

be your only homework assignment for all of next week. But with two weekends and five school days, I expect excellent work. Questions? (*Bell rings.*) Dismissed.

*(Lights cross fade: down on MISS SHIELDS, up on apron downstage. Fence rolls back into place as HELEN and ESTHER JANE enter DR, walking home from school, moving DL as they talk.)*

HELEN. Know what Roxane said?

ESTHER JANE. What?

HELEN. Roxane said Ralph Parker likes you.

ESTHER JANE. Really? Roxane said that? (*HELEN nods. After a pause.*) I think he's cute. Don't you think he's cute?

HELEN. I like older men.

ESTHER JANE. Older?

HELEN. Sixth-graders.

ESTHER JANE (*clearly impressed*). Oh! (*Pause.*) Have you picked a subject for your theme?

HELEN. No. Something about politics, maybe.

ESTHER JANE. Maybe I will, too.

HELEN. Are you a democrat or republican?

ESTHER JANE (*uncertain, then, with conviction*). Presbyterian.

*(They exit DL, crossing past RALPHIE, FLICK and SCHWARTZ, who enter DL and move DR.)*

SCHWARTZ. You see that, Ralph?

RALPHIE. What?

SCHWARTZ. Esther Jane was lookin' at you.

FLICK. I thought she was lookin' at *me*.

SCHWARTZ. Why would a girl look at *you*? (*He pokes FLICK affectionately as he crosses to RALPHIE.*)