

= Bart 's Dog Gets an " F " =

" Bart 's Dog Gets an " F " " is the sixteenth episode of The Simpsons ' second season . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on March 7 , 1991 . In this episode , the Simpson family 's dog , Santa 's Little Helper , manages to infuriate Homer and Marge by destroying Homer 's new shoes , ruining a family heirloom , and devouring Homer 's cookie . As a result Homer considers giving him away while Bart is forced to train Santa 's Little Helper at an obedience school so that the family will not have to give him away . At first , the dog is extremely disobedient , but , at the last minute , passes the test .

The episode was written by Jon Vitti and directed by Jim Reardon . Tracey Ullman guest starred as Emily Winthrop , the instructor at the obedience school and as neighbour Mrs. Winfield . The animal noises for the episode were performed by Frank Welker . " Bart 's Dog Gets an " F " " features cultural references to films such as Predator , Jaws , E.T. the Extra @-@ Terrestrial , and National Lampoon 's Animal House . Since airing , the episode has received mostly positive reviews from television critics . It acquired a Nielsen rating of 13 @.@ 8 , and was the highest @-@ rated show on the Fox network the week it aired .

= = Plot = =

Lisa has the mumps and has to spend a few days home from school . While Marge teaches Lisa sewing , Homer goes to the mall to buy some magazines for her . There he sees and purchases some \$ 125 shoes known as the Assassins , which he saw his neighbor Ned Flanders wear earlier . However , Santa 's Little Helper promptly destroys the shoes , angering Homer . Marge shows Lisa a patchwork quilt , which is a family heirloom . Lisa makes her own contribution to it , but then Santa 's Little Helper rips it up . When Homer discovers that Santa 's Little Helper has also eaten his cookie , which Homer had bought earlier , he demands that the family get rid of the dog and laughs at the kids when Marge agrees with him , but the kids , terrified that Homer will take away their pet , promise their dad that they will train their dog to prevent future circumstances .

Santa 's Little Helper does not do well at the obedience school as Bart is reluctant to use a choke chain suggested by the school 's instructor Emily Winthrop . The night before the final exam , Bart and Santa 's Little Helper play , thinking it will be their last few hours together . This bonding breaks down the communication barrier , meaning Santa 's Little Helper can understand Bart 's commands , and much to Homer 's chagrin , passes obedience school . Lisa marks the occasions by starting a new quilt to replace the one destroyed .

= = Production = =

The episode was written by Jon Vitti and directed by Jim Reardon . Tracey Ullman guest starred as Emily Winthrop , the instructor at the obedience school , a parody of Margaret Thatcher in her mannerisms . The Simpsons began as a series of one @-@ minute shorts that aired on Ullman 's variety show , The Tracey Ullman Show , for three seasons during 1987 ? 89 . Due to the success of the shorts , the characters spun off into their own half @-@ hour prime @-@ time show on the Fox network named The Simpsons . Matt Groening , the series ' creator , wanted Ullman to make a guest appearance in one of the shorts , but was told that she was too busy with the rest of The Tracey Ullman Show . When her show was canceled in 1990 , Ullman agreed to do a guest appearance on The Simpsons after being asked by Groening once again . The animal noises for the episode , including those by Santa 's Little Helper , were performed by Frank Welker . It was the first The Simpsons episode Welker worked on and he became a recurring voice actor on the show , before leaving in 2002 .

= = Cultural references = =

Dr. Hibbert 's home and family resemble that of the The Cosby Show , a program that at the time

competed with The Simpsons for the Thursday 8 : 00 p.m. time slot . The high tech and expensive sneakers Assassins are reference to the Nike Air Jordan , an athletic shoe brand which was expensive in the early 1990s , and was expected to sell on the basis of brand loyalty and celebrity endorsements . When Lisa shows Marge her sewing finger , the music from the film E.T. the Extra @-@ Terrestrial plays . Lisa touching Marge 's finger is reference to the final scene of that film . The second frame in the Bouvier family patchwork quilt depicts a poster for one of Buffalo Bill 's Wild West Shows . In addition , the photograph The Falling Soldier by Robert Capa is the third frame in the quilt . When the scene changes to Santa 's Little Helper 's point of view , a small explosion sound is heard ; this sound is used in the film Predator , when the camera switches to Predator 's point of view . The dramatic music from the film Jaws is used just before Santa 's Little Helper attacks something . The dog obedience school has different categories named after famous dogs , which are Rin Tin Tin , Benji , Toto and the one in which Santa 's Little Helper attends , Cujo . Winthrop is based on British dog trainer and author Barbara Woodhouse . Winthrop exclaims " Heavens to Murgatroyd ! " , a catchphrase spoken by Bert Lahr in Meet the People and popularised by the cartoon character Snagglepuss . One of the dogs seen in the graduation ceremony is named after Lao Tzu , an ancient philosopher of China . At the end of the episode , the eventual fate of the various dogs in the class are captioned at the bottom of the screen , a reference to the ending of the film National Lampoon 's Animal House .

= = Reception = =

In its original broadcast , " Bart 's Dog Gets an " F " " finished thirtieth in the ratings for the week of March 4 ? 10 , 1991 , with a Nielsen rating of 13 @.@ 8 , equivalent to approximately thirteen million viewing households . It was the highest @-@ rated show on the Fox network that week . Since airing , the episode has received mostly 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 , wrote that it was an " enjoyable episode heightened by both Tracey Ullman 's Miss Winthrop and Frank Welker 's muted dog noises . " DVD Movie Guide 's Colin Jacobson said the episode " presented an odd viewpoint , since [Santa 's Little Helper] never behaved this badly in prior episodes , but consistency never exactly was the hallmark of the series . " He also commented that Tracey Ullman " offered a great performance as obedience school owner Emily Winthrop , " and concluded by saying that the episode overall " provided yet another consistently fine show . " In a review of the second season , Bryce Wilson of Cinema Blend thought " Bart 's Dog Gets an " F " " felt " a bit flat " , but " even in [its] lowest points , humor is easy to find . " Doug Pratt , a DVD reviewer and Rolling Stone contributor , was also positive about the episode : " The viewer is treated to an inspired dog 's prospective of the world , in very grayish tones , with the humans speaking gibberish ; another poignant character effort . " Jacobson 's favorite line of the episode was Homer 's ad about Santa 's Little Helper : " Free to loving home . World ? s most brilliant dog . Says ? I love you ? on command . " Reviewing for The DVD Journal , Dawn Taylor thought the most memorable line was Flanders 's description of the Assassins sneakers : " They 've got Velcro straps , a water pump in the tongue , a built @-@ in pedometer , reflective sidewalls and little vanity plates . "

In promotion of The Simpsons Sing the Blues , the music video for the album 's second single , " Deep , Deep Trouble " premiered shortly after this episode 's first broadcast .