

= Lisa Gets an " A " =

" Lisa Gets an " A " " is the seventh episode of The Simpsons ' tenth season . It first aired on Fox in the United States on November 22 , 1998 . In the episode , Lisa cheats on a test for which she fails to study and receives an A + + + grade , but becomes guilt @-@ ridden . Meanwhile , Homer buys a lobster with the intention of fattening him up to eat . However , he becomes attached to it and decides to keep it as a pet named Pinchy .

" Lisa Gets an " A " " was directed by Bob Anderson , and although it was written by Ian Maxtone @-@ Graham , neither the main storyline nor the subplot was conceived by him . The main storyline was instead pitched by former staff writer Ron Hauge , while Richard Appel , who also was a staff writer , had pitched the episode 's subplot for a long time . The episode satirizes educational establishments , and features a parody of the video game Crash Bandicoot .

In its original American broadcast , " Lisa Gets an " A " " was seen by approximately 8 million viewers , and finished in 51st place in ratings the week it aired . Following its broadcast , a scene in the episode garnered criticism from the The Catholic League , but the controversy went largely ignored by The Simpsons ' staff . The episode received generally positive reviews from critics , and is considered one of the best episodes of the season .

= = Plot = =

After a long morning at church , the Simpsons go to the grocery store Eatie Gourmet 's to take advantage of free samples in lieu of a Sunday brunch and Bart 's suggestion that the family go Catholic so they can have " communion wafers and booze " . At the store , Homer wants to buy a lobster , but since the larger ones are too expensive , he decides to buy a small one and fatten him up before he " eats the profits " . Homer also tries to look for normal flavors of ice cream among the unusually named flavors at the " Ken & Harry 's " factory plant , so he puts Lisa into the freezer to look for some in the back , which ultimately causes her to catch a cold .

Although Lisa hates the idea , Marge wants Lisa to stay home from school for the next few days to recover from her cold . Lisa is derisive about playing one of Bart 's video games in order to pass the time , but soon becomes addicted to it , and consequently ignores the homework on The Wind in the Willows that she is given by Ralph . She even fakes the perpetuation of her illness so that she can continue playing the game . When Marge finally compels her to return to school , Lisa realizes she is unprepared for a test on the book , having not read it . In a panic she visits Bart , who brings her to Nelson , from whom she gets the test answers . Miss Hoover grades the tests over lunch , and Lisa is awarded the rare grade of A + + + . Meanwhile , Homer has become attached to his lobster and names him Pinchy . When the time comes to cook Pinchy , Homer cannot bring himself to do it , and instead declares him a part of the family .

The family is extremely proud of Lisa 's " achievement " , although she is guilt @-@ ridden at having cheated . The next day at school , Principal Skinner informs Lisa that her test grade has brought Springfield Elementary 's GPA up to the state 's minimum standard , and they now qualify for a basic assistance grant . Lisa admits that she cheated on the test , but Skinner and Superintendent Chalmers persuade her to keep it a secret so the school can keep the money . During the presentation , Lisa says that she understands about how desperate the school needs the basic assistance grant money , but also says that the truth is more important , confessing that she cheated . However , this was anticipated by Skinner , who fooled Lisa by staging a fake presentation before the real one , with the comptroller being revealed as Otto wearing a latex mask , allowing the school to keep the money anyway . Meanwhile , Homer discovers that he has accidentally cooked Pinchy while giving him a hot bath . Later that night , a distraught Homer eats his late friend , and finds him delicious .

= = Production = =

" Lisa Gets an " A " " was written by Ian Maxtone @-@ Graham and directed by Bob Anderson .

Although the episode was written by Maxtone @-@ Graham , neither of the plots were conceived by him . The main plot involving Lisa was pitched by fellow Simpsons writer Ron Hauge , and the sub @-@ plot involving Homer adopting a lobster was conceived by former staff writer Richard Appel . The writers found it difficult to " get the subplot go [ing] , " and it took a long time to come up with the third act , according to Maxtone @-@ Graham . The writers debated what name Homer would give his lobster . Hauge pitched that his name would be " Shelly " , however they eventually settled on naming him " Pinchy " . Hauge also pitched the name of the grocery store Eatie Gourmet 's . At the end of the episode , when Homer is eating Pinchy , a lot of the dialogue was ad @-@ libbed by Dan Castellaneta , who portrays Homer among other characters in the series . It took a long time for the writers to come up with an ending to the episode 's main storyline . Eventually , they settled on an ending that parodied the 1973 caper film The Sting .

In real life , lobsters are black in color , turning red after being cooked . However , in " Lisa Gets an " A " " , Pinchy is red throughout the whole episode . The Dash Dingo video game was difficult to animate , according to Hauge , as the animators had to " make it look less than The Simpsons style " . In order to achieve the desired effect , the animators decided to pixelate the video game . The episode features the second appearance of Gavin , who first appeared in the season seven episode " Marge Be Not Proud " , and " Range Rover Mom " , Gavin 's mother . They were both voiced by Tress MacNeille . The false Comptroller Atkins was portrayed by series regular cast member Harry Shearer , while the real Atkins was voiced by Hank Azaria , who is also a regular cast member for the series . The name of the character was based on the name of Jacqueline Atkins , a writer 's assistant on The Simpsons . The episode also features Marcia Wallace , Pamela Hayden , Maggie Roswell , Russi Taylor and Karl Wiedergott .

The episode satirizes the " skewed priorities " sometimes associated with educational establishments . Even though Principal Skinner knows that Lisa cheated on her test , he " looks the other way " so that the school meets the requirements for government @-@ funding . In the DVD commentary for the episode , the episodes showrunner Mike Scully opined that " there is a lot of truth in this story [...] There are certain requirements that the school has to meet in order to get state funding , and there are things that they 'd rather look the other way on if it 's gonna cost them money . This does really happen . "

While staying home from school , Lisa plays a video game called Dash Dingo . The video game is a spoof of the 1996 platform video game Crash Bandicoot . In a scene in the episode , Lisa imagines that she will fail the test . She imagines that the president of Harvard University , voiced by Dan Castellaneta , will be disappointed in her and recommend her to Brown University , where Otto was apparently on faculty . The scene was conceived by Maxtone @-@ Graham , whose alma mater was Brown University . He stated that all his friends from Brown and Harvard " loved " the joke . The liqueur Drambuie is also mentioned in the episode . With the government @-@ funded grant money , Springfield Elementary are able to afford a Coleco , a 1980s home computer .

= = Release and reception = =

= = Broadcast and controversy = =

In its original American broadcast on November 22 , 1998 , " Lisa Gets an " A " " received an 8 @. @ 0 rating , according to Nielsen Media Research , translating to approximately 8 million viewers . The episode finished in 51st place in the ratings for the week of November 16 ? 22 , 1998 , tied with the ABC program Sabrina the Teenage Witch .

After its original broadcast , the episode garnered scrutiny from The Catholic League . In a scene in the episode , the Simpsons are on their way home from a church service , and Bart says " I ? m starving . Mom , can we go Catholic so we can get Communion wafers and booze ? " To which Marge replies " No , no one is going Catholic . Three children is enough , thank you . " In an issue of the Catholic League 's monthly newspaper Catalyst , the organization wrote " The Fox animated TV show , " The Simpsons , " is loved by millions for its engaging characters . It was with regret ,

therefore , that we were forced to take issue with its November 22 episode [" Lisa Gets an " A " "] .
" They added that William Anthony Donohue , the current president of the organization , had sent a letter to Fox , reading " Can you possibly explain why this dialogue was included in the show ? " In response , Thomas Chavez , Fox 's manager for broadcast standards and practices , wrote a " lengthy " letter , in part re @-@ printed on the same issue of Catalyst . It read :

According to Mark I. Pinsky of The gospel according to the Simpsons : bigger and possibly even better ! edition with a new afterword exploring South park , Family guy , and other animated TV shows , the Catholic League was " not persuaded " by Chavez ' letter , and stated that they " sarcastically " responded in Catalyst : " Now why didn ' t we think of that ? Just goes to show how thoughtful the Hollywood gang really is . " According to Pinsky , the controversy did not have any impact on the show and was " simply ignored " by The Simpsons ' staff .

= = = Home release and critical reception = = =

On August 7 , 2007 , the episode was released as part of The Simpsons : The Complete Tenth Season DVD box set . Matt Groening , Mike Scully , George Meyer , Ian Maxtone @-@ Graham , Ron Hauge , Yeardley Smith and Mike B. Anderson participated in the DVD 's audio commentary of the episode .

Following its home video release , " Lisa Gets an " A " " received generally positive reviews from critics . Warren Martyn and Adrian Wood of I Can 't Believe It 's a Bigger and Better Updated Unofficial Simpsons Guide described it as " A fabulously defining moment in Lisa 's life , showing what happens if you let your guard slip . " They continued by writing " What makes this work even more is the false ending which shows that everyone in Springfield is as adept at predicting Lisa 's morality as the viewers are . " They concluded their review by calling it " An absolutely inspired piece of comedy . " Colin Jacobson of DVD Movie Guide wrote that he " [took] great delight in the way this episode skewers the skewed priorities of the educational establishment . " He added that " Lisa acts like her usual prissy self , but that factor acts to allow the show to succeed . " He concluded by writing that the episode " connects to real emotions pretty well and offers some funny moments . " Digital Entertainment New 's Jake McNeill described it as one of the season 's best episodes , giving particular praise to its subplot , which he called " great " . James Plath of DVD Town wrote that " the real fun in this episode comes from Homer 's attachment to a lobster he brings home . " Giving the episode a more mixed review , the Currentfilm.com staff called it " memorable " , although " the majority of the episode remains uneven " . They wrote that " The episode remains entertaining simply because of Homer 's subplot , " and compared Pinchy to Mojo the Helper Monkey from the season nine episode " Girly Edition " and Stampy the Elephant from the season five episode " Bart Gets an Elephant " , which they considered to be " great (and brief) Simpsons pets " .