @-@ course and crashes through Mr. Burns ' office window . Mr. Burns reads the note and shuts off the penitentiary 's power . In the aftermath , the Simpsons congratulate Ralph , for pointing out that Lisa could solve the problem .

= = Production = =

Show runner Mike Scully had pitched an idea to Dan Greaney on Marge forcing Bart to become Ralph Wiggum 's friend . Scully gave the idea to Greaney due to his ability to write Ralph 's lines and actions well , and his overall liking of the character .

This episode was the second to focus on Ralph , after the fourth @-@ season episode " I Love Lisa " . Despite this , in 2007 , producer J. Stewart Burns did not believe Ralph had an episode with a plot centered on him .

The robot that was introduced early in the episode was influenced by Greaney 's experiences working with a USA Today themed robot . While at a baseball game with the robot , the robot led the stadium in singing " Take Me Out to the Ball Game " . The robot was not well @-@ received , and the spectators threw objects at it . The robot 's operator had to stay close to the robot during the baseball game , and was also teased and bothered in the same way as the operator in the episode .

Episode director Neil Affleck was praised by the staff for his directing in this episode . In the scene where Chief Wiggum falls on his back in his bedroom , unable to roll over or get back up , Affleck decided to act out the scene for the staff to showcase how Affleck envisioned Chief Wiggum 's predicament . Affleck was also praised for his ability to create three new elaborate settings in the episode : the science museum , the Springfield penitentiary , and the large toy store .

The episode originally did not involve Lisa helping Ralph and Bart to brainstorm an idea to alert the penitentiary . The original scene , which Greaney cites as one of his favorite scenes in the show , despite never actually being in the show , involved Bart , Ralph , and Homer trying to make a plan to save Mayor Quimby .

= = Reception = =

In its original broadcast , " This Little Wiggy " finished 27th in ratings for the week of March 16 ? 22 , 1998 , with a Nielsen rating of 9 @.@ 1 , equivalent to approximately 8 @.@ 9 million viewing households . It was the second highest @-@ rated show on the Fox network that week , following Ally McBeal .

The authors of the book I Can 't Believe It 's a Bigger and Better Updated Unofficial Simpsons Guide , Warren Martyn and Adrian Wood , enjoyed the episode , remarking : " Marvellous fun as Bart comes to realize there 's more to Ralph , or at least his daddy , than he realised . "