

## = Separate Vocations =

" Separate Vocations " is the eighteenth episode of The Simpsons ' third season . It originally aired on Fox in the United States on February 27 , 1992 . In the episode , the Springfield Elementary School makes the students take career aptitude tests . When Lisa discovers that she is best suited to become a homemaker , her dreams of becoming a professional musician are shattered and , as a result , she becomes a troublemaker in school . Meanwhile , Bart discovers that he is best suited to become a policeman ; this significantly improves his grades and behavior and he is chosen to be the school 's new hall monitor .

The episode was written by George Meyer and directed by Jeffrey Lynch . American actor and television personality Steve Allen guest starred in the episode as the electronically altered voice of Bart in a fantasy sequence . The episode features cultural references to films such as Bullitt , The Wild One , and Beverly Hills Cop , and the television series The Streets of San Francisco . Since airing , the episode has received mostly positive reviews from television critics . It acquired a Nielsen Rating of 14 @. @ 8 and was the highest @-@ rated show on the Fox network the week it aired . Nancy Cartwright received a Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Voice @-@ Over Performance for her performance as Bart in the episode .

## = = Plot = =

After taking career aptitude tests ( scored by a malfunctioning computer ) , Lisa discovers that the occupation she is best suited for is homemaker , while Bart 's test shows that he should be a policeman . Lisa is heartbroken over the result and is determined to prove the test wrong . She consults a music teacher for his opinion , but he tells her that , having inherited her father 's stubby fingers , she can never be a professional saxophone player . Lisa is therefore required by the test to spend the day doing chores with her mother Marge , while Bart goes on a ride @-@ along with the police .

Lisa hates her role as a homemaker and , realizing that her future dreams have been shattered , loses interest in being a good student . Bart enjoys spending time with the police , and he even ends up stopping Snake Jailbird during a car chase . When Principal Skinner discovers Bart 's new interest in law enforcement , he enlists him as a hall monitor . Bart starts handing out demerits to his classmates for minor infractions and has order restored to the school . Meanwhile , Lisa becomes a sulky , rebellious student with no interest in school . She hangs out with the bad girls in the bathroom , makes snippy comments at Miss Hoover , gets disciplined by Skinner , and her grades drop as a result . The girls are impressed with Lisa 's recent bad behavior and offer her a cigarette . Though hesitant to accept , she takes it and tells them that she will smoke it in class .

One day , while she is in detention for another snippy comment , Lisa secretly steals all of the Teachers ' Editions of the schoolbooks and reveals the teachers ' incompetence . When the books turn up missing , it is up to Bart to find out who stole them . He finds the books in Lisa 's locker and realizes she is the culprit . Closing her locker , Lisa confesses to the crime and reveals she stole them because she was rebelling against her chosen occupation as a homemaker . She also tells Bart that before he became a hall monitor , he used to enjoy the simple freedom of rebellion . He admits so , but also tells Lisa that even he had his limits and that she could face expulsion for her actions . When Skinner finds the books , he is overjoyed , but then asks who stole them . Bart takes the blame and returns to his life as a bad student and detention hall regular .

When Milhouse takes him to Skinner 's office for punishment , Lisa asks Bart why he took the blame for her and not let her take the fall . He tells Lisa he did not want her ruining her future as she had the brains and talent to do what she wanted . Bart encourages her to keep pursuing her future dreams as a professional saxophone player and promises to be there for her when she needs his help again ( as well as borrowing money from her ) . Lisa is touched by Bart 's deeds and returns to her old life as a good student . As he spends his time in detention , Lisa plays her saxophone outside his classroom to comfort him . While hearing her play her sax , Bart makes encouraging comments that Lisa has a great future as a professional saxophone player regardless of what

anyone else says .

= = Production = =

The episode was written by George Meyer and directed by Jeffrey Lynch . Mike Reiss , show runner of The Simpsons with Al Jean at the time , said Meyer wrote most of the episode by himself without help from the show 's other writers . Few changes were made to the first draft that he pitched to the producers ; it was near identical to the final script . The episode was inspired by the vocational tests taken by several members of the show 's staff when they went to school ; Reiss , for example , said he was told he would become a librarian . Jean said " one of the first things that sold us on doing the episode " was the idea of Bart becoming a policeman . He said it was " a funny , realistic depiction of what a kid like Bart might wind up to become , and it wasn 't something you would immediately think of . " Jean said the episode deals with the emotion that many adults feel when they grow older and realize that they are not going to achieve the dreams they once had . " [ It 's about ] how people in life cope with that problem . Maybe Lisa , at eight years old , is a little bit young to worry about that , but that 's what we were trying to explore here . "

In one sequence where Bart imagines himself testifying in court , with his voice electronically altered . The altered voice was provided by American actor and television personality Steve Allen . Series creator Matt Groening said that he and some of the writers who were old enough to remember Allen 's TV show from the 1950s ? 60s were thrilled to have him guest @-@ star , especially John Swartzwelder . It took nine takes for Allen to pronounce Bart 's catchphrase " ¡ Ay , caramba ! " correctly , to the point where the staff began to get slightly frustrated with him . There was a discussion amongst the writing team of whether the episode should end with a joke or have a " sweet " ending . Reiss said " With the better angels in our nature , we went with the sweet ending [ of Lisa playing her saxophone for Bart ] . "

= = Cultural references = =

The music school that Lisa visits has a sign out front with a picture of a diapered baby Ludwig van Beethoven on it . When Principal Skinner is questioning Lisa about her newfound sense of irresponsibility , he asks " What are you rebelling against ? " She responds " Whaddaya got ? " , like Marlon Brando 's character Johnny Strabler did in the film The Wild One . She also has a toothpick in her mouth , like Johnny had in the film . The fifth graders that Lisa talks to in the school washroom are smoking Laramie cigarettes .

The car chase scene with Snake is a reference to the car chase scene in the 1968 film Bullitt . Music similar to the soundtrack of the television series The Streets of San Francisco is heard in the scene . Alf Clausen , a composer on The Simpsons who had previously worked on several police shows , wrote the music for the scene . In another reference to The Streets of San Francisco and other Quinn Martin productions , a voice @-@ over and caption proclaims the name of act two of the episode , " Act II - Death Drives a Stick " , after the episode 's first act break in the middle of the Snake car chase . In the sequence where Bart imagines himself testifying in court , his face is obscured with a blue dot ; this is a references to the television coverage of the rape trial of William Kennedy Smith , in which the woman who accused Smith of raping her was obscured with a blue dot over her face . The way the scene changes from Bart and Skinner talking in Skinner 's office to them searching through the lockers is a reference to the same style of scene change used in the 1960s Batman television series , in which a close @-@ up of Batman 's face with dramatic music in the background is shown for a brief moment before the scene changes . The song heard when Bart and Skinner search through the lockers for the Teachers ' Editions is a variation of Harold Faltermeyer 's " Axel F " from the film Beverly Hills Cop .

= = Analysis = =

In the last scene of the episode , Bart is seen writing " I will not expose the ignorance of the faculty "

on the blackboard as a punishment for exposing the ignorance of the teachers by removing the Teachers' Editions. In his book *The Small Screen: How Television Equips Us to Live in the Information Age*, Brian L. Ott describes this scene as one of the "key ways The Simpsons appeals to audience, which tends to be younger, by critiquing authority figures, and in particular educators." Toby Daspit and John Weaver write in their book *Popular Culture and Critical Pedagogy: Reading, Constructing, Connecting* that the writers of The Simpsons are "particularly interested" in questions about authority and the abuses of powers in school. Another scene from the episode sees Ms. Hoover telling the students to stare at the blackboard for ten minutes until class is over. Daspit and Weaver write that it is "the absolute power that teachers have over students' every action that allows for the image to be presented on The Simpsons. It would be comforting to tell ourselves that this is simply parody run amok, that the writers are stretching reality to make a point, but the discussants in the study [of The Simpsons in this book] had memories of a reality very much like the one presented in this program." One of the discussants said she believes everyone has experienced similar situations in their school years, and she thinks the thought that "an educator could ever do something so useless and pointless with the children's time" is "frightening".

= = Reception = =

In its original American broadcast, "Separate Vocations" finished 29th in the ratings for the week of February 24 – March 1, 1992, with a Nielsen Rating of 14 @. @ 8, equivalent to approximately 13 @. @ 6 million viewing households. It was the highest @-@ rated show on the Fox network that week. Bart's voice actor, Nancy Cartwright, received a Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Voice @-@ Over Performance in 1992 for her performance in the episode.

Since airing, the episode has received mostly 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, thought the episode displayed The Simpsons "at its best – not only hilarious but daringly outspoken on a whole range of issues – the failures of the education system, police abuses of power, the stifling of children's creativity." Bill Gibron of *DVD Verdict* said "Separate Vocations" represent The Simpsons "at its apex as a well tuned talent machine grinding out the good stuff with surprising accuracy and skill." Gibron added that the episode shows that "even in territory they're not used to (Bart as a safety patrol, Lisa as a cursing class cut up), the Simpsons' kids are funny and inventive." Nate Meyers of *Digitally Obsessed* gave the episode a four out of five rating and commented that the script's "departure from the traditional roles assigned to Bart and Lisa makes for a fresh experience with many laughs." Meyers thought the highlight of the episode was Bart's ride in the police car. *DVD Movie Guide*'s Colin Jacobson thought the theme of the episode was unoriginal, but commented that Bart's "rapid embrace of fascism" and Lisa's "descent into hooliganism" provide "a number of funny opportunities, and 'Separate Vocations' exploits them well. Though it's not one of the year's best shows, it seems like a good one for the most part."