

= Coming of Age (Star Trek : The Next Generation) =

" Coming of Age " is the 19th episode of the American science fiction television series Star Trek : The Next Generation . It first aired in broadcast syndication on March 14 , 1988 . Sandy Fries originally wrote the episode , but Hannah Louise Shearer performed an uncredited re @-@ write . It is the only episode of the series directed by Mike Vejar , who went on to direct episodes of Deep Space Nine , Voyager and Enterprise .

Set in the 24th century , the series follows the adventures of the Starfleet crew of the Federation starship Enterprise @-@ D. In the episode , Wesley Crusher (Wil Wheaton) takes a Starfleet Academy entrance exam while Adm. Gregory Quinn (Ward Costello) and Lt. Cdr . Dexter Remmick (Robert Schenkkan) investigate the senior staff of the Enterprise .

The episode marked the first appearance of a shuttlecraft in the series , and the first speaking role for a Vulcan . The events of the episode continued in " Conspiracy " and " Samaritan Snare " . 10 @. @ 1 million viewers watched the episode during the first broadcast , with critics giving it a mixed response .

= = Plot = =

Captain Jean @-@ Luc Picard (Patrick Stewart) greets his friend Admiral Gregory Quinn (Ward Costello) and his assistant Lt. Commander Dexter Remmick (Robert Schenkkan) aboard the Enterprise . For classified reasons , Quinn has ordered Remmick to perform an investigation of the Enterprise and its crew and expects Picard to fully co @-@ operate . Remmick 's query causes tension in the crew , particularly when he questions the trustworthiness of the senior staff based on their personal logs and past actions . A young cadet , having failed the Starfleet Academy entrance examination , attempts to run away in a shuttlecraft but ends up drifting . Picard is able to direct the cadet to pilot the shuttle away from a planet by bouncing off the atmosphere .

The investigation is completed , and Remmick informs both Picard and Quinn that there is no sign of wrongdoing , and expresses his interest in joining its crew in the future . Quinn tells Picard that he feels there is an unknown force that has infiltrated Starfleet , and he was seeking to assure himself of his trust in Picard and the Enterprise crew . To help combat this threat , Quinn offers Picard a promotion to Admiral and a job overseeing Starfleet Academy which would place Picard near Quinn at all times . Picard mulls the offer for some time , but eventually declines .

Meanwhile , Wesley Crusher (Wil Wheaton) prepares to take the Academy entrance exam himself . He succeeds in passing several parts of the exam , and helps Mordock (John Pugh) , a highly talented Benzite and fellow competitor , to solve a difficult test problem so that they may both advance . Wesley is worried about the psychological part of the exam , and he is directed to a room to wait for the test to start .

While waiting , he hears an explosion nearby , and leaves the room to investigate . He finds two men trapped by fallen components in a fire @-@ engulfed room . Wesley helps to release one man wounded under a heavy pipe , and tries to coax the other man to leave the burning room , but the man refuses . Wesley is forced to leave the scared man inside and drags the other man to safety . Outside the room , he soon realizes this was the psychological test . Eventually , the cadets are told of the results , and Mordock is granted admission into Starfleet Academy , while Wesley is encouraged to try again next year . Mordock thanks Wesley for his help and wishes him future success . After Wesley returns to the Enterprise , Picard confides in him that he also failed the examination the first time .

= = Production = =

Although Mike Vejar directed only this single episode of The Next Generation , he later directed several episodes of Deep Space Nine , Voyager and Enterprise . Hannah Louise Shearer conducted an uncredited script re @-@ write , and left the details of the conspiracy deliberately open as plans were already underway for a follow @-@ up story . " Coming of Age " featured several firsts for The

Next Generation , including the first appearance of a shuttlecraft in the series and the first appearance of a Vulcan in a speaking role within the series .

Only a quarter of the shuttlecraft set was built for " Coming of Age " with the set expanded gradually according to the scene requirements in season two . Due to construction errors with the full @-@ scale model , it failed to match the miniature . A smaller shuttlepod with a new shuttle design was later used , first appearing in " Darmok " . Several previous episodes are referenced during Remmick 's investigation , including " Where No One Has Gone Before " , " The Battle " , " Angel One " and " Justice " . In a scene cut from the episode , the crew celebrate Wesley 's 16th birthday on the presumption that he wouldn 't be on the ship at the time due to joining the Academy .

Guest stars included Robert Schenkkan as Remmick , who had been a fan of The Original Series . He later won a Pulitzer Prize for his nine @-@ act play The Kentucky Cycle . Robert Ito had previously been a main cast member on Quincy , M.E .. Guest stars Daniel Riordan and John Putch later appeared in the franchise in different roles . Riordan appeared as a Bajoran in the Deep Space Nine episode " Progress " . Putch returned as a different Benzite later in The Next Generation episode " A Matter of Honor " , and in the film Star Trek Generations . The events of the episode are followed up in " Conspiracy " which also features the return of Costello and Schenkkan as Quinn and Remmick . Wesley would re @-@ take his Starfleet Academy exam in " Samaritan Snare " .

= = Reception and home media release = =

The episode first aired on March 14 , 1988 . It received Nielsen ratings of 10 @.@ 1 million on the first broadcast , which was an increase of over a million viewers from the previous episode " Home Soil " , which was watched by 9 million viewers some three weeks prior . The following week 's episode , " Heart of Glory " , was watched by 10 @.@ 7 million viewers .

Several reviewers re @-@ watched the episode after the end of the series . Writing for Tor.com , Keith DeCandido questioned why the shuttlebay wasn 't guarded , comparing it to a similar situation in The Original Series episode , " The Doomsday Machine " . He also felt that the sequence where the shuttle is bounced off an atmosphere resembled the " Premiere " episode of Farscape . DeCandido said that the exam made no sense , and that there were no surprises as it was obvious that Wesley and Picard were not due to leave the series . Despite Remmick representing " the ultimate cliché of the jackass interrogator " , DeCandido liked the episode . He credited the strong performance by the cast and called Wheaton 's performance the best of the first season . DeCandido gave the episode a score of five out of ten .

In his review for The A.V. Club , Zack Handlen thought the episode was like " getting a two @-@ parter with no ' To Be Continued ... ' in the end credits " and felt the episode was " clunky " . He felt that the Wesley storyline was clichéd , and that having two unconnected storylines would never have happened in The Original Series . Handlen gave the episode a grade of C.

James Hunt of Den of Geek said that it was a " very good episode " despite being " Wesley @-@ heavy " . He recommended that readers watch the episode and described the Remmick interviews and the shuttlecraft sequence as " fantastic " . Michelle Erica Green , whilst writing for TrekNation , described the episode as " craptastic " and Wesley as " intolerable " . She said that knowing about the " insane " alien parasite conspiracy in " Conspiracy " ahead of time made her look negatively on the episode .

" Coming of Age " was first released on VHS cassette in the United States and Canada on November 11 , 1992 . The episode was included on the Star Trek : The Next Generation season one DVD box set , released in March 2002 . The season one Blu @-@ ray set was released on July 24 , 2012 .