

= When Flanders Failed =

" When Flanders Failed " is the third episode of the The Simpsons ' third season . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on October 3 , 1991 . In the episode , Homer makes a wish for Ned Flanders 's new left @-@ handed store to go out of business . The wish comes true and gets the Flanders family into financial troubles . Ned is forced to sell his possessions , and Homer gleefully buys many of his things . When finding out that Ned 's house is to be repossessed , Homer feels guilty and decides to get the store back in business by telling all the left @-@ handed citizens about it . Meanwhile , Bart takes karate lessons but quits after discovering that it is not as interesting as he had expected it to be .

The episode was written by Jon Vitti and directed by Jim Reardon . It had an unusual amount of animation glitches because the animation studio was training a new group of animators . The episode features cultural references to playwright William Shakespeare and the film It 's a Wonderful Life . The title of the episode is a reference to the title of the poem " In Flanders Fields " . Since airing , the episode has received mostly positive reviews from television critics . It acquired a Nielsen rating of 13 @. @ 9 , and was the highest @-@ rated show on the Fox network the week it aired .

= = Plot = =

Ned Flanders invites the Simpson family to a barbecue party and announces his plans to open a store for left @-@ handed people ; The Leftorium . During the pulling of a wishbone , Homer , who has been constantly jealous of the material success of Ned and his family , wishes for The Leftorium to be a failure and go out of business . Homer frequently checks in on Ned to ensure that business is going poorly and is happy to see precisely that happening . When Homer sees left @-@ handed citizens struggling with items made for right @-@ handed people , he thinks about informing them about The Leftorium , but decides not to . Eventually the store does indeed close due to lack of business , plunging the Flanders ' into debt and misery . Ned is forced to sell his possessions , and Homer gleefully buys many of Ned 's things . Homer starts to regret what he did , but when he goes to return Ned 's possessions , he finds Ned 's house repossessed and the family living in their car . Homer wrestles with the guilt his wish has brought , and tells Ned to open the store for one final day . He then tells all the left @-@ handed residents of Springfield about The Leftorium , and they all travel to the store and buy things . The increase in customers helps Ned keep the store open and get his house back .

In a subplot , Bart begins taking karate lessons at Akira 's karate school . On his first lesson , he finds that karate is quite boring , so he decides to skip each lesson in order to play video games at the mall arcade . Whenever he is questioned by his family and friends about the techniques he has learned , he refers to the " Touch of Death " , an ability he saw in one of the arcade games he played . He proceeds to terrorize his sister Lisa into doing his will by threatening her with the technique . His actions catch up to him when Lisa prods him to defend her from the school bullies and reclaim her saxophone . He ends up being pantsed and hung by his underwear from the basketball hoop rim by the bullies , as Lisa ( having reclaimed her saxophone ) wistfully notes that sometimes two wrongs do make a right .

= = Production = =

The episode was written by Jon Vitti and directed by Jim Reardon . It featured an unusual amount of animation glitches because the animation studio in Korea was training a new group of animators , and this episode was one of their first efforts . Show runner Mike Reiss said he will always remember it as the episode " that came back animated with a thousand mistakes in it and was just a complete and utter mess . " Reardon said there was " literally a mistake in every other scene " when the episode came back from Korea . Several scenes had to be re @-@ animated in the United States because of these glitches , but according to Reardon , " you can still see the lesser ones that got through , such as line quality problems particularly in the first act . " Though it aired in season

three , " When Flanders Failed " was produced during the previous season . It was recorded in spring 1991 when the previous season came to an end , and was scheduled to air in autumn that year . The staff therefore had more time to fix the glitches during the summer .

" When Flanders Failed " features the second appearance of the character Akira , voiced by Hank Azaria . He was previously seen in the season two episode " One Fish , Two Fish , Blowfish , Blue Fish " , where he is a waiter at a Japanese restaurant . It is revealed in this episode that the characters Ned Flanders , Moe Szyslak and Montgomery Burns are left @-@ handed , just like The Simpsons creator Matt Groening . The Simpsons writer George Meyer came up with the idea of The Leftorium when the writers were trying to figure out what Ned 's failed business would be . The inspiration came from a friend of Meyer 's who opened a left @-@ handed store that was quickly forced to close down due to lack of business .

= = Cultural references = =

The title of the episode is a reference to the title of the poem " In Flanders Fields " . Homer watches the Canadian Football League Draft on television . The Simpsons writers Jay Kogen , Wallace Wolodarsky , and John Swartzwelder appear on the draft list . Akira 's school is located in the mall next to Shakespeare 's Fried Chicken , a reference to the English poet and playwright William Shakespeare . Akira gives Bart 's karate class the ancient Chinese military treatise The Art of War by Sun Tzu . The episode 's ending in which Homer gathers the citizens to The Leftorium is a reference to the film It 's a Wonderful Life , including Homer 's toast and the way Ned and his wife Maude are dressed . Richard Sakai is seen in one of the crowd shots at The Leftorium at the end of the episode . The word schadenfreude became increasingly known in popular culture after it appeared in this episode . Lisa asks Homer if he has ever heard of schadenfreude after he expresses delight that Ned 's business is failing . Defining it for him , she says , " It 's a German term for ' shameful joy ' , taking pleasure in the suffering of others . "

= = Reception = =

In its original American broadcast , " When Flanders Failed " finished 29th in the ratings for the week of September 30 ? October 6 , 1991 , with a Nielsen rating of 13 @.@ 9 , equivalent to approximately 12 @.@ 8 million viewing households . It was the highest @-@ rated show on the Fox network that week .

In December 2002 , " When Flanders Failed " was utilized in a Roanoke Presbyterian Church Sunday School class , to stimulate a discussion among both children and adults , about why unfortunate things happen to good people . Phil Brown , the teacher of the class , said the reason they used episodes of The Simpsons was " to get something that would get the kids excited and be more than just a traditional Sunday School lecture series . "

Since airing , the episode has received mostly positive reviews from television critics . Kirk Baird of the Las Vegas Sun named it the fifth best episode of The Simpsons , and Central Michigan Life called it an " instant classic " .

Pete Oliva of North Texas Daily said the episode " proves that it is possible to laugh and cry at the same time without being able to control either response . " Bill Gibron of DVD Verdict said " When Flanders Failed " shows that even if The Simpsons is not dealing with famous celebrities or " high profile places " , the writers can still " wring uproarious comedy out of their cast of regulars . Flanders is a special creation in the canon of humor , a regular guy who is funny because of how hyper @-@ normal he is compared to his Neanderthal neighbors . The focus on people who are left @-@ handed , and the whole idea of being a lefty , is an unusual basis for a television show . But then again , nothing about The Simpsons is ever common . " Hock Guan Teh of DVD Town also praised the writers , stating that they " are able to craft a downtrodden tale for the perpetually clueless Flanders family that serves to illustrate how dark emotions can eventually be overcome by Homer 's guilt . A memorable episode . " Niel Harvey of The Roanoke Times called " When Flanders Failed " a " classic bit of Simpsonia . " The episode 's reference to It 's a Wonderful Life was named

the 26th greatest film reference in the history of the show by Total Film 's Nathan Ditum .

Nate Meyers of Digitally Obsessed gave the episode a 3 @. @ 5 / 5 rating and commented that " perhaps it is not profound in its examination of jealousy causing people to behave irrationally , but it handles the topic in a serious manner while not compromising the show 's humor . The side story with Bart stems from the era of the series when Bart was the big star , but it still has some funny bits . " DVD Movie Guide 's Colin Jacobson wrote : " Mean Homer equals Funny Homer , so ' When Flanders Failed ' presents an above average show . He seems unusually crude here , which makes him amusing . The subplot with Bart and his karate class also adds good material , especially when he threatens to turn the ' Touch of Death ' on Lisa . Another sappy finish slightly mars this one , but it remains generally solid . " Kimberly Potts of AOL named it tenth best episode of the show and commented : " Schadenfreude is the theme of this tight episode about Homer 's joy at the failure of Flanders ' Leftorium store . There are few times Homer is more shamelessly smug than he was while imitating Flanders and using Ned 's yard sale grill , and we haven 't even mentioned Bart 's ' Touch of Death ' subplot . " Winston @-@ Salem Journal 's Tim Clodfelter called it an " outstanding " episode .