

The Cow Tippers

A comedy in two acts

By
Eddie McPherson

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DEDICATION

To Levie and Jennifer. Levie because he understands cow tipping; Jennifer because she understands theatre. Put them together, and you have this play.

STORY OF THE PLAY

Mrs. Brown is a sophisticated lady from a large metropolitan area who is working on her Ph.D. She has moved to the tiny hamlet of Hoke's Bluff for a one-year study of rural school life. Once she arrives, she finds she's quite the fish out of water. Mrs. Brown is used to schools equipped with state-of-the-art computer labs and up-to-date technology. At Hoke's Bluff High, however, high tech is an intercom system of aluminum cans attached together with a piece of string.

On the first day of school, the Sheriff shows up in Mrs. Brown's classroom looking for leads to cow-tipping pranks which were pulled all summer on area pasture land. Mrs. Brown discovers right away her task of studying "these people" may be more than she bargained for.

But as relationships are built, Mrs. Brown not only teaches her students a few lessons, but she learns a few of her own. And when Clyde, the school janitor, has eyes for her, she also discovers that there's more on the minds of these people than just cow tipping.

Running Time: 80 to 90 minutes.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(7 m, 10 w, 1 flexible, extras if desired)

MRS. BROWN: New teacher at Hoke's Bluff High, very sophisticated and proper, late 20s/early 30s.
MS. JENNINGS: Laid-back principal, late 50s.
CLYDE: School's custodian, simple and hardworking, late 20s/early 30s.
DECI: Math teacher, 30s or 40s.
CHARLOTTE: Home economic and marksmanship teacher, 30s or 40s.
SHERIFF DRAKE: *(Flexible.)* Sheriff, mid 20s.
CLOE: *(W)* Student, extremely shy.
WINSTON: *(M)* Student, loves to joke around.
ELIOT: *(M)* Student, friends with Winston.
WILMA: *(W)* Student, friendly, talkative, knows sign language.
SKINNY: *(M)* Student who takes notes and writes poetry.
ARENA: *(W)* Student, cheerleader.
COWBOY: *(M)* Student, likes Cloe.
JACKSON: *(M)* Student, spends an unusual amount of time outside the school building.
BETTY: *(W)* Student, also spends time outside.
VICKI: *(W)* Student, also spends time outside.
MRS. GOODWIN: Cowboy's high-strung mother, late 30s, early 40s.
MR. GOODWIN: Mrs. Goodwin's subservient husband who seldom speaks, late 30s, early 40s.
EXTRAS: Additional students, if desired.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Act I

Scene 1: Early Monday morning, the first day of school.

Scene 2: Tuesday morning, before school.

Scene 3: Wednesday, during class.

Act II

Scene 1: Thursday morning, before school.

Scene 2: Friday, after-school rehearsal.

PRODUCTION NOTES

The play takes place in a neat and clean but clearly run-down rural school classroom. There are approximately ten student desks. (*More if you have extras as additional students.*) The blackboard may be free-standing or attached to the upstage wall center. A door upstage left goes out into the hallway. An archway upstage right leads into the cloakroom. The desks are arranged so that five are stage left facing stage right and five are stage right facing stage left. The teacher's desk, a card table, sits between the blackboard and cloakroom door. The area in front of the blackboard is open. Educational posters that would find their way into an English classroom hang about.

The intercom is a can that hangs on a hook and is attached to a string. The string runs along the wall and through a hole in the stage right wall.

There are five scenes that take place on different days. To keep the blackouts from being too long while the actors change costumes, put together a costume plan that will make these changes quick. For example, Mrs. Brown can wear the same dress in the next scene with a different jacket. Make the changes minimal and the audience will accept it as a different outfit for a different day.

PROPS: Please see the end of the script for a list of props.

ACT I
Scene 1

(Before the LIGHTS come up, we here the sound of a cow MOOING and kids GIGGLING. AT RISE: Monday, the first day of school. MS. JENNINGS enters holding a clipboard with several pencils sticking from her bouffant. MRS. BROWN enters behind her. Sophistication beams from Mrs. Brown, from her wardrobe to the way she carries herself. She wears a nice fitting dress, with a purse hanging on a shoulder. She carries several books.)

MS. JENNINGS: *(Crossing to CS in front of the chalkboard.)*
Here we are. This is your classroom.

MRS. BROWN: *(Looking around, her smile disappears.)* How very *(For lack of a better word.)* quaint.

MS. JENNINGS: *(Points to the card table.)* There's your desk there; you can move it anywhere in the room you would like.

MRS. BROWN: Isn't that a card table?

MS. JENNINGS: *(Smiling.)* If you play cards on it, it's a card table.

MRS. BROWN: *(Placing her books on a student desk.)* It's just that there aren't any drawers for supplies and files.

MS. JENNINGS: Oh that. *(Crossing behind the table and picking up a few shoe boxes that are stacked at one of its corners.)* You have plenty of space for those things right here in these boxes. You can still see how Ms. Winkler used them. See? *(Holds up a box labeled "Pencils.")* She used this one for pencils. *(Another.)* This one for rubber bands and paper clips. *(Holding up a third one and reading the box absentmindedly.)* And this one here for poison darts *(Calmly puts it down.)* Oh dear – I don't think you were supposed to see that one.

MRS. BROWN: *(Writing in her black book.)* Hmmmmm, interesting.

MS. JENNINGS: What a nice little journal.

MRS. BROWN: Thank you. It's what I'll be keeping my notes in this year.

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MS. JENNINGS: At any rate, there is your chalkboard and over there is the cloakroom where you can hang those fancy coats of yours.

MRS. BROWN: (*Closing her book.*) Ms. Jennings, I need to be honest with you. Being raised in the city, I'm a little concerned about my connecting with the children way out here.

MS. JENNINGS: I wouldn't worry about it; kids are kids.

MRS. BROWN: Are the students here motivated in their studies?

MS. JENNINGS: Let me put it this way, Mrs. Brown: we have two types of students here in Hoke's Bluff: Those who will drop out of school, get married and take over their daddy's farm one day; and those who will graduate from high school, get married and take over their daddy's farm one day.

MRS. BROWN: Are you saying most of the students never leave Hoke's Bluff after high school?

MS. JENNINGS: No, I mean none of the students leave Hoke's Bluff after high school. It's sort of an unspoken law: You're born, you're married, you take over your daddy's farm, and then you die.

MRS. BROWN: But surely, out of all the many years the school has been in operation, some of the students have gone on to bigger things.

MS. JENNINGS: Now that you mention it, there was Travis Millhouse about fifteen years ago. He left town.

MRS. BROWN: Where did he go?

MS. JENNINGS: Federal prison.

MRS. BROWN: (*Writing in her book.*) I just thought there would be at least a few students who would dream of life outside Hoke's Bluff. Take me, for example. I've traveled to Paris, France, England.

MS. JENNINGS: And your luck has brought you to our quaint little community. God's country, we like to call it.

MRS. BROWN: Just remember I'm only here for a year, then I'll be heading back home to write my dissertation.

MS. JENNINGS: Well, we'll take you as long as we can keep you. You're the closest thing to a movie star we've ever had out here.

End of Freeview

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