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# **This Is a Test**

*(Online Theatre Edition)*

By

STEPHEN GREGG

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# **This Is a Test**

*(Online Theatre Edition)*

## CHARACTERS

ALAN

LOIS

MOTHER

TEACHER

EVAN

CHRIS

PAT

THE CHORUS: At least ONE, TWO and THREE.

PARENT

OTHER STUDENTS

THE TEST

TIME: The present.

PLACE: A classroom.

## PRODUCTION NOTES

*This Is a Test* is a natural fit for virtual production. It requires very little blocking; the students remain at their desks for most of the play.

And the Chorus is potentially better on a screen than it is on a stage. The Chorus members can appear and disappear. They're in Alan's head, so if you have control of where the boxes appear, they can float above him. (And, if you can manage it, I always like the illusion of passing objects from box to box.)

Most of what's different about this version are overdue updates required because the play is more than 30 years old. Meahgan Dunham and her crew at Grosse Pointe South High School helped refresh the both the tech and the dated references on their way to a spiffy production of their own.

Additional notes can be found in the back of the book.

# This Is a Test

*(Online Theatre Edition)*

*(A high-pitched whine of the type that signals emergency broadcast system tests.)*

THE TEST. This is a test. For the next sixty minutes, this classroom will conduct a test of your emergency information retrieval system. This is only a test.

*(Up on ALAN, who is a mess: his shirt's buttoned wrong, his expression dazed and frantic. The hair is misbehaving.*

*A moment when it's not clear that he even knows where he is. LOIS appears.)*

LOIS. Are you OK?

ALAN. AAAH! When did you get here?

LOIS. We came in together.

ALAN. I shouldn't have done this.

LOIS. It's going to be worth it.

ALAN. This was not a good idea.

LOIS. You know the stuff, right?

ALAN. I don't feel good.

LOIS. You're going to get an A, and you're going to thank me.

ALAN. No. I should have slept.

LOIS. I told you, a little sleep is worse than no sleep.

ALAN. For you maybe. You do this all the time. I'm not used to this. I shouldn't have done it. I should have turned off my phone.

LOIS. You did the right thing.

ALAN. It didn't work. I don't know anything.

LOIS. Yes, you do.

ALAN. I don't.

*(He retrieves study materials from under his desk and frantically goes through them.)*

ALAN *(cont'd)*. I have to study some more. *(Stopping at a random spot.)* Saladin. A Muslim sultan of Egypt in the twelfth century. His name means "keeper of the faith." He grew up in Lower Mesopotamia.

LOIS. Stop it. It's too late to study now. You either know it or you don't. The best thing you can do now is just relax.

ALAN. I can't! I don't know anything! Nothing stuck with me. You know what I learned last night? I learned that the Battle of Hastings was in 1066 and I learned that Thomas Edison's middle name was Alva. That's it. That's all I know. If we're asked when the Battle of Hastings was, I can say, "The Battle of Hastings was in 1066." If she asks, "What was Thomas Edison's middle name? I can say, "Alva." Other than that, I'm completely sunk.

LOIS. No you're not.

ALAN. Evan wouldn't have done this.

LOIS. What does Evan have to do with this?

ALAN. He has the best grades in the class, and he didn't stay up all night.

LOIS. Who cares?

ALAN. He's going to get a better grade than I am, and he didn't have you texting him every half hour to say, "Are you still awake?" Yes, Lois, I am still awake. I am still awake, Lois! I am still awake!



LOIS. Calm down!

ALAN. I'm sorry. It's all that caffeine. It makes me nervous.

LOIS. I know.

ALAN. I lose my concentration.

LOIS. Me too.

ALAN. I lose my concentration. I just have to study some more.

LOIS. No. Trust me. Just close your eyes ... *(He does.)* and relax. Think about something else.

*(We start to hear the CHORUS: ONE, TWO and THREE.)*

LOIS *(cont'd)*. Are you thinking about something else?

ONE *(beat, holding a pen)*. This is a pen.

ALAN. Yes.

TWO *(beat)*. A what?

ONE *(beat)*. A pen.

TWO. A what?

ONE. A pen.

*(And now we can see the CHORUS.)*

TWO. Oh, a pen. *(TWO turns and addresses THREE.)* This is a pen.

THREE. A what?

TWO. A pen.

THREE. A what?

TWO. A pen.

THREE. Oh, a pen.

*(For clarification of the following exercise, see the production notes at the end of the script.)*

ONE (*to TWO, holding a shoe*). This is a shoe.

*(ONE and TWO go through the same sequence: “A what?” “A shoe?” “A what?” “A shoe.” “Oh, a shoe.”*

*When TWO takes the shoe, he/she immediately turns to THREE and says, “This is a shoe.”*

*Simultaneously, ONE, now holding a spoon, says, “This is a spoon” to TWO.*

*Three responds, “A what?” to TWO at the same time that TWO turns and responds, “A what?” to ONE.)*

LOIS. What’s the matter?

ALAN. It’s that drama exercise we did yesterday.

LOIS. What about it?

*(With no interruptions in dialogue, PAT, CHRIS and the rest of the students enter and sit. They can’t help but notice ALAN’s facial contortions.)*

ALAN. That’s what I’m thinking about.

LOIS. So?

ALAN. It’s stuck.

LOIS. What do you mean, “It’s stuck.”

ALAN. It’s stuck in my head.

LOIS. Think about something else.

ALAN. I can’t!

*(A loud bell signals the beginning of class. The TEACHER enters, holding the tests.)*

TEACHER. Good morning, class!

*(The CHORUS continues, perhaps a bit quieter. As the STUDENTS acknowledge the TEACHER, she can't help but noticed dazed, twitchy ALAN, trying to get the CHORUS out of his head.)*

TEACHER *(cont'd)*. I hope we're all rested and ready to go. I know I am. There are a couple of things I'd like for you to keep in mind while you take this test. First, you really shouldn't think of this as a test. It is a test, of course, but it's also quite a bit more. Alan, are you all right?

ALAN. Fine!

*(The CHORUS disappears.)*

TEACHER. Good. As I was saying, keep in mind that this isn't only a test. This is your midterm. How you do today, this morning, will determine to a large extent how you do in this course. And, of course, how you do in this class has a large impact on your overall grade point average, which is a major factor in determining what, if any, colleges you might be accepted to. It might help if you didn't think of this as a test so much as you think of it as your future. Your future in fifty-eight minutes. Any last-minute questions? Chris?

CHRIS. Uh, what was Thomas Edison's middle name?

TEACHER. Alva. But don't worry, that's not on the test. Anything else? All right then, let's get going. *(Handing out the tests.)* Think carefully about each question and be sure not to leave anything blank. Most of the questions come right off the review sheets, so if you studied them you'll be fine.

ALAN. Review sheets?

TEACHER. Yes. These. *(Shows a giant stack of papers.)* I handed them out last week. Didn't you get them?

ALAN. No.

TEACHER. Well, I don't know how that could have happened. Were you here last Monday?

ALAN. Of course.

TEACHER. I don't understand. Everyone who did get the review sheets raise your hands.

*(All the other students raise their hands.)*

TEACHER *(cont'd)*. That's a shame. They might have helped you. But do your best, Alan. I'm sure you'll do fine. Is everyone ready? You have fifty-six minutes to take this test.

*(PAT immediately starts to scribble furiously. Perhaps a clock starts to tick loudly. ALAN looks at his test.)*

THE TEST. Section one. Multiple choice. Question one. In what year was the Battle of Hastings? A: 1062.

ALAN. No.

THE TEST. 1063.

ALAN. No.

THE TEST. 1064.

ALAN. No.

THE TEST. 1065.

ALAN. No.

THE TEST. 1067.

ALAN. What? What happened to 1066?

PAT *(raising a hand)*. May I have more paper?

TEACHER. Of course.

ALAN. What happened to 1066?!

*(CHRIS' hand is raised.)*