

Excerpt terms and conditions



This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

You may view, print and download any of our excerpts for perusal purposes.

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest reading the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

Dramatic Publishing

ALIEN EQUATION

by
Annie Maccoby

with
Jeff Church



The Dramatic Publishing Company
Woodstock, Illinois • Wilton, Connecticut • Melbourne, Australia

*** NOTICE ***

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty fees are given in our current catalogue and are subject to change without notice. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed anytime it is acted before an audience. All inquiries concerning amateur and stock rights should be addressed to: THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, 311 Washington St., Woodstock, Illinois 60098.

COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR HIS AGENT
THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES.

This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law is not only ethical, it encourages authors to continue their creative work. This work is fully protected by copyright. No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including but not limited to the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication, and reading are reserved. On all programs this notice should appear: "Produced by special arrangement with THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY of Woodstock, Illinois."

©MCMLXXXVI by
ANNIE MACCOBY with JEFF CHURCH
Copyright revised ©MCMXCI
Printed in the United States of America
All Rights Reserved
(ALIEN EQUATION)

ISBN 0-87129-024-3

ALIEN EQUATION

A Play in One Act
For Six Men and Seven Women

CHARACTERS

MAXthe class behavior problem
ALPHA RAY a boy from the world of anti-matter
MINUS I a female negative from anti-matter
MINUS II a male negative from anti-matter
MISS MITHERS the school teacher
SAM Max's friend
TAMMYthe teacher's pet
CROWN KINGSLEY the class trendsetter
EMMA the class crush
MARJORIE Emma's confidant

Others in the class:

CHIP, WANDA, SANDY, CROWN'S band

TIME: Now.

PLACE: Miss Mithers' modular classroom.

ALIEN EQUATION was first produced at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D. C., opening on December 12, 1984. Carole Calano Sullivan was producer. The cast was as follows: (in alphabetical order)

CROWN KINGSLEY	Mike Anderson
SANDY	Christina Biltchik
EMMA	Erika Bogren
TAMMY	Sara Michelle Cox
MINUS II	Luke Dollar
CHIP	Marc Felish
WANDA	Sarah Fogel
MINUS I	Allison Jacobs
ALPHA RAY	Hans Jacobson
MISS MITHERS	Sarah Marshall
MARJORIE	Dionne Mebane
MAX	Luke Smith
SAM	Matt Smith

Directed by	Sue Crystal
Set Designed by	Russell Metheny
Costume Design by	Henry Shaffer
Lighting Design by	Kim Peter Kovac
Sound Design by	John Vengrouskie
Stage Manager	Sue Landess

ALIEN EQUATION

SCENE: *A classroom suggesting a modular style. No walls necessary. Above the chalkboard hang drawings from last week's art unit. A supply closet door is next to the board. The teacher's desk can wheel about freely on a raised circular platform, which also serves as a large group desk for the students. Each student can rove around the large modular desk on his/her stool. Above hang large painted punchballs: the planets of our solar system. Also present, of course, are the required American flag, clock, and world map.*

AT RISE: *An isolated circle of light rises on MAX who sits at a work station off to one side. He is working on an unusual shape he has constructed from milk cartons, paste and masking tape.*

MAX *(voice over, with sound of clock ticking).* Okay... here we go...the light hits it just right...I think I've almost got it...There it is! That shape I saw in the sky... ahh...perfect! Now if I could just get—*(Adds one more shape to model.)*—yes.

(The lights grow. The classroom is revealed. The sound of the clock's ticking accelerates. A test is in progress. The STUDENTS are bent over desks, working. MISS MITHERS sits at her desk, correcting papers. Written

in large block letters on the chalkboard behind her is "Math Module Quiz.")

TAMMY. I got it! (*MAX shakes his head, suddenly hearing the shouts of the classroom that break into his private world of thought; his quiz lies beside him, untouched. Looking at MAX.*) I got it! Ha. Finished first!

CHIP. Shh.

SAM. Yeah, be quiet, will ya?

TAMMY. Miss Mithers, I'm done. Am I the first one again?

MISS MITHERS. Yes, Tammy, I'll take your paper. Okay, everyone, just a minute more. (*The class panics, ad libs "We need more time"... "Come on, Miss Mithers," etc.*) Quiet. Let's get quiet. Now yesterday, when you said you weren't ready, I gave you an extra day. You've had plenty of time to study.

TAMMY. Thirty seconds left, Miss Mithers.

MISS MITHERS. What?...Oh, yes...well, everybody, thirty seconds then.

TAMMY. Twenty-five seconds now. (*Several CLASS MEMBERS groan.*)

MISS MITHERS. Just use your time wisely, that's all I ask. (*WANDA finishes her test. While studying it, as she crosses to MISS MITHERS's desk, she stumbles over MAX's box of milk cartons next to the work station.*)

MAX. Watch it.

WANDA. Max!

TAMMY. Fifteen seconds, Miss Mithers.

CHIP. Shh.

MISS MITHERS. What's going on back there? Max? Wanda?

WANDA. Max is trying to trip everybody with this box here.

MAX. I am not—

TAMMY. Five seconds.

MISS MITHERS. Max...

TAMMY (*building in volume with each one*). Three, two, one, Zero! Time's up! Time's up! (*Con conversationally*.) Miss Mithers, the time is up.

MISS MITHERS. Okay, Tammy. Okay, people, let's hand in the quizzes as I come by. (*CROWN KINGSLEY hands quiz to her.*)

CROWN. Great. Let's get into it. (*Turns on his boom box, blasting music. Yells.*) I got a big gig Friday night! I gotta think of a new name for my band, ya know?

MISS MITHERS. Crown Kingsley, this school is not equipped with—(*CROWN looks at her as if to say "What?" then turns off music.*)—ear plugs!...Thank you, Crown.

CROWN. Hey yeah. The Earplugs. That'd be a vicious name for my band. (*CLASS laughs.*)

MISS MITHERS. Look people, I know it's only a matter of days before vacation—

TAMMY. Forty nine hours, twenty-two seconds.

MISS MITHERS. —but let's settle down and get *something* done, please? (*Crosses to MAX.*) Max, where's your quiz?

MAX. Uh...right there.

MISS MITHERS (*picks up his sheet of paper*). There's nothing on this. It's blank. It's a blank piece of paper.

MAX (*scratches*). Yeah, I know.

MISS MITHERS. Well that's an automatic F, Max. (*MAX shrugs slightly.*) Do you know what F means? Max, do you?

MAX (*mocking as if he's stupid*). "No..." (*CLASS snickers.*)

MISS MITHERS. Shhh. It's not F for Fun or F for Fine. No. It's F for Flunk, Max. Flunked this quiz. Why don't you *try* to learn the material?

MAX. I don't know. (*Looks away to one of his models.*)

MISS MITHERS (*a buddy to her students*). Look, Max, let's talk about this. Why aren't you learning these equations like the rest of your peer group?

MAX. I've got my reasons.

MISS MITHERS (*her best empathy*). May I be in on these reasons?

MAX (*exploding*). Why should I learn what everyone's learned a hundred billion times before? It's all been done. The answers are right there in the back of your book. The whole thing's so boring...that's all.

MISS MITHERS. Is that why you're just playing? Is that why there's this mess on your desk? (*Picks up one unit of milk cartons.*) What are these things?

TAMMY (*raising her hand in a frenzy*). Oh! Miss Mithers! Miss Mithers, I saw him this morning with those cartons around the paint sink...

MISS MITHERS. What are you doing with them, Max?

TAMMY. But wait, Miss Mithers, listen to this. I saw him—

MISS MITHERS (*cutting her off*). Tammy. What are they, Max?

CROWN. I think he's into modern art.

MARJORIE. I think he's into building roach motels.

CROWN. The Roach Motels. Hey, I've heard of 'em. Great new album.

MISS MITHERS. Tell us what's more important than a quiz, Max?

MAX. I was trying to build—(*Sees all eyes upon him.*)—

Just forget it. It's nothing. It's nothing.

SAM. Anything's better'n a dorky quiz.

MISS MITHERS (*putting cartons into the box*). This has nothing to do with school. I'm taking this box right now and putting it out in the hall. (*She starts out.*)

MAX. Miss Mithers...! (*She stops and turns to MAX.*)

MISS MITHERS. I'm only doing this so you can get some work done. (*She exits into the hall.*)

MAX. Just don't break 'em...okay?

WANDA. What were you doing with those, Max?

MAX (*shrugs*). Just—nothing...

TAMMY. You're weird. (*To PERSON next to her.*) He's a weirdo.

SAM. Hey, Tammy, eat this! (*SAM fires a spitball at her. TAMMY yelps and retaliates. A quick free-for-all erupts.*)

CROWN. Let's wave out! (*CROWN blasts his music. An army of paper airplanes takes off. MAX climbs onto MISS MITHERS's desk, reveling in the middle of a jet stream of smoothly flying planes.*)

EMMA (*trying to get attention of CLASS*). Get down for a minute, Max. (*She takes his place.*) Hey, everybody, watch this! It's a giant spaceship! Full of aliens! (*She takes careful aim, launches a paper airplane, and watches it crash to the floor. CLASS catcalls and pelts her with a dozen spitballs.*) Not in my hair, you guys! Come on!...Oh, no! Grody little spitballs in my hair! EEEEW!

(*MISS MITHERS enters; CLASS is quickly subdued.*)

MISS MITHERS. What's this about spitballs?

CROWN. *Life* is one big fat spitball, that's what I say.

MISS MITHERS. What?

MARJORIE. Crown, you are totally bizarre.

TAMMY. You know, this entire class is immature for their age. I'll tell you what they all did.

MISS MITHERS (*it's just too much*). I don't want to hear it. I want all of you to learn how to get along and work together as a group.

TAMMY. For some of the people in this class, that's impossible. (*She makes a face.*)

SAM. That face would freeze Frankenstein.

MISS MITHERS. C'mon, that's enough, people. I just spoke with Mrs. Potter, school counselor—(*General snickers and raspberries from CLASS.*)—and she thinks that before we break for vacation we should start her group trust unit. With exercises.

MARJORIE. Exercises? (*Grunts.*) Whadda we need them for?

SAM (*laughing*). Some of us are out of shape.

CROWN. Some of us are shaped out.

MAX. And some of us are just plain stupid...

MISS MITHERS. Max...I don't know what to say about your attitude. In fact, this whole class could use a little more development in cooperation and group communication skills. (*MISS MITHERS crosses to her desk, shaking her head, looks through her papers.*) Where is that ditto sheet...of Mrs. Potter's...

SANDY. But why do we have to do any of Mrs. Potter's dumb exercises?

MISS MITHERS (*irritated*). People, I just said...“To expand our horizons,” Sandy. (*She continues to search for Mrs. Potter's instruction sheet.*)

TAMMY. Are you going to give us our homework assignment for tonight? (*CLASS groans.*)

SAM. There she goes again...

MISS MITHERS. In a minute, Tammy. (*Giving up her search for the paper.*) Let me see if Mr. Eener next door has an extra copy. (*CLASS catcalls as if there is some hidden romance between Miss Mithers and Mr. Eener.*) Everyone...behave please. I'll be back in a minute—

MARJORIE. Kissy kissy.

MISS MITHERS. —shortly, that is. (*She adjusts her hair and exits. CROWN looks out after her and signals "O.K."*)

EMMA. Let's go! Come on! (*Instant chaos with music. In the midst of the dancing and the din, MAX reaches up and pulls down one of the painted "punchball" planets from the ceiling.*)

SAM (*noticing MAX, speaking over hubbub*). Put 'er here, put 'er here, Max! (*MAX bounces the planet to him. SAM dribbles it by TAMMY.*) Lakers 21, Seattle 3. What a game! (*SAM goes to pass the ball to MAX, but TAMMY unwittingly reflects it with her head.*) A brilliant rebound by Tammy Thompson. (*SAM throws the ball over her head and back to MAX.*)

TAMMY (*running off-stage to find MISS MITHERS*). Miss Mithers! You better see what they're doing in here.

(*MISS MITHERS enters with her ditto sheet and followed by TAMMY.*)

MISS MITHERS. Stop it. Max, what are you doing with that planet? Put it back. I've just about had it. You waste time...minutes fly by. (*Points to clock.*)

CROWN (*weightily*). "Minutes fly by...minutes inch on... yeah... Time needs no direction." A new tune by the

Fly Byes. Whoa—(*Falls back in amazement.*)—how deep.

MISS MITHERS (*a bit crazed*). Okay, everyone...Come to the middle of the room. (*Reading from sheet.*) “And form a circle.” (*MAX lingers by the work station. MISS MITHERS looks up from the paper.*) Max, come on and join the group.

MAX (*walking slowly over to the circle*). Do I have to?

MISS MITHERS (*crossing to board*). Look, people. We’re going to focus on this unit now. Like it or not, it’s about trust. When you learn to trust your peers, you’ll cooperate—(*Draws large circle.*)—and work together—(*Gritting her teeth.*)—as a grrroup! (*She grinds a tiny dot of chalk in the center of the large circle. The KIDS snicker to themselves.*)

SAM. Hey, can I be in a group by myself?

MISS MITHERS. No. Now we don’t have long before the bell rings. Chip, drag over the mat there by the paint sink. Thank you. (*CHIP drags the class mat over.*)

EMMA. Can we hold hands? (*To MARJORIE.*) Why is Chester Miller absent *today*?

MISS MITHERS. We’ll take turns. Here, Emma. Stand in the middle of the circle. Now you’ll fall backwards, yes—(*MISS MITHERS readies SAM.*)—we’re ready. Like that, Emma, and trust! Trust us to catch you. (*EMMA falls back, is caught, and lingers in SAM’s arms.*)

SAM. I caught you, so now get up.

EMMA (*still lingering*). Ooooh...

MISS MITHERS. Good. Okay, Crown. You go next. (*CROWN takes his turn.*)

CROWN. Bizarre. Totally bizarre. The experience did something to me.

TAMMY (*raising her hand*). Next. Me next, Miss Mithers. (*TAMMY goes to the center of the circle, falls back.*) Catch me—catch me! (*MAX, looking up at planets, preoccupied, misses TAMMY. She falls just beside him.*) Aaaaaaugh...Max! You dropped me!

MAX. Huh?

MISS MITHERS. Max, what in the world were you thinking about?

MAX. I thought I saw that planet spinning on its own up there.

MISS MITHERS. Oh, Max...

TAMMY. Is my dress ripped—? (*She inspects it; it isn't.*) You'll pay for this. Just wait.

SAM. I'll pay to see that again.

TAMMY. Oh, Miss Mithers, I hate him. (*She slams several of her books down; MISS MITHERS jumps.*)

MISS MITHERS. Tammy, learn some control.

TAMMY. No! (*MISS MITHERS jumps again.*) I'll tell you what he did. Those milk cartons he had? Well, this morning I caught him dumping all the milk out in the paint sink. I saw him and everything.

MISS MITHERS (*evenly*). Tammy, we can't just go and accuse all of the time...(*Quickly.*) Max, do you know anything about what Tammy's saying? (*MAX doesn't answer.*) Max, did you pour tomorrow's lunch milk into the paint sink? (*MAX looks away.*) Did you?

MAX. Yeah.

MISS MITHERS (*rhetorically*). "Yeah...?"

MAX. Yeah, I did.

MISS MITHERS. How can others place trust in you, Max, when you pour their lunch milk down the paint sink? Tell us?

MAX. I was bored. That's all.

MISS MITHERS. Bored?

MAX. Bored. Yeah.

MISS MITHERS. Why couldn't you find something constructive to do?

MAX (*brooding*). Because... (*Beat.*) I did.

MISS MITHERS. What's constructive about wasting good milk?

MAX. You wouldn't understand!

MISS MITHERS. Well, just try me. (*The STUDENTS begin to ad lib "Tell us, Max" "What was it," etc.*)

MAX. I had this idea. An experiment.

CHIP. What kind of experiment, dude?

MAX. I haven't decided yet.

MISS MITHERS. Max, I'd buy that if I thought you knew what an experiment was. But you do just as poorly in science as you do in math. I think you know this means detention again.

MAX. Why?

MISS MITHERS. Max! Look at your behavior in the classroom today. I mean, dumping the lunch milk down the paint sink, skipping a quiz, ruining the group trust unit, throwing planets all around the room...now *that* is childish behavior, and childish behavior gets a childish punishment, so I want you to write on the board one hundred times: "I will not be a child anymore." (*The bell rings. KIDS scramble, gathering up books, etc.*)
Wait. Your homework assignment for tomorrow—

MARJORIE. But it's almost vacation!

MISS MITHERS. Almost. Math, page 84, all the problems. (*The KIDS holler "All?" CHIP, WANDA, SANDY and SEVERAL OTHERS exit, ad lib: "I'll call you tonight," etc.*)