

= Bart Gets an " F " =

" Bart Gets an " F " " is the first episode of The Simpsons ' second season . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on October 11 , 1990 . In the episode , Bart fails four consecutive history exams and the school psychiatrist recommends that Bart repeat the fourth grade . Bart vows that he will start to do better and attempts to get the resident class genius Martin Prince to help him , but after that backfires , Bart prays for help . That night , Springfield is hit with a massive blizzard and the school is closed , giving Bart another day to study .

The episode was written by David M. Stern and directed by David Silverman . Mayor Quimby makes his first appearance and the episode was the first to feature a new opening sequence . " Bart Gets an " F " " was the third episode produced for the second season , but it was chosen to be the season premiere because it prominently featured Bart.

Due to the success of the first season of The Simpsons , Fox decided to switch the show 's time slot to Thursday at 8 : 00 p.m. EST where it would air opposite of NBC 's The Cosby Show , the number one show at the time . Through the summer , several news outlets published stories about the supposed " Bill vs. Bart " rivalry and heavily hyped the first episode of the second season . Several critics predicted that " Bart Gets an " F " " would do considerably worse in the ratings than The Cosby Show . However , the final Nielsen rating for the episode was 18 @. @ 4 and a 29 % share of the audience , finishing second in its time slot behind The Cosby Show , which had an 18 @. @ 5 rating and 29 % share . It finished eighth in the weekly ratings , but was watched by an estimated 33 @. @ 6 million viewers , making it the number one show in terms of actual viewers that week . It became the highest rated and most watched program in the history of the Fox Network and remained in that position until January 1 , 1995 . As of 2016 it is still the highest rated episode in the history of The Simpsons .

The episode has received positive reviews from television critics and was ranked 31st on Entertainment Weekly 's 1999 list of " The 100 Greatest Moments in Television " .

= = Plot = =

Bart presents a book report at Springfield Elementary School on Treasure Island , but it is blatantly obvious he did not read the book . After school , Mrs. Krabappel tells Bart his grades have steadily gotten worse and warns him about an upcoming exam on Colonial America , but Bart does not pay attention , and puts off studying . The next day at school , Bart feigns illness and that night , Lisa warns Bart he cannot evade his responsibilities forever , but Bart calls Milhouse for the test answers . After school the next day , an overconfident Bart hands in his test , only to get a poor score that is even worse than Milhouse 's substandard test and have Mrs. Krabappel take remedial action .

Homer and Marge are called in to meet with Mrs. Krabappel and school psychiatrist Dr. J. Loren Pryor . Dr. Pryor says that Bart is an underachiever and recommends that he should repeat the fourth @- @ grade . Homer and Marge consider that holding Bart back might not be such a bad idea . However , Bart is against this idea , and vows that he will start to do better and will pass . Left with little time to study on his own , Bart prays to God and asks that something miraculous happen to make him miss school the next day so he can have more time to study . That night , Springfield is hit with a massive blizzard , and the schools are closed .

After receiving word of the school closures , Bart prepares for a fun snow day . However , Lisa reminds him of his prayer , and Bart decides to make good with God by studying while everyone is outside having fun . The next day , he finishes the test and asks Mrs. Krabappel to grade it immediately . She does so , and tells him that he gets a 59 , failing by just one point . However , Bart becomes upset at having failed despite all his efforts . Mrs Krabappel is initially stunned and tries to console him but Bart when compares his failure to George Washington 's surrender of Fort Necessity to the French in 1754 , Mrs. Krabappel is impressed at this obscure historical reference , realizes that Bart has put more effort and gives him an extra point for demonstrating applied knowledge , pushing his grade up to a D minus , enough to pass . Proud without thinking , Bart runs throughout Springfield , exclaiming to people that he actually passed .

= = Production = =

" Bart Gets an " F " " was the first episode of The Simpsons to be written by David M. Stern . It was directed by David Silverman . Over the summer of 1990 , Bart 's rebellious nature was characterized by some parents and conservatives as a poor role model for children while several American public schools banned T @-@ shirts featuring Bart next to captions such as " I 'm Bart Simpson . Who the hell are you ? " and " Underachiever (' And proud of it , man ! ') " Several critics thought that the episode was a response to these controversies . However , executive producer James L. Brooks responded that it was not , but added , " we 're mindful of it . I do think it 's important for us that Bart does badly in school . There are students like that . Besides , I 'm very wary of television where everybody is supposed to be a role model . You don 't run across that many role models in real life . Why should television be full of them ? " Sam Simon commented that " there are themes to the shows we did last year , important themes , I think it 's a tribute to how well we executed them that nobody realized we had a point . Bart says " Cowabunga " for the second time (the first time being in " The Telltale Head ") , which was commonly associated with Bart through its use as a T @-@ shirt slogan . Mayor Quimby makes his first appearance in this episode , without his trademark sash that says " Mayor " . The sash was later added because the writers feared that viewers would not recognize him .

The episode was the first to feature a new opening sequence , which was shortened by fifteen seconds from its original length of roughly 1 minute , 30 seconds . The opening sequence for the first season showed Bart stealing a " Bus Stop " sign ; whilst the new sequence featured him skateboarding past several characters who had been introduced during the previous season . Starting with this season , there were three versions of the opening : a full roughly 1 minute 15 second long version , a 45 @-@ second version and a 25 @-@ second version . This gave the show 's editors more leeway . David Silverman believes that the animators began to " come into their own " as they had gotten used to the characters and were able to achieve more with character acting . During the scene where Bart delivers a speech where he states he is " dumb as a post " , Silverman wanted to cut from several angles very quickly to give a sense of anxiety . Martin Prince 's design was changed several times during the episode . There was a different model that had larger eyes and wilder hair designed for the scene where Martin betrays Bart and runs off . Silverman describes the " Snow Day " sequence as one of the hardest things he ever had to animate . It features several long pans which shows many different characters engaging in various activities and was difficult to time correctly . Bart 's fantasy where he sees the founding fathers of the United States uses muted colors and variations of red , white and blue . Silverman also had to work hard to make Bart cry without making his design look too off @-@ putting , and this is the reason why he was shown covering his face with a piece of paper .

= = First broadcast = =

= = = Move to Thursday = = =

The first season of The Simpsons had finished as high as 4th in the weekly ratings and was the Fox network 's first series to rank among a season 's top 30 highest @-@ rated shows and Bart quickly became one of the most popular characters on television in what was termed " Bartmania " . Due to the success of the first season of the show , the Fox Network decided to switch The Simpsons ' timeslot in hopes that it would steal ratings from NBC 's " powerhouse " line up , generate more advertising revenue , and result in higher ratings for Beverly Hills , 90210 and Babes , which would follow the show . The show was moved from its from 8 : 00 p.m. EST Sunday night slot to the same time on Thursday , where it would compete with NBC 's The Cosby Show , the number one show at the time . Many of the producers of The Simpsons , including James L. Brooks , were against the move . The show had been in the top 10 while airing on Sunday and they felt the move would

destroy its ratings . He commented that " Suddenly a show that was a hit is fighting for its survival , [...] We 're not fighting ' Cosby , ' we just want to get healthy ratings . There have been two weeks in my life when a show I was associated with was number one in the ratings , and on Sunday night , we had a chance to be the number one show in the country . I don 't think we have a chance on Thursday night . "

" Two Cars in Every Garage and Three Eyes on Every Fish " was the first episode produced for the season , but " Bart Gets an " F " " aired first because Bart was popular at the time and the producers had wanted to premiere with an episode involving him . It aired opposite the fourth episode of the seventh season of The Cosby Show titled " Period of Adjustment " , which saw the addition of Erika Alexander to the cast . The first 13 episodes of The Simpsons had been rerun several times through the summer , and Fox heavily promoted the first new episode since May , and news outlets published stories about the supposed " Bill vs. Bart " rivalry .

= = = Nielsen rating = = =

Reruns of The Simpsons which aired in the Thursday time slot against new episodes of The Cosby Show were ranked as low as 73rd in the weekly ratings (compared with third place for The Cosby Show) . Several critics predicted that " Bart Gets an " F " " would do considerably worse in the ratings than The Cosby Show . Greg Dawson of the Orlando Sentinel wrote that he would " bet dollars to plain @-@ cake doughnuts (a Homer pet peeve) that even a fresh Simpsons won 't come within five rating points of Cosby , which could get a 30 share in a power blackout . " Fox executive Peter Chernin said that they were hoping to establish a foothold on Thursday night and that " if we 're really lucky and very fortunate , we 're going to come in second place . "

Early overnight ratings figures for the original broadcast of the episode in 24 cities projected that The Simpsons had a 19 @.@ 9 Nielsen Rating and 30 % share of the audience while The Cosby Show had a 19 @.@ 3 Nielsen Rating and 29 % share . However , the final rating for " Bart Gets an " F " " was an 18 @.@ 4 and a 29 % share of the audience , finishing second in its time slot behind The Cosby Show , which had an 18 @.@ 5 rating and 29 % share . At the time , NBC had 208 television stations , while Fox only had 133 . It finished eighth in the weekly ratings , tied with Who 's the Boss ? , while The Cosby Show finished seventh . The rating is based on the number of household televisions that were tuned into the show , but Nielsen Media Research estimated that 33 @.@ 6 million viewers watched the episode , making it the number one show in terms of actual viewers that week (The Cosby Show was watched by 28 @.@ 5 million , finished seventh) . It became the highest rated and most watched program in the history of the Fox Network . It remained in that position until January 1 , 1995 , when a National Football League playoff game between the Minnesota Vikings and Chicago Bears achieved a Nielsen Rating of 21 @.@ 0 . As of 2016 it is still the highest rated episode in the history of The Simpsons .

= = Cultural references = =

Bart 's slapdash book report was on the Robert Louis Stevenson novel Treasure Island , while Martin presents Ernest Hemingway 's The Old Man and the Sea . Later on , Martin makes remarks about the forecandle of the Pequod in reference to Moby Dick .

During " Snow Day " , the citizens of Springfield sing " Winter Wonderland " .

The scene where everyone in Springfield gathers around the town circle , holds hands and begins singing is a reference to How the Grinch Stole Christmas ! .

" Hallelujah " , the chorus from George Frideric Handel 's Messiah , can be heard when it starts snowing .

In Bart 's fantasy of the improbable snowing on the 4th of July , he imagines Benjamin Franklin proclaiming he has invented the " First Ever Sled " , on which it is painted " Don 't Sled on Me " , an obvious reference to the Don 't Tread on Me banner .

= = Reception = =

The episode has received 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 , " A cracking opener to the second season - especially memorable for the sequence in which Bart prays for school to be cancelled the following day only to find himself exiled from the ensuing winter wonderland . " Virginia Mann of *The Record* felt that it was " not as wildly funny as last season 's best episodes , [but still] well @-@ done , humorous , and , at times , poignant . " The episode was praised for its emotional scenes . Tom Shales wrote that the episode is " not only funny , it 's touching " and praised it for its scenes where Bart prays , writing " There are few if any other entertainment shows on television that get into philosophical matters even this deeply . The Simpsons can be as thoughtful as a furrow @-@ browed Bill Moyers pontification - yet infinitely more amusing . " Hal Boedeker of *The Miami Herald* felt that it " pulls off a finale that 's thoughtful without being preachy , tender without being sappy . Despite the tears , the show keeps its edge . And the way TV usually smears on the schmaltz , that 's quite an achievement . " Phil Kloer of *The Atlanta Journal @-@ Constitution* wrote " The episode does a good job of emphasizing the importance of studying without getting goofy . For all the talk about the anarchy of " *The Simpsons* , " the show sometimes has smuggled in an occasional message , as it does again . " In his book *The Gospel According to the Simpsons* , Mark I. Pinsky writes that " *Bart Gets an " F "* " offers the most detailed portrayal of the dynamic of prayer on *The Simpsons* . " Steve L. Case later included the episode in his book *Toons That Teach* , a list of 75 cartoons that help teach biblical lessons . Internet comedian , Doug Walker , considers the episode to be the best of the entire series because he found it to be the most dramatic , funny , realistic , and relatable .

The episode was ranked 31st on *Entertainment Weekly* 's list of " *The 100 Greatest Moments in Television* " , writing that it " stands as classic irreverent family TV " . In 2007 , Larina Adamson , a supervising producer on *The Simpsons* , named " *Bart Gets an ' F ' "* as her favorite episode of the series . In 2010 BBC named " *Bart Gets an " F "* " as one of the ten most memorable episodes of the show , calling it " insightful and poignant " .