

Abbot Elementary

"Thanksgiving"

Written by

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Int. Elementary Classroom-Day

Janice teaches her second graders how to use their hands to draw turkeys. She stands over her student's shoulders looking over their work. Each child slowly traces around their hands to draw turkeys. They use supplies such as markers and craft feathers for added details.

Janice comes to the front of the classroom to get her class' attention.

JANCIE

(EXCITED)

Okay everyone! I'm so proud of you all for your special turkeys. Now we're gonna give each turkey a name and tomorrow we're gonna make cornucopias! Class is dismissed so please follow me out the door.

Janice leads the second graders out of the classroom door. She then faces the camera and speaks directly to the audience.

JANCIE

I just really want to teach my kids about history. Thanksgiving is a racist holiday as we all know and I want to implement the harsh realities of life into my kid's minds rather than give them a Disneyfied sugar coated version of reality.

Janice makes a cold and serious face.

Int. Hallway-Day

In the next scene, Jacob walks through the hall and is stopped by Janice.

JANCIE

Jacob! Oh I'm so glad I ran into you!

JACOB

Janice hi how's it going?

JANCIE

Jacob, I need your help in teaching the kids the true story of thanksgiving, Columbus, Pocahontas, and and...

Jacob silences Jancie.

JACOB

Hey hey, slow down what's going on? What do you want me to help you teach?

JANICE

Okay, this friday, I need you to help me put on a presentation on the true story of Thanksgiving for my kids cause I just want their little minds to be invigorated with the truth and historical accuracy.

JACOB

Janice I don't know if your kids are old enough to understand the harsh realities of history. I mean we're talking about a seriously dark time in America.

JANICE

Look I was just hoping that you could help me put on a little presentation about the truth of Thanksgiving. Don't worry, I'm not gonna make it too dramatic. I just want my kids to learn the truth. Will you just please help me this friday? Please?

JACOB

Okay fine, I guess I could dress up like a pilgrim.

JANICE

Excellent. And I'll dress like a real member of the Wompanoag nation.

JACOB

Janice, I think that's cultural appropriation?

JANICE

Well in this context, the only thing I'm appropriating is the truth!

JACOB

Okay I'll help you this Friday. Can we watch Pocahontas?

JANICE

No! What did we just go over?

JACOB

Oh yeah. Right, Sorry.

(END OF SCENE)

Int. Kindergarten classroom-Late Afternoon

After the kindergarteners are dismissed, Janice walks into Mrs. Howard's (a.k.a Barbra) classroom and tries to get advice about teaching Thanksgiving history to her second grade class.

JANICE

Hey Barbara Hi. I need your help.

Mrs. Howard is grading worksheets and looks up from her desk.

Barbara

Yes Janice, what is it this time if I may ask?

JANICE

(EXCITED)

I'm gonna be teaching my class the true story of Thanksgiving and I was wondering how you would go about teaching that to a second grade class?

Barbara

Yes, and to answer your question, I wouldn't challenge their minds too much on America's horrendous history.

JANICE

Wait what? Why? It's important and I want my kids to know what happened?

Barbara

Janice, your second graders don't need a lecture on a brutal historical event. Let them enjoy the holiday. Believe me, your kids are better off learning proper grammar and how many apples are in a box rather than something that happened 400 years ago.

Janice

Mrs. Howard I'm surprised. I thought that you would find this kind of lecture important for our school.

Barbara

Janice please, I know that you want to do the right thing. But your kids are too young to appreciate and respect history. Now please, have draw more of those funny geeses-

JANICE

Turkeys.

Barbara

Right, yes, turkeys. And keep the lessons clean and simple for their little minds.

JANICE

Okay, I guess you have a point. This only makes me appreciate teaching actual history more when they are older.

Barbara

Exactly. Now, I will be very busy tonight. Me and Ava are gonna have some fun tonight.

JANICE

Really, what for?

Barbara

Well, Ava's grandma just got released from prison and we're gonna go to the bingo hall to celebrate.

JANICE

Oh, okay sounds neat. I guess.

Barbara walks out of the hallway exiting the scene.

(END OF SCENE)

Int. Hallway-Afternoon

As the children leave class for the day, Janice runs down the hall and approaches Jacob.

JANCIE

Jacob, are you still down for this Friday?

JACOB

Little bit, I mean teaching the kids the history of Thanksgiving and pairing it with European colonization might be too much for their little minds.

JANICE

Oh man. You sound like Barbara.

JACOB

Barbara? What do you mean?

JANICE

Well, she said that we shouldn't go through with teaching them that side of history.

JACOB

Well maybe Barbara's right. I mean I'm only helping you do this cause we're friends. But, even I think the kids should be a little older if we're gonna teach them about the truth on Thanksgiving.

JANICE

Jacob, please believe me. This could be really good for the kids. Just trust me on this one okay.

Jacob looks at Janice hesitantly pondering whether Janice has a good idea or not.

JACOB

Okay, okay. I trust you that you know what you're doing but I still don't know how it's gonna really come out.

JANICE

Oh it will be fine. Just you wait and see how excited those kids will be learning the true story of Thanksgiving.

JACOB

Does Ava know about your presentation?

JANICE

Oh believe me, she's the last person I want to have any knowledge about what's going on. I want her to have nothing to do with this all.

JACOB

Well yeah but Janice we need to follow the curriculum.

JANICE

Jacob, this will be a great way for the children to seriously ponder on a particular topic. This is perfect for our curriculum.

JACOB

I really don't think Ava is going to like this.

JANICE

I want to challenge my kids with fresh new ideas and make them question morality and the human condition. This will really boost their critical thinking skills.

JACOB

Janice, they're seven.

JANICE

You are never too young to be exposed to the dark side of history Jacob. Don't be ageist.

Jacob looks at Janice confused

JANICE

Look. how about tonight we get a coffee and work on the presentation. I found a bunch of old engravings we could show the children.

JACOB

What kind of engravings?

JANICE

Here, look, I have this one on my phone.

Janice shows Jacob a supposedly violent and engraving from the 1600's

JACOB

Janice, this drawing has dead bodies in it.

JANICE

Exactly, historical accuracy.

JACOB

Janice I still don't really know about this.

JANICE

Oh it will be fine. Just you wait and see how excited those kids will be. And besides, I already got us some costumes.

JACOB

Costumes?

JANICE

Yup, I'm gonna dress as Chief Massasoit and you get to be a cute little pilgrim.

JACOB

I wouldn't call the pilgrims cute considering what they did.

JANICE

Oh yeah right... Well anyways, let's work on the presentation tonight. Besides, I wanna make sure you look good in the dress I got you.

JACOB

Dress?

JANICE

You know, what the pilgrims would wear.

Int. Second Grade Classroom-Next morning

Janice and Jacob both get dressed in costumes related to Thanksgiving. Janice dresses like a member of the Wampanoag nation and Jacob dresses like a pilgrim. They set a paper mache turkey on a table and begin their presentation to Janice's second grade class.

JANICE

Okay class, can anyone tell me who I am dressed as?

The children look at her with confusion. One of the students raises her hand.

JANICE

Yes Mikala?

MIKALA

A stripper?

Janice and Jacob look at Mikala with confusion and concern.

JANICE

(SHOCKED)

Um...No sweetie. I'm actually supposed to be a member of the Wampanoag nation. A people who were being persecuted by Columbus.

Jacob pulls Janice aside to whisper to her the historical inaccuracy.

JACOB

Um Janice, Columbus committed settler colonialism nearly 130 years before the puritans even left the Netherlands.

JANICE

What? Why didn't you tell me that before we even started?

JACOB

What? I thought you would already know that.

JANICE

Jacob, let's not argue in front of the kids.

JACOB

What? You didn't-

JANICE cuts off Jacob from finishing and continues the presentation to the class.

JANICE

Okay so anyway class! Let's continue!
Now, where did we leave off? Oh yeah,

I am not Mrs. Teagues, I am Sachem Massasoit
And this here is not Mr.Hill but instead an evil
colonizing pilgrim.

Jacob corrects Janice again whispering into her ear.

JACOB

They didn't call themselves pilgrims. They were
actually puritans.

JANICE

Jacob!

Meanwhile, out of nowhere, Principle Coleman (otherwise known as
Ava) enters the classroom.

Ava

What's going on here? Janice, are you going
against our school district's curriculum? I was
told that you were teaching the students how to
put their hands in a turkey's butt.

Janice looks at Ava in shock.

JANICE

Oh no, I think Barbara told Ava about what we
were up to

AVA

No. It wasn't Barbara. I was instructed by a "Mr.
Hill" to keep their identity anonymous. So that's
why I'm not gonna reveal anything.

JANICE

Wait, you said that a "Mr. Hill" wanted to keep
their identity anonymous?

AVA

Yup, meaning you don't have the right to know who
Mr. Hill is.

Janice glances over at Jacob with an unimpressed and
disappointed look.

JANICE

You told Ava that we were gonna teach the kids
about Thanksgiving?

JACOB

I was just worried about their fragile little minds being exposed to the dark side of history.

AVA

Well it shouldn't matter who told me about this. But Janice this is against our curriculum. I mean I could have you suspended for this if I wanted.

Concerned with the noise coming from Janice's classroom, Barbara enters the class to see what the commotion is all about.

BARBARA

What's going on here, Janice, are you really teaching your students what happened on Thanksgiving, something I told you not to do.

JANICE

Look I know you told me to wait till the kids are older but I really wanted to do this for them.

BARBARA

Well, from what I heard down the hall, I really don't know if it'll work in your favor now. Your job is on the line and there's nothing I really can't do to help you now.

Janice and Jacob both look from Barbara back to Ava with suspicion. Janice is especially fearful that she would lose her job.

JANICE

Look Ava, we're sorry that we're going against the curriculum but I really wanted to just challenge my kids with new ideas.

AVA

Oh, I know. I know that you want to bring in new ideas and how you think you're so above our school's curriculum. So because you can't follow any of our educational standards. I have no other choice except to suspend you until further notice.

Janice and Jacob look at Ava with shock.

JACOB

But Ava this is too much. I mean I didn't think Janice would get suspended. I just thought you would stop the presentation and we could watch Pocahontas or something.

AVA

I'm sorry Jacob and Janice but there's nothing I could do. We need to think about the children now.

Janice slowly approaches Ava

JANICE

You know what Ava, it's okay. Yup, yeah it's totally fine. Apparently, according to you, I don't care about the children. Yeah, I don't care because I wanted to teach them to think critically about a concept.

Ava looks at Janice.

JANICE

(CONT'D.)

Yeah, so apparently I'm a bad teacher because I was trying to challenge my kids who I believe in. These are smart and gifted children Ava. They deserve to be exposed to instruction that is more interesting than counting on their fingers or reading fairy tales. So you know what Ava, go ahead and fire me. I don't care. But I care about these kids and I want you to know that before I'm dismissed.

Jacob, Barbara, and Ava look at Janice in astonishment.

Ava

Well. Um Janice, you seem to have made your point. But unfortunately I can't allow you to teach Thanksgiving history to the second graders because of its darker elements. However, from me reassessing the situation, I don't see any reason why you can't give your lesson to the sixth graders.

Janice and Jacob both look surprised by this revelation.

JANICE
I'm sorry, what?

AVA
Yes, you showed me that despite the circumstances of you being potentially removed from your job, you still feel a sense of responsibility for educating our community's youth. And that is what being a teacher means.

JANICE
So I could keep my job?

AVA
Yes, but just do me a favor?

JANICE
Yeah of course, what is it?

AVA
Next time, don't teach a particular topic to our student body without my permission. Okay?

JANICE
Yeah, that's agreeable.

AVA
Now then, just for this one time I'll let you educate our babies on Pilgrim and Pie day. Carry on with your lesson. But, just for today though. What happens in this classroom stays in this classroom. Got it?

JANICE
Yeah of course. OK bye now.

Ava and Barbara exit the classroom.

JACOB
So Janice, where should we continue?

JANICE
You know Jacob, I think I realized today that our kids also deserve to have fun when they learn.

Janice shifts her attention from Jacob onto her class.

JANICE

Okay kiddos, who's ready to make a cornucopia for arts and crafts!

The kids shout and cheer with excitement as Janice prepares to teach their art lesson.

(End of Scene)

