

= Bart the Lover =

" Bart the Lover " is the sixteenth episode of The Simpsons ' third season . It first aired on the Fox network in the United States on February 13 , 1992 . In the episode Mrs. Edna Krabappel , Bart 's teacher , feels increasingly isolated and , looking for a companion , places a personal ad in the newspaper . Bart , who was given a month 's detention for breaking the class fish tank with his yo @-@ yo , decides to get revenge by responding to the ad . He creates a new adult male alter ego named Woodrow , inspired by a picture of former President Woodrow Wilson , and Mrs. Krabappel becomes infatuated with " Woodrow " . Meanwhile , Ned Flanders asks Homer to cut down on his swearing , so Homer starts using a swear jar .

The episode was written by Jon Vitti and directed by Carlos Baeza . Vitti had wanted an episode centered on Mrs. Krabappel that examined what it was like to have Bart as a student . It was the first episode of the show to feature her in a prominent role . The subplot where Homer tries to clean up his language was written partially in response to the many complaints the show had been getting about the amount of cursing on the show . Woodrow 's voice was performed by Harry Shearer , who did an impression of Ricardo Montalbán . The picture Bart sends Edna is of NHL and WHA star Gordie Howe . The writers had originally wanted to use a picture of American football player Johnny Unitas , but were unable to get the rights to use his image for free .

In its original airing on the Fox Network during February sweeps , the episode had a 12 @.@ 9 Nielsen rating , finishing the week ranked 29th , up from the season 's average . Marcia Wallace , the voice of Mrs. Krabappel , won a Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Voice @-@ Over Performance for her role in the episode .

= = Plot = =

Springfield Elementary School teacher Mrs. Edna Krabappel feels increasingly lonely , and , searching for love , places a personal ad in the newspaper . A yo @-@ yo craze sweeps through the school after a group of four demonstrate the potential of the toys . Bart breaks the class fish tank with his yo @-@ yo , and is given one month of detention by Mrs. Krabappel . While snooping in her desk to take back his yo @-@ yo , he discovers her personal ad and decides to get revenge on her , by pulling a prank and responding by mail . He creates a new adult male alter ego named Woodrow , after former President Woodrow Wilson . Mrs. Krabappel responds by sending a suggestive photograph . Bart writes a response to Edna using lines from an old love letter Homer had sent Marge .

Meanwhile , Marge notices that their dog Santa 's Little Helper needs a new dog house . She wants to buy one , but Homer says that he can save money by building one instead . His infuriating attempts at constructing the dog house cause him to curse loud enough for Todd Flanders to overhear . Todd says " hell no " and " damn " at the dinner table , so his father Ned tries to find out where he learned such language - with possibilities being bumper stickers , comic books , Grandma , television and his elder brother Rod . Ned discovers that Homer is the source when he and his kids hear him curse in frustration after getting his jacket stuck to a piece of wood in another failed attempt to build a dog house . He complains to Homer , who in turn criticizes Ned 's mustache . Ned promises to shave off his mustache in return for Homer 's curtailing uses of profanity . When Homer claims that it is too late for him to stop , Marge disagrees and reveals her own experience with her father 's cursing that lead her mother to use a swear jar . Homer promises to put money in a " swear jar " - 25 cents for each curse . The next couple of days he keeps his word to put money inside the jar for every time he uses profanity in frustration (this including accidentally placing a 20 dollar note in the church collection plate , failing to knock down all the pins while bowling , seeing a newly clean shaven Ned who got hired as a spokesman in a commercial , failing yet again to build a dog house and having a beehive fall on him while sleeping in a hammock) until it gets to the point where he instead speaks calmly upon being injured ; " I 'm not going to swear , but I am going to KICK THIS DOGHOUSE DOWN ! " . Homer 's constant cursing puts more than enough money in the swear jar to purchase a dog house for Santa 's Little Helper , along with an added bonus ; Duff Beer for

Homer for at least committing .

Edna asks " Woodrow " for a photograph , so Bart searches through a book called NHL Stars of 1969 and sends her a picture of hockey star Gordie Howe . Bart , as Woodrow , writes Mrs. Krabappel more letters , telling her what she wants to hear . He then sends a letter asking for them to meet at the Gilded Truffle . Bart sees Mrs. Krabappel waiting for Woodrow . Bart decides to watch a movie thinking Krabappel thinks " Woodrow " is on his way to meet her . But on his way back home he sees Mrs. Krabappel still waiting at the empty restaurant , all alone and on the verge of tears . Bart feels guilty to see her so sad .

Bart talks to Mrs. Krabappel after class and starts to feel worse about what he did when he is unable to console her . He confesses to the family what he has done , and , realizing the truth would humiliate her , they all write a poetic and loving letter to tell her why Woodrow must leave which makes Mrs. Krabappel feel better . On Bart 's last day of detention , Mrs. Krabappel suggest they spend it outside and Bart agrees .

= = Production = =

The script for " Bart the Lover " was written by Jon Vitti , who wanted an episode centered on Mrs. Krabappel that examined what it was like to have Bart as a student . Executive producer Mike Reiss pitched the idea of having Bart answer Mrs. Krabappel 's personal ad . It was the first episode of the show to feature Mrs. Krabappel in a prominent role . The subplot where Homer tries to clean up his language was written partially in response to the many complaints the show had been getting about the language on the show . Near the end of the episode , there is a montage where Homer has a series of bad experiences that cause him to curse , although the scene always cuts out before he can be heard swearing . While recording Homer 's lines for that sequence , Dan Castellaneta was told to include the cursing . According to Mike Reiss , by coincidence , some eight @-@ year @-@ old children were allowed to visit the studio the day those lines were recorded . Reiss recalls that " their eyes were as big as saucers " after hearing Homer curse . The ending of the episode was largely pitched by James L. Brooks , who wanted a scene where the entire family got together to write Woodrow 's final letter to Edna .

The episode was directed by Carlos Baeza . In the background of the classroom , there are several portraits of past United States presidents . These were added for the scene where Bart tries to think of a name for his fictional letter writer , and sees a portrait of Woodrow Wilson . Woodrow 's voice was performed by Harry Shearer , who did an impression of Ricardo Montalbán . The picture Bart sends Edna is of NHL and WHA star Gordie Howe . The writers had originally wanted to use a picture of American football player Johnny Unitas , but were unable to get the rights to use his image for free . Howe , their second choice , was suggested by Al Jean , who had been a Detroit Red Wings fan growing up . At the end of the episode , Howe 's NHL and WHA statistics are shown because the writers decided to try something different in filling a slight time under @-@ run .

During the opening sequence in which Bart 's class watch a film about zinc , a character in the film tries to shoot himself in the head . The Fox censors objected to this , so the producers had to claim that the character was not aiming at his head . For the name of the yo @-@ yo trick that Bart performs for Milhouse , the writers had wanted to use a term that was slang for masturbation . They proposed several names to the censors , and " Plucking the Pickle " was the term they deemed acceptable .

= = Cultural references = =

The 1950s educational film at the beginning of the episode is a reference to old science movies that were often shown in classes when the writers were in school , specifically it was a parody of the 1940s educational short film " A Case of Spring Fever " (later featured on Mystery Science Theater 3000) . The Twirl King yo @-@ yo champions are based on groups that companies like Duncan sent to schools to perform tricks . King Crimson guitarist Adrian Belew 's name appears on a paper Edna Krabappel is grading during detention . Todd Flanders watches a television show that features

Gomer Pyle from Gomer Pyle , U.S.M.C .. Bart sees the fictional movie Ernest Needs A Kidney , based on the character Ernest P. Worrell . Rod and Todd Flanders sing the song " Bringing in the Sheaves " , because the writers liked having them sing " obscure religious songs " .

= = Reception = =

In its original airing on the Fox Network during February sweeps , the episode had a 12 @. @ 9 Nielsen rating and was viewed in approximately 11 @. @ 88 million homes . It finished the week of February 10 ? 16 , 1992 ranked 29th , up from the season 's average rank of 39th . The Simpsons was the second highest rated show on Fox that week , after Married ... with Children .

Marcia Wallace , the voice of Mrs. Krabappel , won a Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Voice @-@ Over Performance for her role in the episode . She was one of six voice @-@ actors from The Simpsons to win the award that year . She is one of three guest stars on the show to win the award . The other two are Jackie Mason , who shared the award in 1992 , and Kelsey Grammer who won in 2006 for voicing Sideshow Bob .

Since airing , the episode has received positive reviews from television critics . It was named the eighth best episode of The Simpsons by Sarah Culp of The Quindecim . Bill Gibron of DVD Verdict said " Bart the Lover " represent The Simpsons " at its apex as a well tuned talent machine grinding out the good stuff with surprising accuracy and skill . " Gibron added that the episode shows that the made @-@ up romance between Mrs. Krabappel and Woodrow " works because it 's so painfully true . [...] How the kiss @-@ off to Mrs. Krabappel is created and handled shows that The Simpsons has heart to add to its humor . " Nate Meyers of Digitally Obsessed gave the episode a 5 / 5 rating . He thought the intertwining of the two plots in the episode " works very well , creating a fast paced story . Bart 's alias , Woodrow , is a delight to hear in voice @-@ overs and Homer 's antics produce many laughs . " DVD Movie Guide 's Colin Jacobson said " Bart the Lover " stands out as a " very strong episode " because it " steers clear of most potentially sappy material and offers a lively piece . [...] The ' B ' story in which Homer tries not to swear also swings and creates some great moments . " The authors of the book I Can 't Believe It 's a Bigger and Better Updated Unofficial Simpsons Guide , Warren Martyn and Adrian Wood , said they " loved " Homer 's suggestion for the kiss @-@ off letter from Woodrow : " Dear Baby . Welcome to Dumpsville , population : you . P.S. I am gay . " In 2000 , the staff of the Star Tribune listed their top ten episodes . " Bart the Lover " was listed at number four .

In the July 26 , 2007 issue of Nature , the scientific journal 's editorial staff listed an education film seen in the episode among " The Top Ten science moments in The Simpsons " , writing : " ' Thank goodness I still live in a world of telephones , car batteries , handguns and many things made of zinc , ' says Jimmy , a character in an educational film . When confronted with a world without zinc he attempts suicide but fails , as his zinc @-@ free gun cannot work . " In 2002 , Bill Brioux of The Canadian Press ranked the episode and its use of Gordie Howe as the top reference to Canada on the show . In 2004 , ESPN released a list of the Top 100 Simpsons sport moments , ranking Gordie Howe 's image in the episode at number 34 .

In 2013 a Wired article described the episode as " the best Krabappel (and arguably the best Simpsons) episode " .