



A one-act dramatic play
The Man with Bad Manners
by Idries Shah

CAST

Narrator 1: the waitress
Narrator 2: the young man with the Bermuda shirt
Narrator 3: the young woman with the flower in her hat
Anybody in the Village
The Man with Bad Manners / Then Good Manners
The People of the Village
The Clever Boy
The Old Woman
An Old Man

(If there are not enough students to play the parts, have students play multiple roles, changing their costumes or adding a prop as appropriate.)

Allow the students to think about and create their own props, costumes and scenery. Some ideas on props and costumes are on the next page.

Suggested Costumes

Narrator 1: dress, apron, sneakers, pencil and pad of paper

Narrator 2: Bermuda shirt, shorts, flip-flops

Narrator 3: dress, a hat with a flower attached

The Man with Bad Manners: overalls, a jacket (perhaps another outfit for the end of the story)

The Clever Boy: sports-themed (baseball?) jersey

The Old Woman: "grey" hair, rouge (powder) for her cheeks, lipstick, pearl necklace, frilly blouse and skirt

An Old Man: suspenders

Outfits and accessories for the various People of the Village: dark-rimmed glasses (plastic or no lens), jeans and turtleneck, running outfit and sneakers

For the night scene: hair curlers, toothbrush, pajamas, bathrobe

Other Suggested Props

Two dogs (Have the students make these out of papier mâché or cardboard) with collars and leashes

Tin cans and a spoon (make sure there are no sharp edges on the can)

Suitcase (a real one or cardboard cutout)

Flashlight

Paintbrushes & a pail (for paint can)

Potatoes, carrots and cabbages: Make these out of papier mâché, or draw them on cardboard and cutout

Table, chairs and telephone

The house of the Man with Bad Manners: Have the students make two houses (large appliance boxes make great houses) or two paintings of houses: one in red, and the other in green. Other houses can be made for the villagers (cut a window in one "house").

THE SCRIPT

Narrator 1: Once upon a time, many, many years ago, when birds flew upside-down, there was a village.

Narrator 2: Everyone who had a house in the village also had a field.

Narrator 3: And in their fields they grew potatoes and carrots and cabbages and all kinds of other crops.

Narrator 1: Now, all of the people who lived in the village were very courteous and well-behaved,

All of the Narrators: except for one man who had very bad manners.

Narrator 2: Whenever anybody said

Anybody in the Village: good morning

Narrator 3: to the man with bad manners, he would say

The Man with Bad Manners: blah, blah, blah

Narrator 1: And when anybody said

Anybody in the Village: good evening

Narrator 2: to him, he would say

The Man with Bad Manners: blee, blee, blee

Narrator 3: The people would become annoyed when he did this, and they would say

The People of the Village: Why do you have such bad manners?

Narrator 1: But he would just say

The Man with Bad Manners: blah, blah, blah

Narrator 2: Except, of course, when he said

The Man with Bad Manners: blee, blee, blee

Narrator 3: For a long time, the people weren't too bothered by the man's behavior.

Narrator 1: They knew good manners from bad manners,

Narrator 2: and most of the time they didn't take much notice of the man with bad manners.

Narrator 3: But one day he got worse.

Narrator 1: He began to go out at night and stand outside different houses,

Narrator 2: and he would beat tin cans and make terrible noises. (*Man with Bad Manners beats the tin cans.*)

All of the Narrators: Bang! Bang! Bang!

Narrator 3: This would wake the people up, and they would lean out of their windows and say,

The People of the Village: Why are you making such a racket?

Narrator 1: But he would just beat the cans harder. (*Man with Bad Manners beats the tin cans.*)

All of the Narrators: Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bong! Bang! Bing! Bang!

Narrator 2: The people simply didn't know what to do with him.

Narrator 3: Now, one day, the man with the bad manners went to stay with some friends in another village.

Narrator 1: The people were so glad he was going away that they all gathered to watch him walk out of town.

Narrator 2: Among those watching was a very clever boy.

Narrator 3: As soon as the man was out of sight, the clever boy stood on a box and called all the people to come together.

Narrator 1: And when the people had gathered, the clever boy said

The Clever Boy: I want to talk to you about the man with bad manners.

Narrator 2: Everyone spoke at once.

The People of the Village: He's gone! Thank Goodness!

Yes, he's gone! What a relief!

Why should we talk about him?

The Clever Boy: But he's going to come back!

The Old Woman: You're right. He's going to come back, and then he will just annoy us all over again!

An Old Man: Yes, indeed.

The People of the Village: What can we do?

The Clever Boy: I have an idea. I've thought of a way to make him change his ways.

The People of the Village: Tell us quickly!

The Clever Boy: Well, the man has a field, and in his field he is growing potatoes. While he's away, we'll take the potatoes out and put carrots in their place. Then when he comes back, we can pretend that it isn't his field and that this isn't even his village.

The Old Woman: What about his house? He'll go to his house, and he'll know that this is his village because he'll see his house right there.

The Clever Boy: His house is red. We'll paint it green so he'll think it's some other house.

The Old Woman: What if he goes inside?

The Clever Boy: I've thought of that, too. We'll paint the walls a different color, and we'll paint the furniture a different color, and then we'll rearrange it. He's sure to think then that it's somebody else's house.

Several of the People of the Village: What good will that do?

The Clever Boy: Well, he'll either go away or he'll change his ways.

The Old Woman: You know, it may just work!

Narrator 3: And so the people got together and worked very hard. They dug up all the man's potatoes

Narrator 1: and put carrots in the ground in their place. They painted the walls outside his house.

Narrator 2: They painted the walls inside his house. They painted all the furniture.

Narrator 3: And they rearranged everything so that it all looked quite different.

Narrator 1: Not long afterwards, the man with the bad manners came back. As he walked into the village, he said

The Man with Bad Manners: blah, blah, blah

Narrator 1: and

The Man with Bad Manners: blee, blee, blee

Narrator 2: to everyone he saw, and he hit tin cans just as loudly as ever.

(Man with Bad Manners hits the tin cans.)

All of the Narrators: Bang! Bang! Bang!

Narrator 3: The people gathered around him.

The Clever Boy: Hello there! Who are you?

The Man with Bad Manners (while banging on a can): You know who I am.

The People of the Village: Oh, no, we don't!

The Man with Bad Manners (*pointing to his field*): Yes, you do! This is my potato field.

The Clever Boy (*pulling a carrot out of the ground*): But there are carrots in this field. This can't be your field.

The Man with Bad Manners: But my house is right over there!

The Clever Boy: What color is your house?

The Man with Bad Manners: You know perfectly well that my house is red.

The Clever Boy: But this house is green.

The Man with Bad Manners (*looking carefully at his house*): Good heavens! That house is green.

Narrator 1: And then he ran over to the window and looked inside and saw that everything was quite unfamiliar.

The Man with Bad Manners (*scratching his head*): Dear me! Maybe I don't come from this village after all.

Narrator 2: He looked around at all the villagers, and then looked down at the ground,

Narrator 3: and all of a sudden, he became very sad.

The Man with Bad Manners: But, if I don't come from this village, where do I come from?

The Clever Boy: It's a secret, but we can tell you the secret only on one condition. You must promise to use good manners and speak courteously and behave properly from now on. If you promise that, we'll tell you the secret.

The Man with Bad Manners: I promise! I promise! Please tell me!

All of People of the Village: We painted your house on the outside. We put carrots in your field. We painted it on the inside. We painted all your furniture. And, then, we rearranged it.

The Clever Boy: We did it all to teach you a lesson. But now that you have promised to behave yourself, we'll change everything back, and we can all live happily ever after.

Narrator 1: So, the man with bad manners promised again to change his ways.

Narrator 2: He promised, and he promised, and he promised.

Narrator 3: And then the people changed everything back for him.

Narrator 1: From then on, when anyone said

Anyone in the Village: Good morning

Narrator 1: to the man, he replied cheerily

The Man with Bad Manners: Good morning to you!

Narrator 2: And when anyone said

Anyone of the Village: Good evening

Narrator 2: to the man, he replied courteously

The Man with Bad Manners: Good evening to you!

Narrator 3: And he never banged another can...

All of the Narrators: ever. And, so, indeed, everyone did live

All of the cast: happily ever after.

THE END