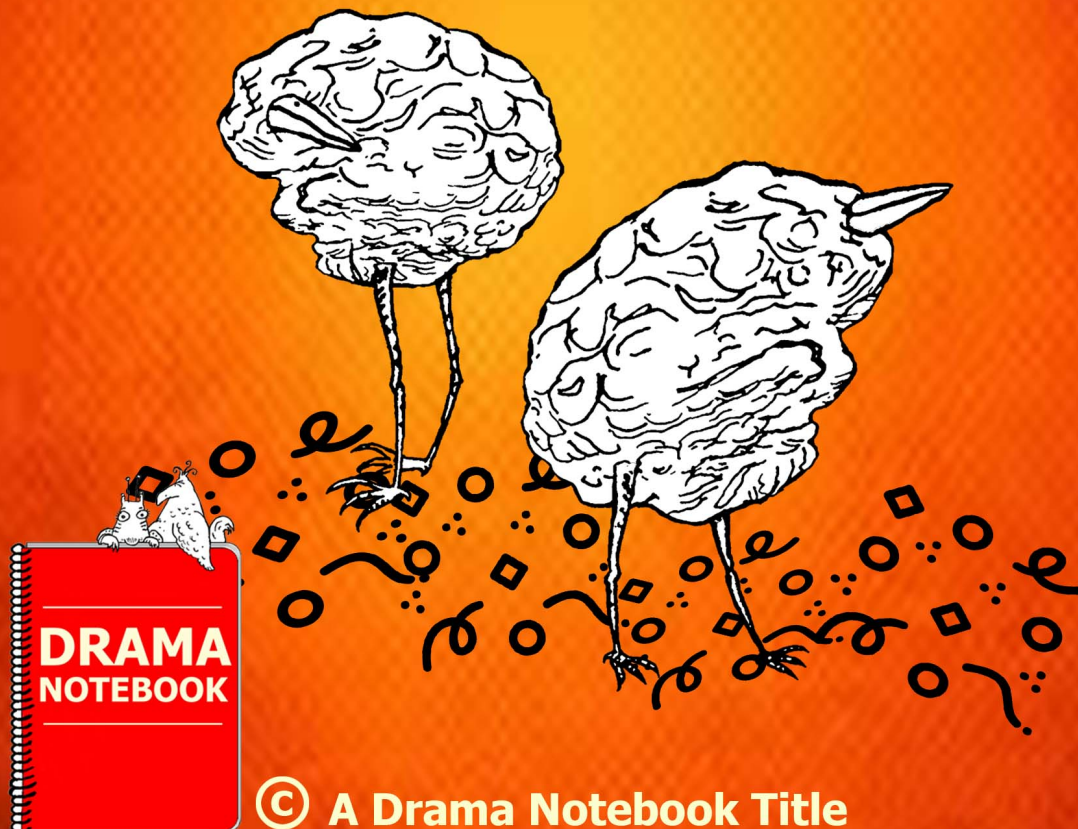


# MIDDLE SCHOOL BRAIN

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By Debra A. Cole



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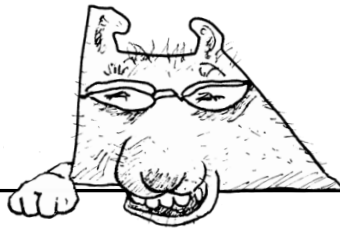
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## About the Author..

Debra A. Cole is a celebrated humanities teacher, youth theatre director, and children's playwright with degrees in journalism, art history, and elementary education. She understands the needs of young performers and their directors and creates pieces that encourage engaging discussion, creative thought, and quirky playfulness. Her goal is that young performers discover the power and delight that theatre brings to actors and audiences alike.

Visit her website:  
[www.debraacole-playwright.com](http://www.debraacole-playwright.com)



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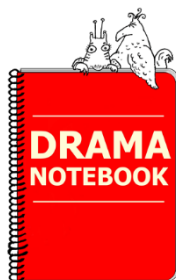
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## About the play..

The middle school brain is a complicated organ that scares many adults. But once people take a closer look at the individual components within the teenage brain, it's quite an amazing piece of machinery that works together to make one great kid.



## Middle School Brain

By Debra A. Cole

### CHARACTERS

**APPEARANCE** — (M/F) constantly questioning if everything is cool

**FEAR** — (M/F) frozen by the unknown

**HAPPINESS** — (M/F) sees the bright side of everything

**WORRY** — (M/F) always sees the bad side of "what if"

**SADNESS** — (M/F) cries about everything

**BLAME** — (M/F) everyone else makes the mistakes

**PLEASER** — (M/F) wants everyone to love her/him

**LOGIC** — (M/F) sees the truth in situations

**CONFIDENCE** — (M/F) never does anything wrong

**MUSCLE** — (M/F) cheesy - works out and is very strong

**MRS. FINNEGAN** — (F) principal - stern

**ABBY** — (F) actress - snotty and arrogant popular girl

**JAX** — (M) boy at school - really kind



# Middle School Brain

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(The action takes place in modern time on a middle school lunch table in the cafeteria.)

(Lights come up on a round middle school lunchroom table. Ambient cafeteria noise is playing as all parts of the brain are pulling out the exact same lunch boxes. Each character has a t-shirt with their name on it in clear lettering for the audience to read. Each t-shirt should be a different color. Each character also has the same pair of glasses on their faces, wearing "brain caps" on their heads. Suddenly, Mrs. Finnegan enters, stage right, with a bullhorn.)

## **Mrs. Finnegan:**

(tensely) Okay, middle schoolers, your volume is WAY TOO HIGH at the lunch tables! We are on a LEVEL YELLOW WARNING! YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED!

(Mrs. Finnegan exists stage right.)

(The ambient noise level of the cafeteria lowers.)

## **WORRY**

YELLOW WARNING? It's us she is talking about! I just know it! What if she yells at us? I hate being yelled at.

## **CONFIDENCE**

Easy, Worry! We're fine. WE are never the problem.

## **BLAME**

Speak for yourself, Confidence. Maybe Megan is the problem.

## **FEAR**

(panicked) BUT, WE ARE MEGAN! We're ALL Megan. THAT is how a brain works. Each of us plays a part in MEGAN! I am really scared! If one of us messes up, we ALL are going to "get it."

## **APPEARANCE**

Are we at least the same volume as everybody else? I would hate to be quieter or louder.

## **SADNESS**

(starting to cry) I'm feeling... I'm feeling... I'm feeling really blue about all of this.

## **HAPPINESS**

(calmly with a smile) I kind of like a little noise at lunch. It makes me feel that I'm part of a team.

## **PLEASER**

(sweetly) You are ALL making really good points.

**LOGIC**

(firmly) Enough! This has to stop. Mrs. Finnegan said clearly that the volume at the lunch TABLES was too high. It's clear that Megan is not the problem, or at least not the only problem. Now, it's time to eat our lunch and gather our strength for the afternoon of middle school. Okay?

**EVERYONE BUT LOGIC**

(in unison each with their own emotion) FINE.

(Each character opens his/her matching lunch box in unison. The first thing each pulls out is a peanut butter and jelly sandwich.)

**HAPPINESS**

(happily) Peanut butter and jelly! My favorite! I love the salty slash sweet combination. Megan usually makes tuna or egg salad for her school lunch, but this is so much better.

**CONFIDENCE**

Megan does make a delicious peanut butter and jelly sandwich at home. I would even say she is the very best at it. She knows the perfect balance between the peanut butter and jelly. Go, Megan!

**APPEARANCE**

(looking around the room) Does anyone else in the lunchroom have peanut butter and jelly? Is it too babyish to have here in middle school?

**WORRY**

(holding the sandwich and looking panicked) Wait a minute. Something feels wrong here.

**LOGIC**

(sternly while taking a bite) Nothing is wrong. It's just a sandwich.

**FEAR**

(yelling) Worry is right! We're not allowed to have peanuts in the lunchroom! We are going to kill SOMEONE! I don't know who... but SOMEONE!

**BLAME**

(scared) Darn it, Megan! What did YOU do?

**SADNESS**

(crying) Oh no! I really like... SOMEONE. It will be so sad to see SOMEONE croak. (uses sandwich to wipe tears off of face)

**FEAR**

(sees someone off stage right) Oh no! Mrs. Finnegan is coming over here!

(Everyone looks off stage right.)

**WORRY**

She is going to see our peanut butter and send us to detention for killing SOMEONE!

**APPEARANCE**

(smiling) I really like her shoes. Do you think they would look good on me?

**HAPPINESS**

You deserve those shoes, Appearance.

**CONFIDENCE**

They were made for you.

**FEAR**

KNOCK IT OFF! She's here!

(Everyone freezes as Mrs. Finnegan enters stage right.)

**MRS. FINNEGAN**

(speaking through megaphone) Good morning, Megan. Looks like you packed a beautiful lunch there.

**ALL BRAIN PARTS**

(in unison) Thanks, Mrs. Finnegan.

(Everyone remains frozen for five seconds, time for Mrs. Finnegan to exit.)

**LOGIC**

(shaking heads and hits forehead) Of course! There was no problem. (using fingers to make quotes) "No peanuts or peanut butter" was the rule in ELEMENTARY SCHOOL! We can have peanut products in MIDDLE SCHOOL. We should have remembered THAT!

**BLAME**

(to Logic) YOU should have remembered THAT!

**SADNESS**

(crying) I should have remembered that. Why am I always so sad? (cries more)

**CONFIDENCE**

We'll remember that next time. I am sure of it.

(The ambient noise level of the cafeteria rises, and the table notices it immediately.)

**WORRY**

(nervously) It's coming. I just know it. Mrs. Finnegan is about to say it.

**FEAR**

(scared) It's going to be orange. The dreaded orange!

(Mrs. Finnegan enters stage right with megaphone in hand.)

**MRS. FINNEGAN**

(angrily – through megaphone) Middle Schoolers, we are now at an ORANGE LEVEL warning! YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED... again.



(Mrs. Finnegan exists stage right.)

**APPEARANCE**

(looking around) Be cool. Everyone just be cool. Don't draw attention to Megan.

**HAPPINESS**

It's nice to eat lunch in quiet too. (takes a bite of sandwich)

**PLEASER**

Happiness is right. (takes an even bigger bite out of sandwich)

**LOGIC**

If we all just stay calm and be part of the quiet rather than be part of the noise, we will never reach RED LEVEL.

**WORRY**

Oh, no.

**SADNESS**

(cries) What now?

(Abby enters stage left. She is looking at her nails until she sees Megan.)

**WORRY**

It's... Abby.

**FEAR**

(horrified) NOT ABBY.

**WORRY**

(stressed) She's coming our way.

(Everyone looks stage left and freezes as Abby approaches the table.)

**ABBY**

(trying to be nice but clearly snotty) Hey, Megan. Did you get new glasses? They are SO pretty. Really... did your mom help you pick them out?

**FEAR**

(freaked out but trying to whisper) How should Megan answer her? There is NO good answer.

**LOGIC**

If Megan says her mom did help her pick them out - social death. If she says that she picked them out herself, and Abby doesn't like them, social death. It's a lose-lose situation.

**CONFIDENCE**

(adjusts glasses) But they are cute! There is nothing to worry about. I'm already freaked out enough!

**WORRY**

(slides down in the chair trying not to be seen) Don't bring me into this.



**APPEARANCE**

Don't other girls have these frames? Megan bought these because other girls had them too.

**WORRY**

If other girls have these frames, then why is Abby asking US?

**BLAME**

YOU chose these frames, Appearance. YOU need to come up with an answer for Megan. She's flying blind here. Pardon the glasses pun.

**SADNESS**

What if I make Megan just start crying? Will Abby go away if I do that?

**HAPPINESS**

There is no reason to cry, Sadness. WE LOVE these glasses. I'm sure Abby loves them too and just wants to know where she can buy a pair.

**PLEASER**

Let's just tell her where we bought them. That's what she wants, right?

**WORRY**

I'm not so sure. I didn't like the tone of her question.

**LOGIC**

We are losing track of her question. She just wants to know if Megan's mom picked them out for her. Let's have Megan answer no, and then go right back to eating.

**ALL BRAIN PARTS**

(in unison) No she didn't, Abby.

(Everyone takes a big bite out of his/her sandwich trying not to look up. No one responds for 5 seconds. Abby turns and walk back off stage left.)

**HAPPINESS**

(elated) It worked! She walked away!

**CONFIDENCE**

Of course, it worked.

(Happiness digs into lunch box and pulls out a juice box.)

**HAPPINESS**

(thrilled) JUICE BOX!

(All others quickly pull out the exact same juice box from the lunch boxes and begin sipping.)

**APPEARANCE**

(excited) Oh my gosh, Jax is heading this way! He is looking right at Megan!

**CONFIDENCE**

Oh course, he is looking at Megan. She is AMAZING!

**HAPPINESS**

I LOVE, Jax! He is so cute!

**PLEASER**

I hope Jax asks me to go paint balling with him. I love paint balling.

**LOGIC**

You HATE paint balling, Pleaser.

**PLEASER**

I'm sure I would love it with HIM.

**WORRY**

I have a bad feeling again. Why would Jax want to talk with me?

**FEAR**

It's a trap. I'm sure it's a trap.

**BLAME**

I bet Abby sent him over just to mess with us. She is always doing that.

**SADNESS**

(begins to cry) Oh no... I'm going to cry again...

**HAPPINESS**

Turn off the water works, Sadness. He's here!

(Jax enters stage left.)

**JAX**

(kindly) Hey, Megan.

**ALL BRAIN PARTS**

(in unison - each with their own personality- a collective big breath) Hey, Jax.

**JAX**

(nervously) I wanted to let you know that I'm having a paint balling birthday party this Saturday. I was hoping you could come and be on my team... I mean... if you have nothing else going on.

**FEAR**

(loud and panicked) ALERT! ALERT! PROJECT PAINT BALL IS A GO! THIS IS AWFUL! MEGAN CAN'T PAINT BALL!!!!

**WORRY**

(nervously) What if Megan falls while playing?

**HAPPINESS**

(with a smile) What if she doesn't?

(Ambient cafeteria noise increases gradually.)

**CONFIDENCE**

Happiness is right. Megan has GREAT balance. She's got this. I bet she takes everyone out and wins the entire game! Boy, will Jax LOVE that!

**PLEASER**

Megan should just say YES!

**BLAME**

(pointing at Pleaser) Pleaser, you are going to ruin this!

**LOGIC**

Everybody calm down! We need to think this through. Is he asking to just be nice? Is he asking because he is asking EVERYONE in the lunchroom? Is he asking because Abby dared him to ask Megan - just so he can make fun of her? We need to know.

**FEAR AND WORRY**

(in unison) You are starting to sound like us!

**SADNESS**

Oh, no... (starts crying) We are losing LOGIC! THIS IS AWFUL!

(Ambient cafeteria noise increases even more.)

**CONFIDENCE**

(with force) STOP! Megan can do this! Enough with Fear, Blame, Worry, Sadness, Pleasing, and LOGIC! Happiness and I believe in Megan. She is a great girl. Jax is a good guy. This is genuine, and Megan will have a great time at the paint ball party.

**HAPPINESS**

I feel so good inside! I think we should give Jax an answer that lets him know that we really want to go!

**CONFIDENCE**

Okay, Happiness, you lead this one.

(Happiness stands up on the chair and looks at everyone and gives the signal, and the group prepares and then screams the answer.)

**ALL BRAIN PARTS**

(yelling with enthusiasm) WE WOULD LOVE TO GO!

(Ambient cafeteria noise stops abruptly and all brain parts freeze in shock at their actions.)

**JAX**

(surprised) We? Okay, I guess you can bring a friend. See you there, Megan! (Jax exits stage left.)

**HAPPINESS**

WE DID IT!

**CONFIDENCE**

I told you it would work!

**BLAME**

Way to go, Happiness!

**LOGIC**

What? No blame?

**BLAME**

(surprised) I guess I'm blaming Happiness for doing something good!

**SADNESS**

I... I... I don't feel like crying! This is a new feeling!

**PLEASER**

I just love all of us so much right now.

**FEAR**

I feel... nothing.

**WORRY**

Me too! (looks around) Except, does anyone else notice that the entire lunchroom is looking at us now?

**APPEARANCE**

Looking at us? We can't have them looking at us. Only weird kids get "looked at."

**FEAR**

Oh no, something is about to happen. I can feel it. That good feeling is gone now.

**CONFIDENCE**

We are fine. What could happen?

(Enter Mrs. Finnegan with bullhorn.)

**MRS. FINNEGAN**

(angrily) Miss Megan. Did you not hear that we were on an ORANGE LEVEL warning for noise in the lunchroom?

**ALL BRAIN PARTS**

(in unison) No, I heard, Ma'am.

**MRS. FINNEGAN**

(sternly) So, Miss Megan, if you heard my warnings, why on Earth did you just scream out in the cafeteria?

**HAPPINESS**

(all by herself - cautiously but with a smile) ...Because I was happy?

(The rest of the brain parts looks worried.)

**MRS. FINNEGAN**

(calmly) Well, little missy. You'll be spending your after school with ME in detention. Be sure to bring your brain and your muscle. I have an essay for you to write and some erasers that need cleaning.

(Mrs. Finnegan exists.)

**BLAME**

(scowling) Way to go, team.

**LOGIC**

Actually, it could be worse.

**HAPPINESS**

(smiling) It was all worth it.

**SADNESS**

(curious) Will you at least let me cry when I call mom and tell her Megan has to stay after school?

**PLEASER**

Sure, Sadness. THAT would be the perfect time to cry.

**SADNESS**

(joyfully) Yeah! (blows nose)

**APPEARANCE**

Hey, maybe the cool kids in detention will think we are cool now too. BONUS FOR US!

**CONFIDENCE**

We've got this. Essay writing. WE ROCK AT THAT!

**WORRY**

(nervously) Yeah, but did you hear what she said banging those erasers?

**FEAR**

(scared) Oh no... not him...

(Muscle walks on stage right and goes right up to the table.)

**MUSCLE**

Did I hear muscle was needed? I'm here to save the day. (flexing obnoxiously) Cleaning erasers is sort of Megan's specialty. (more flexing) I've been training my entire life for this.

**LOGIC**

(shrugging shoulders) Well, at least we are not alone.

**PLEASER**

(flirting) Lookin' good, Muscle!

**MUSCLE**

(arrogantly) I know.

(lights out)

**CURTAIN**



## Discussion Questions

"Middle School Brain" is an original play created after years of teaching middle school students. There are so many parts of the middle school brain that are all demanding attention at this age. In this show, we just add a personality to the voice.

### Ask!

Make a list of the characters in your brain.

From the list, which characters are the loudest in your head?

Abby is not kind to Megan. What would you have answered if Abby had asked you who helped you pick out something?

Out of Megan's various brain voices, which one do you think is the most helpful? Why?





# Director/Production Notes

## Casting

Each brain character has a very distinct personality. HAVE FUN! It is possible to cast Jax and Muscle as the same actor. With a quick change, Mrs. Finnegan and Abby could be the same actress.

## Characterization

Here are some director's tips that you can share with your cast members.

**Appearance** – It's all about the looks and how everyone sees Appearance. Primp and look around to check on other as often as possible.

**Fear** – Jumpy and terrorized at everything, jerky movement will help sell your true fear.

**Happiness** – Sunshine, bubbles, puppies, and rainbow, you are light and pure joy.

**Worry** – This character is tight and slightly hunched over. Anxiety and stress surround Worry.

**Sadness** – Tears flow at every turn for Sadness. Turn the water works on for this character.

**Blame** – Everyone else is the problem. You are quick to point a finger!

**Pleaser** – Pleaser needs everyone else to be happy and right. He/She is a little clueless.

**Logic** – Clear-headed, intelligent, and no nonsense, Logic is always in control.

**Confidence** – Full of yourself and never does any wrong. Puffed up and a little over the top. Think of character as OVER confident.

**Muscle** – This character is cheesy, in love with his own muscles, and arrogant. Flex every way possible.

**Mrs. Finnegan** – Tired, irritated, and ready to catch SOMEONE making noise in the cafeteria. The bullhorn is her best friend.

**Abby** – Abby is snotty, rude, and a classic mean girl. Rolling your eyes, smirking, and flipping hair are trademarks for this nasty girl.

**Jax** – Jax is a nice boy who thinks Megan is cool. Small smiles and sparkling eyes are a fun way to go for this character.

## Costumes

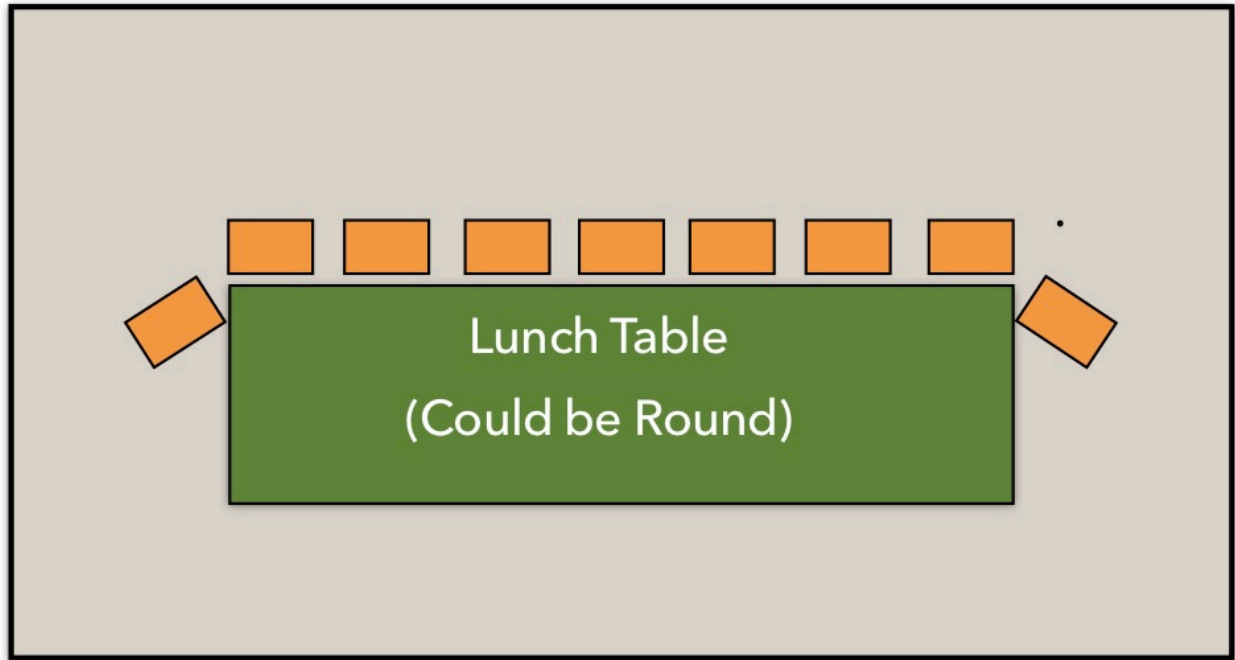
In a recent production, pink colored t-shirts were used with the brain part names on the front. Keys object to have include a bullhorn and a lunch sack with a sandwich and juice box.

**Set**

The play requires no set - just set pieces and props.

**Staging**

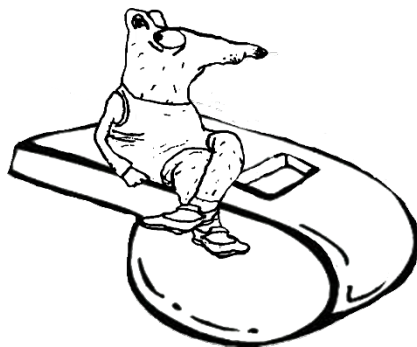
Middle School Cafeteria



Audience

**Curtain Call**

With a small ensemble cast, curtain class is clean and easy with everyone gathering center stage and bowing as one. It takes the whole team to make this piece work, so the bows should celebrate that collaboration.



Need another play?



Have a play to share?

