

STUDENT INTRODUCTION SONG

*The STUDENTS remain silent.
MR. JOHNSON is perplexed.*

MR. JOHNSON (Continued)

Anyone? (no response) Surely there must be somebody who has something they'd like to share with the class.

The STUDENTS remain silent.

MR. JOHNSON (Continued)

(slightly desperate)

Anyone? Anything?

One beautiful, young Chinese woman, MEI LI, rises slowly from her DESK in response to MR. JOHNSON's pitiful plea.

MEI LI

Do not despair, teacher. We will tell you.

(up music: Student Introduction Song)

STUDENTS

DEAREST TEACHER

WE WILL TELL YOU OF US WHAT WE CAN

WE ARE WITNESS TO THE SLAUGHTER

THAT PERVADES ALL MAN

WE WERE AFRAID

OH YES, WE WERE AFRAID

WE BEAR SILENT TESTIMONY

TO THE FALLING REIGN

WE FORGIVE THEM FOR THEIR FAILINGS

THOUGH WE BEAR THE PAIN

WE WERE AFRAID

OH YES, WE WERE AFRAID

MR. JOHNSON

(relieved)

I see. Well, now class, let's hear your stories.

HE points to a group of LATIN STUDENTS, RICO, ROSETTA, JOSE and ENRIQUE.

MR. JOHNSON (Continued)

Why don't we start here?

LATIN STUDENTS

WE CAME FROM SOUTH OF THE BORDER
WHERE THE SOLDIERS DESTROYED LAW AND ORDER
WITH MACHETES THEY DREW IN THE AIR
SO WE FOUGHT AND WE DRAGGED OURSELVES HERE
AI YAI YAI YAI
YAI YAI YAI
OLE

MR. JOHNSON points to RICO.

MR. JOHNSON

How about you, young man?

RICO steps forward to the clicking of castanets.

RICO

MY NAME IS RICO
I COME FROM PUERTO RICO
MY LIFE IS SPICY
LIKE THE SWEAT UPON MY BROW

RICO takes ROSETTA by the hand to introduce her.

RICO (Continued)

THIS IS ROSETTA
SHE COMES FROM NICARAGUA
SHE DANCES PRETTY
WHEN THE LIGHTS GO DOWN

ROSETTA struts brazenly across the classroom floor before halting tantalizingly close to MR. JOHNSON.

ROSETTA

I AM ROSETTA
I COME FROM NICARAGUA
YES, I DANCE PRETTY
WHEN THE LIGHTS GO DOWN
I'D LIKE TO SHOW YOU
A NICARAGUAN MAMBO
IT'S THE HOTTEST DANCE
IN MY COUNTRY THIS YEAR

ROSETTA dances and the other LATIN STUDENTS join in. When they finish, MR. JOHNSON calls to one of the students.

MR. JOHNSON

You, sir. What is your name?

JOSE flashes the thumbs-up sign.

JOSE

My name is Jose.

MR. JOHNSON

Jose... And where are you from?

JOSE

I'm from El Salvador.

MR. JOHNSON

El Salvador. I see. Well now, tell me Jose, why did you come to this country?

JOSE

Why did I come to this country? Well, teacher, I'll tell you.

(up music)

LATIN STUDENTS

WELL, THE GUNS IN THE TOWN
THEY WERE SOON ALL AROUND
THERE WAS SCREAMING
WHEN THE BAD SOLDIERS CAME
AND THEY CHASED US AGAIN
IN THE EVENING

SO, WE GOT OUT OF THERE
AND WE MADE OUR WAY HERE
TO EL NORTE
WHERE THE MOON AND THE STARS
AND THE WOMEN AND CARS
ARE SO SPORTY

ALL STUDENTS

WE WERE AFRAID
OH YES, WE WERE AFRAID
WE WERE AFRAID
OH YES, WE WERE AFRAID

The LATIN STUDENTS join ranks.

LATIN STUDENTS

NOW WE CAME HERE TO LEARN
AND HOPEFULLY EARN SOME DINERO
AND WE WEAR OUR BERETS
AND PARADE LIKE A GAY DESPERADO
BUT WITHIN US NO LIE
WE ARE TREMBLING INSIDE
AUTOMATIC
WANNA FLAP LIKE A BIRD
'CUS WE CAN'T FIND THE WORDS
ONLY STATIC

ALL STUDENTS

WE ARE AFRAID
OH YES, WE ARE AFRAID
WE ARE AFRAID
OH YES, WE ARE AFRAID

MR. JOHNSON

Well, in this class there's no need to be afraid. In here, you are safe. I promise.

The STUDENTS grow quiet at this pronouncement. The LATIN STUDENTS return to their seats. MR. JOHNSON surveys the classroom.

MR. JOHNSON (Continued)

What about some of the other students? What is your story? Tell me, please. I want to know you all.

MEI LI, the beautiful young student who had previously risen to MR. JOHNSON's aid greets him now with an ancient Chinese melody.

MEI LI

MY NAME IS MEI LI
I WANT YOU TO KNOW
I CAME FROM CHINA
ALMOST SEVEN WEEKS AGO
I AM SO EAGER TO DO SO WELL
MR. JOHNSON, HOW DO YOU DO?

MR. JOHNSON is touched by the young woman's sincerity and nods to her kindly as SHE resumes her seat.

MR. JOHNSON

I'm fine, Mei Li. Thank you. (moving on) Alright. Anyone else?

From one corner of the room, the RUSSIAN and UKRAINIAN STUDENTS, LAVONNA, FANYA, JOSEF and VLADIMIR begin humming a traditional Russian melody. LAVONNA, middle-aged and weather-beaten steps forward.

(up Russian music)

LAVONNA

MY NAME IS LAVONNA
FROM UKRAINE, I TELL YOU
LIVING HERE IN AMERICA
A DREAM THAT HAS COME TRUE
I LOVE AMERICA
IT'S (A) LAND WHERE YOU CAN DO
ALL THAT FREEDOM WILL ALLOW
IT'S (A) PLACE FOR ME AND YOU

At this the RUSSIAN STUDENTS rise and begin to waltz to a delightful Russian folk melody. When finished, THEY return to their DESKS.

MR. JOHNSON

Thank you. That was very nice. (beat as HE surveys the class) What about from Vietnam? I know we have some students from Vietnam because I read the attendance sheet and I saw two Vietnamese names on it. Now don't be shy. How about it? Does anyone have a story they'd like to share with the class?

NGUYEN TRAN, a young Vietnamese-Amerasian youth with slicked back hair and shirttail hung fashionably loose slinks brashly to the middle of the floor.

Standing self-assured, HE eyes SOPANNY, the tiny, wide-eyed girl from Laos, dressed in a long, bright, flowery dress. Seeking to impress her, HE blasts forth an Elvis-inspired blues rendition of his life.

(up early rock and roll music)

NGUYEN TRAN

MY NAME IS NGUYEN TRAN
FROM THE PLACE YOU ALL KNOW WELL
I WAS SCRITCHING AND A-SCRATCHING
JUST THIS SIDE OF HELL
WHEN A NUMBER ONE JOE BOY
(TURNS OUT HE WAS MY DADDY)
FREED ME FROM THAT SMELL

WHEN I WAS SMALL
IN THE STREETS OF SAIGON I DID PLAY
WHEN THE GI'S LEFT
I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY
MY DADDY TOOK ME TO KENTUCKY
(NOW THAT WAS COOL)
WE WOUND UP HERE IN SAN FRANCISCO BAY

MR. JOHNSON

Kentucky? You do seem to have a bit of a southern accent there, Tran.

NGUYEN TRAN

Yes, teacher. Tha' becau' I lived in Kentucky for two yea'.

MR. JOHNSON

I see. Well, it's very nice.

NGUYEN TRAN

Thank you, teacher.

The STUDENTS all rise and sing.

STUDENTS

NOW WE'RE HERE IN THIS LAND
WHERE WE CAN'T UNDERSTAND
WHAT THEY'RE SAYING
SO WE CAME TO THIS SCHOOL
TO GATHER THE TOOLS
TO SUCCEED WITH

NOW WE SEE YOU ARE HERE
IN THE SPOTLIGHT SO CLEAR
OF THIS CLASSROOM
AND WE WAIT FOR OUR TURN
AND HOPE WE CAN LEARN
FOR TOMORROW

MR. JOHNSON offers a sympathetic look to his STUDENTS as HE passes among them.

Having come full circle, ALL sing the final refrain.

MR. JOHNSON & STUDENTS

WE'RE NOT AFRAID
OH NO, WE'RE NOT AFRAID
WE'RE NOT AFRAID
OH NO, WE'RE NOT AFRAID
WE'RE NOT AFRAID
OH NO, WE'RE NOT AFRAID

(end song)