

An Educational Mockumentary
Undergraduate Research Thesis
For graduation "with Honors Research Distinction in
English"

EMILY'S CLASSROOM

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A classroom with old, peeling wooden desks, and pea-green tiled floors. The walls are covered from floor to ceiling with bookshelves stuffed with novels, books of poetry, non-fiction. You can barely see the white walls behind them.

Sitting at the cluttered desk in the corner is Emily (30), an eager high school English teacher. Her love of her students is only overshadowed by her love of Harry Potter and her cat, Mr. Darcy.

Emily sits in her classroom, frantically writing. The bell rings and students enter. Emily looks up as Dean approaches her desk. The other kids sit down.

DEAN

What's up, E-Rizzle?

EMILY

Not much, D-Bag--Baggins!
D-Baggins. Like The Hobbit. Not
D-Bag. D-Bagginsy... (Gollum voice)
My precious... you know?

There is an awkward pause.

DEAN

I'm going to sit down now, Ms.
Hanson.

EMILY

(Quietly)

That's probably for the best.
Begone, you nasty hobbitises!

EMILY INTERVIEW

Emily is sitting at a desk in her classroom for her interview.

EMILY

How long have I been teaching here?
I'm halfway through my fifth year.
So, just long enough for me to
start making friends around here.

(Laughs uncomfortably)

I'm sorry, I'm very nervous. But
Riverview High School is a special
place. It's a small school, around
500 students total. I teach 6
different courses, everything from
remedial English 9 to Senior AP

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

EMILY (cont'd)

Lit. But I've been trying to make some big changes around here! The environment is a little stagnant... Our library has 6 computers, but only 20 books. IT blocked Google because Principal Patterson thought it was a time waster, and the teacher rulebook says that women aren't allowed to wear skirts that are above the knee... or pants. So yeah, it's a work in progress.

EMILY'S CLASSROOM

Emily is standing with her back to the class, writing on the dry erase board. The students are quiet, but bored.

EMILY

Okay, welcome to day 1 of the second semester! I hope you all had a great winter break, and are well rested and ready to jump into Shakespeare

The class begins to look miserable.

EMILY

Now, I know you were introduced to Romeo and Juliet, or maybe Hamlet, in 9th or 10th grade. But as senior AP students, we are going to start looking beyond the story and focus more on the language, the themes, and the symbols of the Bard. Any questions?

Emily turns to see her classroom empty except for Ella.

EMILY

Right. Maybe not the best introduction.

Ella shrugs her shoulders

ELLA

I thought it was great! You know, my favorite Shakespeare play--

EMILY

(Cutting Ella off) Ella, you are unspeakable parasite, and this is why no one likes you. Now get out of my classroom.

(CONTINUED)

ELLA
(unphased) You got it, Ms. H!

STAFF MEETING

A stuffy conference room with a long table with mismatched chairs. An overweight man, Principal Patterson (65) sits at the head of the table as other teachers start to arrive. He is several years past his prime as an educator (if you can call him that) and is as conservative as can be. He is wearing tiny black reading glasses as he reads a young adult novel.

Once everyone is seated he puts his book down and sighs deeply. Emily is the last to walk in.

EMILY
Good morning, Gordon!

PRINCIPAL PATTERSON
(ignores Emily)
Alright, let's get this over with.
Several things on the agenda.

PATTERSON INTERVIEW

Principal Patterson is sitting at his desk in his office, facing the camera.

PRINCIPAL PATTERSON
Gordon Patterson. This is my 20th year as principal of Riverview. I taught history for ten years before that. I don't particularly care for children, and I don't really believe in the American school system. But I do love golf, and the vacation plan is perfect for golfing. I retire at the end of the school year. So, yes, I suppose you could say I'm less than passionate about my job right now.

STAFF MEETING CONTINUED

Patterson checks stack of papers in front of him.

PRINCIPAL PATTERSON
I have several requests from teachers to remove the internet blocks for the Google-- No. We are, however, getting three new books for the library. Thank you to Emily
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

PRINCIPAL PATTERSON (cont'd)
for donating those. It seems only
wise that we get rid of three of
the older ones. It's getting a
little cluttered.

EMILY

But--

PRINCIPAL PATTERSON

(Cuts Emily off)

Garrett, unfortunately Mr. Taylor
is taking a leave of absence for
the rest of the year. It seems the
pencil incident from his class in
December is going to take longer to
heal than originally anticipated.

(Teachers make sounds of
disgust)

PRINCIPAL PATTERSON

You're going to be taking on the
6th period calculus. Here are his
lesson plans. Change them, keep
them the same, I really don't give
a damn. Just make sure they pass
the tests at the end of the year.

Garrett looks at the camera in frustration.

GARRETT'S INTERVIEW

Garrett is sitting in a classroom at a student's desk. He is
a teacher who never intended to be one. While he is bright,
he is also arrogant. He feels overqualified, acts
uninterested, and is consistently unengaged.

GARRETT

There are 8 periods in a day at
this school. I teach 8 different
classes. Algebra, Algebra II,
Geometry, Trig, Pre-Calc, Calculus,
AP Calculus I, AP Calculus II, and
Stats. I'm one of three, no, two
math teachers since Taylor is gone.
My calc II class is so large, we
teach it in the auditorium. Becky
Winston threw a sandwich at my back
last September.

(Pauses)

I'm going to make myself cry.
What's that? Oh, why did I decide
to teacher... Well, I really

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

GARRETT (cont'd)
didn't. I spent my first three
years of college flitting between
majors... math education was a last
resort.

STAFF MEETING CONTINUED

PRINCIPAL PATTERSON
Alright, I think that wraps it up.
Have a wonderful week, and best of
luck with the little wieners.

EMILY
Actually, Gordon, I have something
I'd like to bring up.

PRINCIPAL PATTERSON
We aren't starting a book club.

EMILY
No, actually--

PRINCIPAL PATTERSON
I already told you I'm not putting
daily inspirational quotes in the
morning announcements.

EMILY
That's not--

PRINCIPAL PATTERSON
Women's studies is pointless and I
will not let you teach it to the
weak minded children.

EMILY
Gordon! I actually wanted to talk
about the end of the year tests.

PRINCIPAL PATTERSON
Oh. Well carry on.

Patterson sits back in his chair and starts reading again.
Emily shuffles a stack of papers in front of her, and stands
up.

EMILY
(excitedly)
Okay, thank you! I'm not sure who
knows me and who doesn't, but my
name is Emily Hanson, and I'm part
of the English department.

(CONTINUED)

Everyone looks around at each other, not recognizing her.

EMILY

I play 1st base in our summer softball league?

Several people shrug.

EMILY

Okay, forget it. I just want to discuss something that I've been doing research on. Our curricula focuses so much time and energy on our end of the year tests, but I don't feel like these are helping our kids prepare for college.

EMILY INTERVIEW

EMILY

Well, you see, the test themselves aren't the problem. It's the strictness of our curriculum in order to prepare for them. Look at this--

(starts reading from booklet)

'Teachers will spend two days of every week preparing for the end of the year test. Teachers will not include any creative elements into their lesson plan unless approved by administration. If less than 60% of a teacher's class passes the end of the year exam, that teacher will lose control of his or her curriculum planning and will be flogged in the school cafeteria--'

Oh, God. Well, this booklet is old. And thankfully only parts of it are followed... I think.

STAFF MEETING CONTINUED

EMILY

My research has shown that less structured and more creative methods are far more effective. So I think we should start moving away from the test-prep curriculum! Any thoughts?

The room is silent. Garrett clears his throat.

(CONTINUED)

GARRETT

I'm sorry, Emily, but I think our job is to get our students into college. And the test-prep strategy seems to working to do that. You're way off base.

The other teachers nod in agreement.

EMILY

(Annoyed)

I understand that, Mr. Ward, but our job as teachers is to help our students master skills within our subject. Don't you feel obligated to make that happen?

GARRETT

I feel obligated to keep my job. And to avoid causing unnecessary problems if I can help it.

EMILY

(Makes face at Garrett)

Well, fartface, I feel obligated to tell you that you're wrong. And I'm going to prove it.

Emily tries to gather her papers, but continues to drop them. She finally gets them together, and knocks over a chair. She walks quickly out of the room, slams the door, which bounces back open. Everyone stares after her.

PRINCIPAL PATTERSON

(without looking up from his book)

See you all next Monday.

NURSE'S OFFICE

A bright, white nurses office accented with 90's memorabilia. Kara (30), the school nurse, is tending to Emily's wounds. Kara is calm, trendy, and often in the know of what every student at Riverview is doing.

Emily and Kara, are sitting in the nurse's office. Emily's nose is bleeding and Kara is looking at it.

KARA

Okay, go ahead and lean your head back and pinch while I get you some cotton to stuff up there.

(CONTINUED)

Emily leans her head back against the wall, Kara gets up and goes to the cabinet behind her.

EMILY
(nasally)
Okay. Right. This is fine.

KARA
So, just to clarify, you slammed the door, it bounced back open, then you ran into the wall in the hallway.

EMILY
Yes.

KARA
All because of Garrett?

EMILY
Yes.

KARA
And we don't like him, right?

EMILY
Right.

KARA
Gotcha. Well the good news is that your nose isn't broken. The bad news is that you were on the security camera in the hallway when you ran into the wall. And he's streaming it in the teacher's lounge.

Emily slumps over, face in her lap.

EMILY
(muffled)
Oh, god.

KARA
Hey! Head back!

Emily quickly sits up.

EMILY
Yes, ma'am.

Emily quickly grabs her forehead.
Head rush! Ughhh.

KARA INTERVIEW

Kara stands outside her office door.

KARA

Actually, Emily and I have been best friends for a long time. We met in the college dorms. We were the only ones from our floor to go to the N'SYNC reunion show, and we've been close ever since. How did I become a school nurse? Well, I spent three days working in the ER at St. Leonard's after graduation before I realized how much being a nurse sucks.

NURSE'S OFFICE CONTINUED

Kara sits down next to Emily.

KARA

So Garrett was pretty harsh, huh?

EMILY

That's guy's a fartface. He could be a great teacher if he tried. Do you know what he said the other day?

Kara is taking notes on her chart.

KARA

(distracted)

Hm?

EMILY

He said that the senior class are a bunch of (whispers) shits. Can you believe that? My seniors? My precious angels from above, the wind beneath my wings?

Kara looks up surprised

KARA

(laughing)

Emily, they are little shits! Last week four juniors ended up in my office because Mike Thompson put superglue on the toilet seats in the boys bathroom. I had to call the squad, it was horrible.

(CONTINUED)

EMILY

You shut your beautiful mouth. They are the "light of my life, fire of my loins!"

Kara makes a disgusted face

KARA

Ugh.

EMILY

Okay, that was weird.

KARA

Please don't quite Lolita anymore.

EMILY

But the seniors are glorious humans. I think they might be the most important thing to me.

KARA

You are a freak, and I love you. Now go be the great teacher that I know you are, and kick some unmotivated math teacher ass.

EMILY

Yeah, I will!

KARA

Yeah!

EMILY

(louder)

I got this!

KARA

You got this!

EMILY

Heck, yeah!

(pauses)

I need to go plan.

Emily runs out of the room. Kara looks at the camera confused, shrugs, and starts making notes again. Dave (45), enters. Dave is the school counselor, and spends more time admiring the female population of the school than doing his job.

(CONTINUED)

DAVE

Hey there, beautiful. Interested in playing nurse and doctor?

KARA

(without looking up)

Go away.

DAVE

Nurse, can you please check my heart? Because it's running wild for you.

KARA

Get out.

DAVE

Nurse, can you--

KARA

Dave. If you don't leave, I'm going to sever your trachea with my pen. And then I'm going to call your wife.

Dave opens his mouth to speak, then leaves instead.

EMILY'S CLASSROOM EARLY MORNING

Emily walks up to her classroom door, has multiple boxes in her arms. She is trying to unlock her door. It is still dark outside.

EMILY

Well, I worked all night on my new lesson plan. I think it has creativity, structure, and will still help my students with the end of the year tests.

Emily finally manages to unlock the door and enters her classroom. The walls are completely covered with charts, posters, and notes.

EMILY

Yeah, I stayed pretty late last night. Gordon gave me my own set of keys last year. Apparently the 14 hour shift isn't for everyone.

She puts the boxes down on the desk. Looks around the classroom.

(CONTINUED)

EMILY

I still need Principal Patterson's approval before I can implement anything permanently. So he's sitting in on my senior AP class this afternoon. We're doing Shakespeare!

Emily sits down and starts rummaging through the boxes.

EMILY

But these early mornings are great. I'm usually here by 5:30, but I wanted an early start today. It lets me feed the stray cat that lives in the cafeteria, reread my favorite papers that the kids have written, leave "I love you, you're a magical human person" notes for Kara... Do you think size large tights will fit Dean Nichols?

GARRETT'S LECTURE

Garrett is writing on outdated projector slides in the auditorium, with around 50 kids sitting in the seats.

GARRETT

Okay, today we are starting with integrals. Now, we talked about these a little before winter break--

GARRETT'S INTERVIEW

Garrett is sitting in a seat in the empty auditorium

GARRETT

I hate these seniors. They're all so hopped up on their graduation high. Coming to class with bright faces, eager for the future. It sucks. But this is my AP Calc II class, so they're actually pretty smart kids. And they don't suck as much as the rest of my students.

GARRETT'S LECTURE

GARRETT

Okay, so if you read chapter 8 last night--

A cell phone dings, and a girl in the front row gets her phone out of her bag.

GARRETT

Kayla, what the heck? I've begged you guys to keep the phones put away.

KAYLA

I'm really sorry, Mr. Ward. Coach has been texting us all day. He told us to keep our phones close.

GARRETT

Coach Johnson? Why is he texting you during my class?

KAYLA

He wants to approve all of our outfits for the basketball banquet tonight. He said no pants, but that he wanted to make sure our skirts and dresses were appropriate.

GARRETT

(pauses)

Right.

Garrett looks right at the camera, speechless.

PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE

Garrett stands outside of Principal Patterson's office. He knocks on the door.

PRINCIPAL PATTERSON

Come in.

Garrett opens the door to the office, where a stack of young adult novels sits on top of Patterson's desk. Principal Patterson is reading the same young adult novel.

GARRETT

Hey, Gordon. Dave is, uh, well being a creep again.

(CONTINUED)

PRINCIPAL PATTERSON
(Without looking up)
Leroy, please take Dave's internet
and phone, again.

There are thunderous footsteps from the hallway. Garrett looks at the camera, alarmed.

GARRETT
Right. Thanks, buddy.

Garrett rushes out of the room.

GARRETT INTERVIEW

Garrett is standing outside of the principal's office.

GARRETT
(quietly)
Uh, yeah.. Leroy? He's the
vice-principal. Also ex-navy seal.
Or professional wrestler. I've
heard both stories. But he doesn't
talk. He just... stares. And
stomps. And breaks things.

Garrett shivers and walks away.

TEACHER'S LOUNGE

The teacher's lounge, a shabby and tiny room with a microwave and a mini fridge. Two small tables are crammed together. Academic calendars and a bulletin board hang from the wall(covered completely with notices Emily has written and a drawing of a penis signed "by Dave"). Garrett walks into the lounge, where Emily and Leroy are sitting at a table in the corner eating cookies.

EMILY
Leroy, thank you for saying that. I
really needed to hear it today.

Leroy glares at Garrett as he walks towards them.

GARRETT
Hey, Leroy. How's it going?

Leroy gets up, still glaring, and walks out of the lounge.

EMILY
See you later, Leroy. Don't forget
about this weekend!

(CONTINUED)

GARRETT

That dude terrifies me.

EMILY

What are you talking about, weasle?
He's a sweetheart.

GARRETT

Wow, I'll take your word for it, I
guess. What did you mean about this
weekend?

EMILY

He's cat-sitting for me. There's a
midnight release of JK Rowling's
autobiography "Flying on
Floopowder". And Mr. Darcy loves
Leroy.

GARRETT

I don't know how to respond to any
of that.

Emily shrugs and starts to gather her things.

GARRETT

Anyway, how's that new lesson plan
going? Changed the world yet?

EMILY

Like I'd tell you. I don't even
know why I'm talking to you, you
mofo math monkey. Don't students
have calculators, now? Why do you
even work here?

GARRETT

Nice. Here's a question-- is there
some psychiatrist that I should
have Kara call? Or maybe some
medication you forgot to take? What
the Hell, Emily?

EMILY

I just hate you. And your face. And
math! Nobody likes math, Garrett!
It's the worst! You are the reason
kids drop out of school, get
pregnant, and do drugs.

GARRETT

Wow.

(CONTINUED)

EMILY

And you're wrong about my lesson plan. It's amazing.

GARRETT

I never said--

EMILY

My students will be masters of everything ever. Except for math because it's stupid.

GARRETT

Okay, but--

Emily gets up and leaves, and gently closes the door behind her. Garrett looks at the camera, confused.

EMILY INTERVIEW

Emily is outside of the teacher's lounge.

EMILY

Math is very important. Especially for young women. Please don't tell Garrett I said that.

GARRETT'S INTERVIEW

Garrett is sitting in the teacher's lounge alone

GARRETT

Okay...What just happened? I mean, I knew I offended her, but what the hell?

WALKING TO KARA'S OFFICE

Emily is walking from her classroom, down the hallway towards the nurse's office. She is carrying a giant box. The camera is following her.

EMILY

So, my plan is to have my seniors write short skits in Shakespearean English, and then act them out with costumes that I have left over from the Renaissance festival. I have a pretty big collection.

Emily looks down into the box and pulls out a men's tunic.

(CONTINUED)

EMILY

Luckily I dated a guy for a while that had one, too. It didn't last-- I quickly learned that he wore clothes like these all the time. They're coming in handy now, though.

Emily walks down the hallway to Kara's office. Emily slumps against Kara's open doorway.

EMILY

(whiny)

Karaaaaaaaaaa.

Kara is writing on a student's chart. There is the sound of someone throwing up in the bathroom next door.

KARA

Yes, Em?

EMILY

(normal voice)

I need your help.

KARA

Kinda busy, babe. Jessica Montgomery is throwing up in bathroom right now.

EMILY

Ew.

KARA

I'm letting her think she might be pregnant, but it was really just today's lunch. That stray cat left another dead bird in the french fry grease.

EMILY

Catticus Finch? That bad kitty.

KARA

You probably shouldn't name the stray cat.

EMILY

You probably shouldn't let students think they're pregnant if they aren't.

(CONTINUED)

KARA

Hey! This is a learning experience for her. Luke Daniels is not a nice boy, and she should not be sleeping with him.

EMILY

How do you know--? Whatever, nevermind. I really need you to film my class today. They're doing skits.

Holds up digital camera.
Please?

Kara drops her pen.

KARA

You got it.

Kara gets up, knocks on the bathroom door behind her.

KARA

Jessica? I'll be back later. I'm sliding the pregnancy test under the door.

She crouches, slides the box under the door and stands up.

KARA

Okay, let's go.

EMILY

You are perfection.

Both exit, Jessica throws up again.

EMILY'S CLASSROOM

Emily and Kara walk into Emily's classroom both wearing costumes, Principal Patterson is sitting at Emily's desk reading a new young adult novel.

EMILY

Principal Patterson! I'm so glad you came. New book?

PRINCIPAL PATTERSON

Yes, this John Green fellow is incredibly talented. I was stuck on Nicholas Sparks for a while, but this young man has converted me. You should consider teaching one of Green's novels, Emily.

(CONTINUED)

EMILY

Uh, maybe. As you'll soon see,
we're working on Shakespeare right
now.

Students start coming into the classroom dressed in their
Shakespeare costumes.

EMILY

Wow! You guys! You look amazing!

A young girl walks up to Emily wearing a Juliet gown and
headpiece.

EMILY

(hushed)

Becca. You look majestic.

BECCA

What dialect art thee speaking? Tis
unfamiliar to mine ears, mine
dearest teacher!

EMILY

(emotionally)

I just--you are-- I mean to
say--the words--I can't--but she--

Emily starts to cry and hugs Becca.

BECCA'S INTERVIEW

Becca sits in the poorly lit cafeteria. Student's art
projects hang on the walls. Becca (17) is highly
intelligent, but slightly apathetic. Her hobbies include
dressing up like a ghost and scaring mourners at the
cemetery, stealing all of her friend's shoelaces, and
letting her mom think she is addicted to drugs.

BECCA

Oh I hate this. We all hate it. But
Ms. Hanson is so nice, and she was
so excited. Disappointing her is
like kicking the puppy at the
pound. We couldn't do it. She once
called me at my house because I
sneezed in class, and she wanted to
make sure I was okay. She's a
freak. But we like her.

EMILY'S CLASSROOM CONTINUED

Emily is still hugging Becca tightly.

BECCA

Thou art strangling me, wench!

EMILY

I'm sorry! But, wow! You are the most amazing, beautiful, talented students I've ever seen. But let's get started! Ready, Nurse Knowlton?

KARA

Yep, camera's all set.

EMILY

Principal Patterson?

Principal Patterson grunts, still reading his book.

EMILY

Okay, let's start with group--

Door opens, Garrett enters.

GARRETT

I'm sorry to interrupt, but I was hoping to watch. Ms. Hanson, do you mind? I would love to experience your superior teaching methods.

Garrett smirks at Dean in his tights.

EMILY

(annoyed)

I will not allow thee to be hither. Prithee leave anon, sir.

GARRETT

Is that a no?

Garrett looks at Kara, who shrugs.

EMILY

Get out! Ye are not wanted!

GARRETT

I can't tell if you're joking or not with the weird words...

(CONTINUED)

EMILY

I am serious! And I doth proclaim
that ye are a buttface. Begone!

BECCA

M'Lady, who is this jester?

DEAN

Some blighter not worthy of
m'lady's time.

Garrett looks at the camera, flabbergasted.

GARRETT

What is happening?

BECCA

Leave lout! Charlatan! Harlot!

EMILY

Becca, you can't call Mr. Ward a
harlot.

GARRETT

It's fine, I get it.

Garrett walks toward the door.

ELLA

Yeah! Ye harlot!

EMILY

Ella, go stand in the corner. I
don't want to look at you for the
rest of the class.

ELLA

You got it!

Ella walks to the corner and stands there.

EMILY

Okay, group one! You're up!

Garrett stands in the doorway, watching the students
prepare. He sighs and shuts the door behind him.

GARRETT'S INTERVIEW

Garrett is sitting in the teacher's lounge staring at his lap. He looks up at the camera.

GARRETT

Let me premise what I'm about to say with this-- Emily is absolutely insane. Like, clinically psychotic. But she is also the best teacher I've ever seen. To have students be that loyal to you? To love you that much?

EMILY AND KARA INTERVIEW

Emily and Kara are sitting in Emily's classroom, both still in costume.

EMILY

That was the best thing ever! The kids were perfect, eager, excited. It was amaaaazing! Suck it, Garrett!

KARA

Yeah, suck a big one, Garrett!

Emily looks at Kara surprised

EMILY

(hushed)

Kara!

Kara shrugs

KARA

Sorry, I got all excited. This is exciting!

EMILY

We have the chance to change everything! The entire curriculum! No more teaching to the test!

KARA

As long as Principal Patterson agrees, right?

EMILY

Yes, but why wouldn't he? That was great!

PRINCIPAL PATTERSON INTERVIEW

Principal Patterson is sitting at his desk in his office.

PRINCIPAL PATTERSON
I really wasn't paying attention.
I've learned to drown out the sound
of children talking. It's very
helpful. But the old curriculum
isn't going anywhere.

DAVE'S OFFICE

Dave sits at his computer, trying to access a website that
won't load. He is holding his cell phone to his ear?

DAVE
I don't know what happened. That's
why I called IT!

Dave pauses as he listens.

DAVE
Fine. Let me check the settings.

He goes through his computer settings.

DAVE
Why does my computer have a
parental block on it?

Principal Patterson walks by the doorway.

PRINCIPAL PATTERSON
It's for your own good, Dave.