

Chicago-ese
(A One-Scene Short Play)

Playwright: Scot Savage

CHICAGO-ESE
A One-Scene Short Play
For Two Actors of Any Gender and Any Age (but Male & Female Preferred)

CHICAGO-ESE was first presented by Wood Street Theatre Company as part of the *Sixth Annual Palatine Play Reading Festival* at Cutting Hall in Palatine, IL on April 5, 2008. The performance was directed by Scot Savage and the set design was by Susannah Kist. The cast was as follows:

LECTURER.....Nicolette Chelios
DEMONSTRATOR.....Scot Savage

CHARACTERS*
(in order of appearance)

LECTURER

Male or Female (but Female preferred (or Male if DEMONSTRATOR is Female)),
Any Age (but should be close in age to DEMONSTRATOR)

A learned and well-spoken presenter from a prestigious university who pronounces each word correctly as if they were the gospel of proper elocution. Revealed to be the spouse/domestic partner of DEMONSTRATOR and speaks with Greek accent** at the conclusion of the play.

DEMONSTRATOR

Male or Female (but Male preferred (or Female if LECTURER is Male)),
Any Age (but should be close in age to LECTURER)

A streetwise and socially ignorant expounder and Chicago resident who takes no pride in his speech and butchers the English language with his native dialect without remorse. Revealed to be the spouse/domestic partner of LECTURER and speaks with British Cockney accent** at the conclusion of the play.

* If performers are of the same gender, the parts can be played as if the two are same-sex gender romantic partners or can be played platonically (the platonic angle should also apply if the age difference between the two characters is too great) and the dialog should be adjusted accordingly.

** If performers are not proficient with the accents listed with their character descriptions, they can substitute for ones in which they are proficient and adjust the dialogue of the final two lines accordingly.
If all else fails, the dialogue can just be given in their natural ways of speaking.

SETTING
The Present

PLACE
An Orientation Center somewhere in the Greater Chicagoland Area

TIME
No time in particular

SCENE

In the DARKENED theatre, the LIGHTS SLOWLY FADE UP to reveal LECTURER and DEMONSTRATOR facing AUDIENCE and standing URC and ULC respectively.

With the exception of their final lines of dialogue, LECTURER and DEMONSTRATOR always address AUDIENCE directly when speaking.

LECTURER. Good afternoon, Ladies and Gentlemen, and welcome to your first visit to Chicago. You will find that the denizens of the Windy City are a people separated from other Americans by a common language—namely English. I am here to help instruct and assimilate you to the native tongue and lingo of your new home. Let's start off with a simple one—shall we?

DEMONSTRATOR. Da. (*Translation: The.*)

LECTURER. Da—*The*. This definite article is a key part of Chicago speech—for example...

DEMONSTRATOR. Da Baarsss. Da Socksss. Da Cubsss. Da Bullsss. (*Translation: The Bears. The Sox. The Cubs. The Bulls.*)

LECTURER. As in most Chicago pluralization, the "s" is pronounced with a hissing sound, rather than the usual buzzing sound of "z" as practiced in traditional American pluralization. Let us try that again with the word *tools*.

DEMONSTRATOR. Need a hahnd? Just let me run home and grab my toolsss. (*Translation: Need a hand? Just let me run home and grab my tools.*)

DEMONSTRATOR (*Cont'd*). Ta. (*Translation: To.*)

LECTURER. To—Spelled: "T-O"—not "T-A." For example...

DEMONSTRATOR. Hey, whawusss I supposse ta do? (*Translation: Hey, what was I suppose(d) to do?*)

LECTURER. Now, getting back to the subject of sports—Let us not forget our beloved hockey franchise.

DEMONSTRATOR. Hey, Bahb... Hey Dahg... How 'bout dem Hocks? (*Translation: Hey Bob... Hey Doug... How about them Hawks?*)

LECTURER. *Hocks*—Chicago-ese for *Hawks*. Please note that it is too much trouble to say the full name of *Blackhawks*. This is also true when referring to the White Sox. Residents merely refer to the team as *Socksss*—*Sox*. The word *White* only proceeds *Sox* when the Boston franchise is in town. Also—please note the dropping of the "a" in *about*. It is best to keep as many words to as few syllables as possible—one syllable is optimal. Also notice that the "d" sound over "th". This rule applies to demonstratives such as *this*...

DEMONSTRATOR. Wha'is dis crazy ting? (*Translation: What is this crazy thing?*)

LECTURER. Did you catch how the "t" was dropped at the end of *what* and the "h" in *thing*? Let's try another demonstrative, shall we?—That.

DEMONSTRATOR. Wherdja' get dat candy bar? (*Translation: Where did you get that candy bar?*)

LECTURER. Getting to be fun, isn't it?—These.

DEMONSTRATOR. Dese heer are good snow tiressss. (*Translation: These here are good snow tires.*)

LECTURER. And—finally—Those.

DEMONSTRATOR. Dose Green Bay Packers are nuffin' but a'bucha' cheessseheadsss. (*Translation: Those Green Bay Packers are nothing but a bunch of cheeseheads.*)

LECTURER. Very good. On another plane of thought: Did you happen to notice the use of the sharp nasally “ah” sound in the names Bob and Doug in our previous example about the Hawks? Although, phonetically, it's a short and crisp “a”—it was elongated anyway. Perhaps, you missed that? Let's try it again and see if you can pick it up.

DEMONSTRATOR. Hey, Bahb... Hey, Dahg... How 'bout gettin' some Chinese tonight? (*Translation: Hey, Bob... Hey, Doug... How about getting some Chinese tonight?*)

LECTURER. This same unique sound was also used in for the word *hand* in the example about the tools. *Hahnd*—Hand. This phenomenon is known as—the *Chicago A*. Did you also pick up how the “e & a” sound in the word *here*, as used in the example about the snow tires, which is pronounced like a double “e” as in the popular alcoholic beverage of *beer*. *Heer*—Here. *Da Baarsss*—The Bears.

DEMONSTRATOR. (*Waves to AUDIENCE*) Hey!

LECTURER. Much like our salutation to Bob and Doug in our previous examples, “Hey” is a common way to greet, acknowledge or get another person's attention—used in the same way as “Yo” in the city of Philadelphia. Here is another.

DEMONSTRATOR. Ha'ya' doin'? (*Translation: How you doing?*)

LECTURER. *How are you doing?* Notice the ease that we get the greeting off in one word and one breath—especially when we drop the word *are* from the greeting. Of course, there is another popular common greeting which is non-verbal...

DEMONSTRATOR CROSSES UL *and nonchalantly walks back with hands in jacket or pants pockets to original position at UCL. About halfway there, DEMONSTRATOR stops, looks at AUDIENCE, jerks head up at them and then resumes walking to UCL.*

LECTURER (*Cont'd*). Chicago is a very large city and the neighborhood you live in will brand you for life...

DEMONSTRATOR. I'm from Bridgeport.

LECTURER. I'm a Sox fan.

DEMONSTRATOR. I'm from Jeff Park.

LECTURER. I'm a Cubs fan.

DEMONSTRATOR. (*Wisconsin accent*) Hey, deer, I'm from Wisconsin, don'tcha' know? (*Translation: Hey there, I'm from Wisconsin, don't you know?*)

LECTURER. I (*Beat*) am a moron.

DEMONSTRATOR. I'm from Wicker Park.

LECTURER. I like to visit bookstores and see live theatre.

DEMONSTRATOR. I'm from the West side.

LECTURER. I'm a Bulls fan.

DEMONSTRATOR. I live by Lawrence and Broadway.

LECTURER. I (*Beat*) am gay.

DEMONSTRATOR *feigns shock and does a few effeminate gestures.*

LECTURER (*Cont'd*). Now, let us move on to some popular terms and phrases...

DEMONSTRATOR. Grachki. (*Translation: Garage key*)

LECTURER. *Garage key*—as in...

DEMONSTRATOR. Hey, Tah-re-sa, waja' do wid da *grachki*? Howmy' supposta' cut da grass if I don't git intada grach? (*Translation: Hey, Theresa, what (did) you do with the garage key? How am (I) supposed to cut the grass if I don't get into garage?*)

LECTURER *shrugs shoulders.*

DEMONSTRATOR (*Cont'd*). Uptadaendada... (*Translation: Up to the end of the...*)

LECTURER. *Up to the end of the*—For instance...

DEMONSTRATOR. Joey, you kin' ride ur bike *uptadaendada* alley, but not acrost—no funder or I'll bust ur butt. (*Translation: Joey, you can ride your bike up to the end of the alley, but not across—no further or I'll bust your butt.*)

LECTURER *gives DEMONSTRATOR a casual salute of acknowledgement.*

DEMONSTRATOR. Sammich. (*Translation: Sandwich.*)

LECTURER. *Sand-wich*—Sandwich. When made with sausage then it's a...

DEMONSTRATOR. Sassage *sammich*. (*Translation: Sausage Sandwich.*)

LECTURER. With shredded beef—it's an...

DEMONSTRATOR. I-talian beef *sammich*. (*Translation: Italian beef sandwich.*)

LECTURER. That's right—Italian Beef—a local delicacy consisting of piles of spicy meat on a perilously soggy bun.

DEMONSTRATOR. Acuppala... (*Translation: A couple of...*)

LECTURER. Two—a pair. As in...

DEMONSTRATOR. Hey, Bahb, how 'bout we meets up at dat new place on Peetersin' and have acuppala beersss. (*Translation: Hey, Bob, how about we meet(s) up at that new place on Peterson and have a couple of beers?*)

LECTURER *winks at* DEMONSTRATOR *and gives a thumbs-up.*

DEMONSTRATOR (*Cont'd*). Da Mare. (*Translation: The Mayor.*)

LECTURER. Not a female horse, but—*the mayor*. The Chief Executive Officer of Chicago—the Honorable Lori Lightfoot. (**NOTE:** *Substitute with the current mayor if this official is no longer in office at the time this play is performed.*)

DEMONSTRATOR. Jewelsss.

LECTURER. Not family heirlooms or a tender body region, but a popular appellation for one of the region's dominant grocery chains—*Jewel*—singular—but often pluralized when, in reality, no “s” is actually in the name. To wit...

DEMONSTRATOR. I'm goin' tada' Jewelsss ta pick up some sassage. (*Translation: I'm going to the Jewel(s) to pick up some sausage.*)

LECTURER. Another popular regional grocery chain which, sadly, is no longer in business was...

DEMONSTRATOR. Donna-mick's. (*Translation: Dominick's.*)

LECTURER. *Dom-i-nick's*—Dominick's. Note the substitution of “n” for “m”.

DEMONSTRATOR. Fee-eld's. (*Translation: Field's*)

LECTURER. *Marshall Field's*—a prominent Chicago department store—now bought out by Macy's. Also...

DEMONSTRATOR. Kar-sins. (*Translation: Carson's.*)

LECTURER. *Carson Pirie Scott*—another major department store chain—now, sadly—defunct.

DEMONSTRATOR. Tree. (*Translation: Three*)

LECTURER. Not a *tree* in a forest, but—rather—the *number* that comes between two and four.

DEMONSTRATOR. We wuz lucky dat we only got tree inches of snow da udder night. (*Translation: We was (were) lucky that we only got three inches of snow the other night.*)

LECTURER. Only three, huh?

DEMONSTRATOR. Prairie.

LECTURER. Prairie—A vacant lot, especially one on which weeds are growing.

DEMONSTRATOR. Over by dere. (*Translation: Over by there.*)

LECTURER. *Over by there*—A prolix way of emphasizing a site presumed familiar to the listener. As in...

DEMONSTRATOR. I got da sassage at da Jewelsss down on Kedzie—over by dere. (*Translation: I got the sausage at the Jewel(s) down on Kedzie—over by there.*)

LECTURER. Another popular spot located on the South Side—“over by there”—is...

DEMONSTRATOR. Kaminski Park.

LECTURER. Perhaps, the high concentration of ethnic Poles makes people want the *White Sox* to be playing in this mythical ballpark, rather than in their true home, *Guaranteed Rate Field*, formerly known as *Comiskey Park*. (**NOTE:** *Substitute with the current stadium name if this park is owned by another corporation at the time this play is performed.*)

DEMONSTRATOR. Frunchroom. (*Translation: Front Room*)

LECTURER. It's not the *parlor*. It's not the *living room*. In the land of the bungalow, it's the *frunchroom*—a named derived, linguists believe, from *front room*.

DEMONSTRATOR. Getottada frunchroom wit' dose muddy chews! (*Translation: Get out of the front room with those muddy shoes!*)

LECTURER *lifts each leg to look at the bottom of each shoe.*

DEMONSTRATOR (*Cont'd*). Use

LECTURER. Spelled: “U-S-E.” Not the verb—but the plural pronoun of *you*—spelled Y-O-U.

DEMONSTRATOR. Hey, where *use* goin'? (*Translation: Hey, where (are) you going?*)

LECTURER. (*Pointing OFF STAGE*) Over by dere.

DEMONSTRATOR. Gym Shoes.

LECTURER. A soft pair of shoes with rubber soles worn for sports or casual occasions—also known as *sneakers*.

DEMONSTRATOR. Downtown.

LECTURER. Anywhere south of the zoo and north of Soldier Field near the lake.

DEMONSTRATOR. Boyssstown. (*Translation: Boystown*)

LECTURER. *Boystown*: A section on Halsted Avenue, between Belmont and Addison, which is lined with gay bars on the west and east sides of the street.

DEMONSTRATOR. Didn't I see *use* in *Boysssstown* in front of *Da Manhole*? (*Translation: Didn't I see you in Boystown in front of "The Manhole"?*)

LECTURER *quickly shakes head "no." (or optionally/alternately, "yes")*

DEMONSTRATOR (*Cont'd*). *Braht*. (*Translation: Brat*)

LECTURER. A *Bratwurst*—often served with sauerkraut—also known as—'*kraut*.

DEMONSTRATOR. Gimme a braht wid '*kraut*. (*Translation: give me a brat(wurst) with (sauser)kraut.*)

LECTURER *rubs tummy in approval.*

DEMONSTRATOR (*Cont'd*). *Cahshbahks*. (*Translation: Cashbox.*)

LECTURER. *Cashbox*: Traffic reporter slang for *tollbooth*.

DEMONSTRATOR. Dere's a delay at da *cahshbahks* on da *Skyway*. (*Translation: There's a delay at the "cashbox" on the "Skyway."*)

LECTURER. Those expressways aren't always free, folks.

DEMONSTRATOR. *Goesss*. (*Translation: Goes.*)

LECTURER. *Goes*: Past or present tense of the verb *say*. For example...

DEMONSTRATOR. Den Chahk goes, "Hey, I like dis place!" (*Translation: Then Chuck goes (says), "Hey, I like this place!"*)

LECTURER. I always liked Chuck.

DEMONSTRATOR. *Guysss*. (*Translation: Guys.*)

LECTURER. *Guys*: A term used when addressing two or more people—regardless of each individual's gender.

DEMONSTRATOR. Hey, use *guysss*, did ya' try the *cheessesticksss*? (*Translation: Hey, you guys, did you try the chessesticks?*)

LECTURER. Yes, I did.

DEMONSTRATOR. *Pahp*. (*Translation: Pop.*)

LECTURER. *Pop*: A carbonated beverage—a soft drink. Don't ever say *soda* in this town.

DEMONSTRATOR. What kinda' *pahp* you got? (*Translation: What kind of pop you got (do you have)?*)

LECTURER. Actually, I'm a coffee-person.

DEMONSTRATOR. *Slidersss*. (*Translation: Sliders.*)

LECTURER. *Sliders*: Nickname for hamburgers from *White Castle*, a popular Midwestern fast food chain. When garnished with cheese, they are known as—*Golden Sliders*. Also referred as *Whitey-one-bites*.

DEMONSTRATOR. Dose *sliderssss* I had last night gave me da runs. (*Translation: Those “sliders” I had last night gave me the runs.*)

LECTURER *pinches nose and shakes head as DEMONSTRATOR takes this little insult in stride.*

DEMONSTRATOR (*Cont’d*). Da Taste. (*Translation: The Taste.*)

LECTURER. The Annual Taste of Chicago Festival—a huge extravaganza in Grant Park featuring samples of Chicagoland's fine cuisine which takes place just before and concluding on the Fourth of July holiday.

DEMONSTRATOR. Av-new. (*Translation: Avenue*)

LECTURER. *Av-e-nue*—Avenue: A broad road or street in Chicago—conveniently broken down from three syllables to two.

DEMONSTRATOR. Bahb’s carr ran ouda’ gas right in the middla’ Belmont Av-new. (*Translation: Bob’s car ran out of gas right in the middle of Belmont Avenue.*)

LECTURER. That’s what happens when you drive a Yugo.

DEMONSTRATOR. Jieetyet? (*Translation: Did you eat yet?*)

LECTURER. This simple single term is used to ask, “Did you eat yet?” And finally...

DEMONSTRATOR. Win-terr and Construction. (*Translation: Winter and Construction.*)

LECTURER. This is the punchline to the joke, “What are the two seasons in Chicago?”

DEMONSTRATOR. (*Nasally laughter*) HAHAAHAHAHA!

LECTURER. This concludes our seminar for today. Thank you for joining us.

NOTE: *The lines and actions below can be adjusted/changed depending on the genders of the performers, their differences in ages, the perceived relationship the performers have to the other character and their proficiency with accents/dialects.*

DEMONSTRATOR. (*Speaking directly to LECTURER instead of AUDIENCE with British Cockney accent*) Blimey! That went off rather well. Don’t you think, Luv?

LECTURER. (*Speaking directly to DEMONSTRATOR instead of AUDIENCE with Greek accent*) Sure did, Kukla. You come now. I make souvlaki for you.

LECTURER and DEMONSTRATOR *hold hands, face AUDIENCE and then bow. As they EXIT R, arm in arm, the LIGHTS SLOWLY FADE OUT.*

THE END.

COSTUMES/WARDROBE

LECTURER:

Any suitable professional or business-casual attire appropriate for a presentation or seminar

DEMONSTRATOR:

Chicago Cubs or White Sox Baseball Cap

T-Shirt with Chicago Sports Team Logo (Other than the one on the Baseball Cap or Jacket)

Windbreaker, Jacket or Hoodie with Chicago Sports Team Logo

(Other than the one on the Baseball Cap or T-shirt)

OR Denim Jacket if Sports Logo Jacket is not available

Blue Jeans

Sneakers

NOTE: Do NOT wear Cubs and White Sox logos together—only one or the other.

MAKE-UP/HAIRSTYLE (OPTIONAL)

LECTURER:

None required (Other than common stage or every-day-use make-up products)

DEMONSTRATOR:

None required (Other than common stage or every-day-use make-up products)

GENERAL PROPERTIES

None

PERSONAL PROPERTIES (OPTIONAL)

LECTURER:

Stack of Index Cards with Terms written on them to help remember order of presentation

DEMONSTRATOR:

Stack of Index Cards with Terms written on them to help remember order of presentation

SOUND EFFECTS

None