

= Bart the Genius =

" Bart the Genius " is the second episode of The Simpsons ' first season . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on January 14 , 1990 . It was the first episode written by Jon Vitti . It was also the first ever episode to use the opening sequence , as well as the first regular episode . In the episode Bart cheats on an intelligence test and is declared a genius , so he is sent to a school for gifted children . Though he initially enjoys being treated as a genius , he begins to see the downside of his new life .

It marks the first use of Bart 's catchphrase " Eat my shorts " . As the second episode produced , directly after the disastrous animation of " Some Enchanted Evening " , the future of the series depended on how the animation turned out on this episode . The animation proved to be more acceptable and production continued .

= = Plot = =

The Simpson family spend a night of playing Scrabble and Lisa reminds Bart that he is supposed to be stimulating his brain with various vocabulary if he hopes to pass his intelligence test . He cheats his way to victory by coming up with his own word , basing its definition on an insulting description of Homer . This angers his father and he spends time chasing after Bart , much to the embarrassment of his family .

At Springfield Elementary School , Bart is busted for vandalism by Principal Skinner , who has been informed by class genius , Martin Prince . Faced with the prospect of failing an intelligence test , Bart surreptitiously switches exams with Martin . When the school psychologist , Dr. Pryor , studies the results , he identifies Bart as a genius , to the delight of Homer and Marge , who enroll him in a new school . However , Lisa is not fooled by his supposed genius and still believes Bart to be a moron ; Skinner shares her belief , but takes advantage of Bart 's departure from the school .

At the Enriched Learning Center for Gifted Children , Bart feels out of place among the other students with advanced academic skills . Meanwhile , Marge attempts to stimulate Bart with a little culture by taking the family to the opera . However , this proves disastrous as Bart and Homer are quite disruptive , much to Lisa 's joy . Ostracized by his brilliant classmates , Bart visits his former school , where his old friends reject him because of his perceived intelligence . On the bright side , he enjoys newfound attention from Homer and he covers for them when Marge makes another attempt to stimulate Bart 's brain by taking to a ballet recital . After Bart 's chemistry experiment explodes , filling the school lab with green goo , he confesses to Dr. Pryor that he switched tests with Martin . Dr. Pryor realizes that he was never a genius and has him readmitted to Springfield Elementary .

Bart returns home and tells Homer that he cheated on the intelligence test , but that he is glad they are closer than ever . An angry Homer chases Bart through the house , only for Bart to lock the door of his bedroom . Lisa pronounces that Bart is back to being his normal , dumb self .

= = Production = =

The concept for the episode developed from writer Jon Vitti coming up with a long list of bad things Bart would do for attention imagining the potential consequences . The only idea that developed into an interesting episode concept was Bart cheating on an IQ test . This idea was based on an incident from Vitti 's childhood when a number of his classmates did not take an intelligence test seriously and suffered poor academic treatment because of it . Because Bart was already obviously unintelligent , Vitti reversed the problem for his episode . Vitti used all his memories of elementary school behavior to produce a draft script of 71 pages , substantially above the required length of about 45 pages .

It was Vitti 's first script for a 30 @-@ minute television program . Bart 's use of the phrase " Eat my shorts " was intended to reflect his adoption of catchphrases he had heard on TV ; the creative team had told Vitti that he should not come up with original taglines for the character . The scene where

the family plays Scrabble was inspired by the 1985 cartoon The Big Snit .

Director David Silverman had difficulty devising a legible Scrabble board for the opening scene that would convey the idea that the Simpsons were only able to devise very simple words . The design of Bart 's visualization of the math problem was partially inspired by the art of Saul Steinberg . The increasing appearance of numbers in that sequence derived from Silverman 's use of a similar tactic when he had to develop a set design for the play The Adding Machine .

Each successive scene in the sequence was shorter than the one before it by exactly one frame . The scene where Bart writes his confession was done as one long take to balance the shorter scenes elsewhere in the episode . It was animated in the United States by Dan Haskett . There were a few problems with the finished animation for the episode . The banana in the opening scene was colored incorrectly , as the Korean animators were unfamiliar with the fruit , and the final bathtub scene was particularly problematic , including issues with lip sync . The version in the broadcast episode was the best of several attempts .

The episode was the first to feature the series ' full title sequence . Creator Matt Groening developed the lengthy sequence in order to cut down on the animation necessary for each episode , but devised the two gags as compensation for the repeated material each week . In the first gag , the camera zooms in on Springfield Elementary School , where Bart can be seen writing a message on the chalkboard . This message , which changes from episode to episode , has become known as the " chalkboard gag " . The other gag is known as a " couch gag " , in which a twist of events occur when the family meets to sit on their couch and watch television . Groening , who had not paid much attention to television since his own childhood , was unaware that title sequences of such length were uncommon by that time . As the finished episodes became longer , the production team were reluctant to cut the stories in order to allow for the long title sequence , so shorter versions of it were developed . The episode also introduced the characters Martin Prince and his parents , Richard , Bart 's teacher Edna Krabappel and Dr. J Loren Pryor .

= = Cultural references = =

In the opening scene , Maggie spells EMCSQU with her blocks , a reference to Albert Einstein 's mass @-@ energy equivalence equation . A picture of Einstein also appears on the wall of Dr. Pryor 's office . At one point Homer erroneously refers to Einstein as the inventor of the light bulb . Dr. Pryor compares Bart 's proposed work among ordinary children to Jane Goodall 's study of chimpanzees . Goodall was pleased to be mentioned in the episode , sending the program a letter , and Vitti an autographed copy of her book . The conductor of the opera the family attends is named Boris Csupowski , a reference to animator Gabor Csupo . The opera attended by the family is Carmen , by French composer Georges Bizet ; the song that Bart mocks is a famous aria called the Toreador Song . Students at the gifted school have lunchboxes that feature images of the 1945 novel Brideshead Revisited and chess grandmaster Anatoly Karpov .

= = Reception and legacy = =

In its original American broadcast , " Bart the Genius " finished 47th place in the weekly ratings for the week of January 8 ? January 14 , 1990 with a Nielsen rating of 12 @.@ 7 . It was the second highest rated show on the Fox Network that week . Since airing , the episode has received mostly positive reviews from television critics . Warren Martyn and Adrian Wood , the authors of the book I Can 't Believe It 's a Bigger and Better Updated Unofficial Simpsons Guide , strongly praised the episode calling it " superbly written and directed , often a literal child 's @-@ eye view of education , the first Simpsons episode proper is a classic . " They went on to say , " these twenty minutes cemented Bart 's position as a cultural icon and a hero to all underachievers , and managed a good few kicks at hothouse schools along the way . Especially worthy of note is the sequence where Bart visualises his maths problem , the viewing of which should be a required part of teacher training . "

In September 2001 , in an DVD review of the first season , David B. Grelck gave the episode a rating of 2 ½ / 5 and commented that the episode was " wacky and fun , very Bart centered , it 's

easy to see with this episode why Bart became the figurehead for a few years of class clowns " . Colin Jacobson at DVD Movie Guide said in a review that the episode " offered another decent but unspectacular episode " and further commented that " its early vintage seems clear both through the awkward animation and the lack of appropriate character development . "

In February 1991 , in an interview , Jon Vitti described " Bart the Genius " as his favorite among the episodes he wrote to that point . James L. Brooks also mentioned the episode among his favorites , saying that " we did things with animation when that happened that just opened doors for us . " The show received mail from viewers complaining that the throwing away of a comic book was an incident of censorship . The invented word " Kwyjibo " in the episode inspired the creator of the Melissa macro virus , as well as the name of an Iron Oxide Copper Gold deposit in Quebec .

= = Home release = =

The episode was released first on home video in the United Kingdom , as part of a VHS release titled The Simpsons Collection ; the episode was paired with season one episode " The Call of the Simpsons " . In the United Kingdom , it was once re released as part of VHS boxed set of the complete first season , released in November 1999 .

In the United States , the episode would finally see the home video release as a part of The Simpsons Season One DVD set , which was released on September 25 , 2001 . Groening , Brooks , Silverman , and Vitti participated in the DVD 's audio commentary . A digital edition of the series ' first season was published December 20 , 2010 in the United States containing the episode , through Amazon Video and iTunes .