

WHY MUST I BE A TEENAGER IN LOVE? by MICHAEL HATFIELD

CAST LIST:

THE BOUGHS:

RONNIE BOUGH [M]
DR BOUGH [M]
MRS BOUGH [F]
TAMSIN [F]
EURIPIDES [F]
JARVIS THE BUTLER [M]

THE ROUGHS:

JULIE ROUGH [F]
MR ROUGH [M]
MRS ROUGH [F]
SHAZZA [F]
JADE [F]

THE GEEKS:

NERVOUS NIGEL [M]
CEDRIC [M]
MEMOREX [F]
AURORA [F]
THEODORA [F]
CHARLOTTE SOMETIMES [F]
TAI-CHI THERESA [F]
DATABASE [F]

THE FREAKS:

HANDSOME BILLY [M]
TANK [M]
DEADLEG [M]
SPIDER [M]
DUSTBIN [M]
CHANTEL [F]
WEASEL [M]
BANGER [M]

THE SCHOOL:

MISS ANN THROPE [F]
MR BIRKINSHAW [M]
MR CRIDLINGTON [M]
FURY [M or F]
BERRY [M or F]
HALEY [M or F]
HOLLY [M or F]

Male/ Female breakdown is according to the original casting, but there is no reason why more of the gang members shouldn't be female if required.

According to the original casting, then, this is a play for 16 M and 15 F. However, some parts - particularly the two families - are small and could be doubled. Suggested doubling is as follows:

Dr Bough / Mr Rough / Mr Birkinshaw; Mrs Bough / Mrs Rough / Fury;
Tamsin / Jade / Holly; Euripides / Shazza/ Berry; Jarvis / Mr Cridlington - the others retaining single parts. This doubling would mean it is possible to achieve the play with 24 cast members: 12M and 12F.

Further reductions could be made by merging one or two characters, at a pinch. But then their skills would have to complement each other - or simply be left out. Memorex and Database could perhaps merge at a pinch. Theodora has perhaps least to say and do - and could be left out altogether if necessary. Deadleg and Spider could merge. Spider, like Theodora, has little to say and do to individualise him. This reduces the cast to 20 - 11M, 9F. All of these parts would then be of examinable length if required.

Note that this play can be done straight - in which case it runs at approx. one hour [Though it still needs at least one dance number.] Or with added music and dances from the rock and roll era, using well-known rock'n'roll numbers some of which are suggested in the script in which case it runs at approx. one and a half hours. These additions do not make it exactly a musical, but opportunity is there for, between each scene, a musical number which can be sung and / or danced , perhaps building in the scene changes as part of the danced numbers. [More suggestions for songs and more detail on this idea in the Production Notes.]

Scene 1: The School Playground.

Enter Cedric, Nervous Nigel and Database. Cedric and Nigel are reading books. Database is playing with a hand-held computer game. Enter, opposite, Tank, Deadleg, Weasel and Spider. They are clearly looking for trouble. [Suggested Music: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly theme tune.]

Both groups circle each other warily. As one moves left, the others move out of the way. Finally, they move towards each other. Tank bashes viciously into Database, knocking the game out of her hand. He then quite deliberately steps on it.

TANK

Oh dear, what a shame. I'm terribly sorry.

Nigel is shaking. His books are trembling frantically.

CEDRIC

Watch what you're doing, you pusillanimous troglodyte.

TANK

What did you call me?

CEDRIC *defiant*

A Pusillanimous Troglodyte. Want to look it up? [*Holds out thick, heavy dictionary.*]

TANK

Thanks. [*Takes the dictionary. Looks. Then hits Cedric over the head with it.*] Get 'em!

Fight. Nigel is getting the worst of it. Database runs off. Cedric is being pounded by Deadleg and Tank. Enter Ronnie. He wears glasses and looks academic.

RONNIE

Hey, you! Leave them alone!

Ronnie intervenes. Cedric and Nigel take their chance and run. The others all gang up on Ronnie.

TANK

New round here, aren't you? Let us introduce ourselves.

DEADLEG

They call me Deadleg. Guess why? [*Gives Ronnie a deadleg.*]

SPIDER

I'm Spider. Pleased to meet you. [*Hits him.*]

WEASEL

I'm Weasel. [*Kicks him.*]

TANK

I'm Tank. And you're a pusillanimous troglodyte. [*Hitting him with the dictionary.*] So you belong with the Geeks over there. We're Freaks.

RONNIE

You're not kidding! Ow!

TANK

Freaks hate Geeks.

RONNIE

Why?

WEASEL

It's the unwritten law.

RONNIE

But what's the point?

WEASEL

How are we supposed to know? It's unwritten.

Julie enters. She is carrying her school bag. She sees what is happening and puts her bag down. Her exercise book falls out.

JULIE *calmly*
That's enough.

SPIDER
Clear off!

JULIE
I said, that's enough.

She moves in and separates them physically.

TANK
Get out of it!

Julie moves swiftly, grabs Tank and Deadleg by the ears and drags them round the stage. She gets Spider by the nose and slaps him. Weasel looks at her, thinks better of it and runs off. Ronnie looks admiringly at Julie.

JULIE
Are you all right?

She moves to help him up, holding his hand. He keeps hold of her hand.

RONNIE
I am now!

JULIE
Don't mind them. They're all right when you get to know them.

RONNIE
Really?

JULIE
No, not really!

They laugh. Pause.

RONNIE
My name's Ronnie, by the way, Ronnie Bough.

JULIE
You're kidding. You're called Boff?

RONNIE
It's spelled B-O-U-G-H.

JULIE
That's like my name.

Pause.

RONNIE
Which is?

JULIE
R-O-U-G-H.

RONNIE
Now you're kidding! Your name is Rough?

JULIE
It's pronounced Rowe actually. My friends call me Julie.

RONNIE
Can I call you Julie?

JULIE

Well, there's a little problem there

RONNIE

Oh, yes, the unwritten law.

JULIE

What?

RONNIE

Just something the teletubbies over there were saying. Freaks and Geeks?

JULIE

Oh, I see; it's just that ...

School bell sounds.

JULIE

Got to go! See you!

She runs off. Ronnie looks around, sees her book, picks it up and looks inside it. He takes out a pen and begins writing. He continues writing as he walks off.

Scene 2: A Classroom.

The classroom is complete chaos. Pupils are fighting, yelling, arm wrestling, throwing paper aeroplanes. One is banging on a table. Somewhere in this melée is Mr Birkinshaw, trying to assert order. He is not succeeding.

MR BIRKINSHAW

Now, 8S, if you'll look at the board. Don't do that! Please! Listen to me. You will be in big trouble if you don't! That's enough! Will you put that down! [*A paper aeroplane hits him in the backside.*] Ow! Who did that? Was it you?

Enter Miss Thrope.

MISS THROPE

What's going on here?

Freeze. All the pupils immobilised.

MISS THROPE

SIT! [*All pupils instantly sit.*]

ARMS! [*All pupils fold arms and sit bolt upright.*]

BOOKS! [*All pupils get their books out of their desks, pen in hand.*]

MR BIRKINSHAW

That's better, class. Now ...

MISS THROPE

Mr Birkinshaw?

MR BIRKINSHAW

Yes, Miss Thrope.

MISS THROPE

Here. [*He moves to stand near her side, nervous.*] 8S.

ALL

Yes, Miss Thrope.

MISS THROPE

Register! [*Pupil hands her the register. She reads it impossibly fast. Pupils try to keep up.*] Anderson, Berry, Bowie, Cooke, Cole, Clapton, Emerson, Fury, Greenslade, Haley, Holly, Jackson, Lee, Lewis, Lennon, Mantovani, Morrison, McCartney, Richards,