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CLOWNING AROUND

Jokers cross the line between funny and rude

Imagine it's the talent show, and you're singing in front of an audience. You're nervous yet excited to perform the piece you've been practicing for months. The music starts, and you begin to sing. But as you look out among the sea of people sitting in their chairs, their arms are folded against their chests, their expressions are disinterested and many of them are texting or playing games on their phones. Most of the audience members in the back are talking. It is obvious that hardly anyone is paying attention, and those who want to can barely hear you anyway over the ruckus. Would it even be worth the effort of finishing your piece?

In a classroom setting, when the teacher is trying to give a lesson and the majority of the class is not paying attention, this is how they must feel every single day. It is a wonder they bother continuing to teach at all.

From 8:40 a.m. to 4:05 p.m., five days a week, students are expected to be in class working and focused on learning. That's a lot of time to spend confined in a classroom, so it comes as no surprise that the humor and lightheartedness of a class clown is a much-welcomed respite. Stress relievers who bring laughter and amusement are enjoyed in the often stoic atmosphere of a classroom. However, there is a fine line between silliness and disrespect, meaningless fun and persistent disruptions of class.

To most of us, learning is important. Being in school matters, and that means the people who are influencing our lives — our teachers — deserve our respect.

It shouldn't be that difficult for us to re-

spect our teachers. We were taught in elementary school that respect is a fundamental skill of citizenship. It's a lesson we've had drilled into our heads since we were crawling on all fours: "Treat others the way you wish to be treated." If we want our teachers to continue pouring all their dedication into what they do, we need to express our appreciation.

“**This means that when the substitute calls on you for roll call, don't tell him or her that you prefer to go by the name Peewee McButtmuffin.**”

For example, Snapchatting pictures of yourself while the teacher is speaking, or worse, Snapchatting photos of your teachers themselves when they have their backs turned, is disrespectful, not to mention creepy. Using social media as a means to poke fun at teachers — even in a lighthearted manner — is rude. We should be acting like 14-18 year old students, not pre-pubescent middle schoolers who just discovered their first curse word.

Respect for teachers shouldn't stop when

they take a day off either. Our courtesy needs to extend to substitute teachers as well. This means that when the substitute calls on you for roll call, don't tell him or her that you prefer to go by the name Peewee McButtmuffin. Give them your real name like a normal human being. It means that when the sub calls someone who is absent, don't shout "Here!" to mess with them. It means not taking advantage of the fact that the sub doesn't know who you are. We've all had the stern reprimanding from our teachers the day they return about our abuse of substitutes. We shouldn't need that. We shouldn't need the 'time-out corner' or the "You're grounded!" from mom to teach us how to act. We should know better by now.

At some point or another, we have all been guilty of mistreating teachers, whether we are the perpetrators or the students sitting silently or even the ones giggling at our desks. Everyone is equally to blame for disrespecting our teachers this way. Pointing fingers isn't fair; we're all contributors to the problem.

We all need to grow up. We need to take accountability for our own behavior. We need to stop encouraging those who disrespect our teachers in class with our complacency or our laughter. We need to let go of that fear of moving against the current.

We have to let the teachers know we appreciate their effort, to apologize for our mistakes and cultivate respect for others. We need to learn the difference between an innocent joke and a mean-spirited disruption. We know how we should treat those around us, so it's time to do it.