“RICH IS WHEN YOUR MONEY WORKS FOR YOU”
Teaching The Cost of Middle Class Life in *The Cosby Show*

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Preface

Had this Master thesis come with an accompanying sound file, one could have heard a long and loud cheering noise and probably some exclamations of sheer joy – in Dutch and English, of course. Because while the road towards this destination, the final piece of work for my study of English Language and Culture, has surely been interesting and worthwhile, I am truly glad I have finally arrived. For the past seven months, I have immersed myself in *The Cosby Show*, up to the point where I called my boyfriend ‘Cliff’ and woke up giggling in the middle of the night thinking of one of the show’s many funny situations. Working on my Master thesis was, without a doubt, not only the hardest and most demanding project of the past six years, but also the most exciting and enjoyable one. I feel very lucky to have been able to watch episodes of *The Cosby Show* and call it homework, but most of all I am very glad to have picked, with the help of Dr Dragstra, a topic that could keep me interested and motivated for such a long period of time.

Now that my work is done, I would like to thank both Dr Dragstra and Dr Visser in advance for reading and rating my thesis. A special thanks to Dr Dragstra, who, as my supervisor, has been very supportive and encouraging from start to finish, despite it taking a bit longer than intended, and who has been a great help in sorting out all kinds of difficulties. Also, thanks to my parents for allowing me to take advantage of their hospitality these last two weeks. Thank you for helping me through all the work by bringing me many cups of tea and the occasional glass of wine, and for reminding me that my bed was waiting for me. And, most of all, I want to thank my dear Matthias. I sincerely could not have done this without you. Thank you for putting up with me, for allowing me to talk nonsense to you to get my thoughts straightened out, and for being my personal Bill Cosby by making me smile every time you pulled a silly face right when I needed it.

Maaike van der Spoel

Introduction

It was 1984. The television sitcom, or situation comedy, had brought entertainment to the American audience since the early 1950’s, when shows such as *Amos ‘n’ Andy* (1951-1953) and *I Love Lucy* (1951-1957) were among the first to represent the sitcom genre. The American home life depicted in *I Love Lucy* was particularly well liked, and was followed by shows such as *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* (1952-1966), *Leave It to Beaver* (1957-1963), and *All in the Family* (1971-1979), all of which revolved around a nuclear family. And then, in September 1984, there was *The Cosby Show*: another sitcom about another nuclear family. This particular family, however, was black, wealthy, and happy and singlehandedly revolutionised the world of television entertainment.

*The Cosby Show* aired from September 1984 to April 1992, and was the product of the collaboration between producers Marcy Carsey and Tom Werner, NBC executive Brandon Tartikoff, and actor/comedian Bill Cosby. The idea for *The Cosby Show* originated from Cosby’s comedy monologues on parenting and the universality of family relationships, and throughout the show’s eight seasons Cosby had a very influential role in the making of *The Cosby Show*. He insisted on taping the show in New York and modelling the Huxtables after his own family. Cosby also controlled scripts, cast, writers, and public relations. Cosby’s commitment paid off: *The Cosby Show* was an instant success. The *New York Times* immediately labelled it “this season’s prime-time phenomenon” (Smith, qtd. in Fuller 35), and NBC, that broadcasted the show, became known as the “Cosby network” (Fuller 46) and grew to be the number one network in America (Fuller 1992; Jhally and Lewis 1992; Morreale 2003; Tueth 2005).
The Cosby Show revolved around the Huxtables, an African American family that consisted of father Cliff (Bill Cosby), mother Clair (Phylicia Rashad), and children Sondra (Sabrina LeBeauf), Denise (Lisa Bonet), Theo (Malcolm-Jamal Warner), Vanessa (Tempest Bledsoe), and Rudy (Keshia Knight Pulliam). In the course of the show’s eight seasons, the family came to include Sondra’s husband Elvin (Geoffrey Owens) and their twin babies, and Denise’s husband Martin (Joseph C. Philips) and his daughter Olivia (Raven Symoné). The Huxtables were wealthy—Cliff was a gynaecologist and obstetrician, and Clair a successful lawyer—and lived in a beautiful brownstone in Brooklyn. The principal characteristic of a sitcom is that it makes comedy out of everyday situations, as opposed to using slapstick, absurd foolishness, and one-liners to generate laughter. The Cosby Show’s family setting was ideal for the sitcom genre, and the storylines illustrated the humour that could be found in day-to-day life. Each episode highlighted a particular aspect of the Huxtables’ family life, from clarinet recitals to book reports, from family dinners to meeting new boyfriends, and from buying a new remote to buying a new car. In each situation, a problem, difficulty, or conflict would arise, and, following the rules of comedy, this would be humorously solved by the end of the episode. In The Cosby Show, humour was particularly found in the communication between the Huxtable family members, and this had very much to do with Cosby’s personal thoughts on parenting and family life. Cosby, who has a doctorate in education, devoted himself to restoring parental responsibility and control, making it his personal mission to teach the audience “real family values” and to “use the television set to help educate people” (Gold 42, 45). His intention was very compatible with the sitcom genre, as Marc argues the sitcom “graft[s] humour to moral suasion” and therefore cannot “thumb its nose at didacticism” (24).

The Cosby Show has been subject of numerous studies, which predominantly focused on reasons for the show’s success and its portrayal of African Americans and racism (see, for
instance, Downing’s essay “*The Cosby Show* and American Racial Discourse” (1988) on the show’s treatment of racism through sexism, family, and social class discourse, and Inniss and Feagin’s “*The Cosby Show*: The View From the Black Middle Class” (1995) on black middle class responses to the Huxtables’ utopian life). The two studies that were most important for this thesis are Fuller’s *The Cosby Show: Audiences, Impact, and Implications* (1992) and Jhally and Lewis’s *Enlightened racism: The Cosby Show, Audiences and the Myth of the American Dream* (1992). Both studies focused on *The Cosby Show*’s influence on its audience and audience responses to the show, basing their findings on American (Jhally and Lewis) and global (Fuller) audience studies. While these studies offer great insight into *The Cosby Show*’s success, its exemplary role, and its function in a racially divided society, they do not discuss how one of the most debated aspects of *The Cosby Show*, the Huxtables’ wealthy middle class lifestyle, is used as an influential and propagandistic tool. With this thesis I intend to fill this gap.

This Master thesis takes the educational mission of *The Cosby Show* as a starting point and focuses on one particular aspect in which both the members of the Huxtable family and the audience are educated: the cost of middle class life. One particular reason for choosing *The Cosby Show*’s educational mission as a starting point is the compatibility between humour and didacticism. A moralistic undertone is often marked as one of the main characteristics of the sitcom genre, as many of the shows, including *The Cosby Show*, convey social, moral, political and financial lessons through the episode plots without sounding explicitly didactic. In addition, the sitcom structure perfectly lends itself for lessons on the cost of middle class life. Sitcoms rely upon the plot’s denouement for restoring the balance that was disrupted earlier in a particular episode so that the viewer is left with a happy ending. As money is a subject extremely suitable for negotiation, and financial disagreements, whether about weekly allowances or the price of a new car, can be settled through bargaining
and dialogue, it perfectly fits sitcom’s ‘happy-ending-structure.’ In a broader perspective, Marc observes that sitcom’s “structurally guaranteed happy ending tended to celebrate the status quo of a capitalistic consumption-oriented society that was well worth dying for” (65), hereby marking the importance of money and consumerism, and thus middle class life, to a sitcom episode’s plot. *The Cosby Show* portrayal of an African American family makes the subject of teaching the cost of middle class life all the more interesting, considering the social and economical disadvantages African Americans face in American society. Analysing the Huxtables’ attitude towards the financial side of their middle class life could lead to interesting findings on how African American reality is transferred to the screen, and on how the African American middle class fights for a place among the white middle class. In this thesis I hope to answer the following questions: how is the theme of the cost of middle class life presented in selected episodes of *The Cosby Show*, how does the show interpret and present various teaching relationships, how are the show’s financial lessons taught to the Huxtable family members and the show’s audience, and how do these lessons and the ideology created accordingly fit American ideologies?

Chapter one sets out a socioeconomic framework for later analyses and interpretations, by considering various aspects that contribute to a greater understanding of *The Cosby Show*’s social influence and its place in American society. Chapter two describes and analyses selected episodes that I consider representative of the cost of middle class life in order to illustrate how the cost of middle class life is an important source for laughter and education in *The Cosby Show*. Chapter three turns attention to teaching relations within the Huxtable family, by analysing the various ways in which the family members teach and are taught lessons on the function of money in their family and money in middle class society. Finally, chapter four puts *The Cosby Show*’s educational mission in a broader perspective by turning
attention to the show’s influence on its audience and how the view on middle class life propagated by the Huxtables fits American ideologies.
Chapter One

“RICH IS WHEN YOUR MONEY WORKS FOR YOU”¹
SOCIOECONOMIC BACKGROUND TO THE COSBY SHOW

In order to successfully contextualise The Cosby Show’s treatment of the cost of middle class life and the show’s propagandistic nature, it is necessary to understand not only the socioeconomic circumstances of the American middle class, but also the influence and significance of The Cosby Show as a product aimed at appealing to a broad audience. Consequently, the aim of this first chapter is to provide the socioeconomic background to The Cosby Show, against which later analyses and interpretations can be set. I will first discuss the social nature of television, before examining the function of The Cosby Show by considering its significance, its impact on the audience and reactions to the show. Then, I will consider the socioeconomic circumstances by turning attention to American middle class ideologies, the influence of race on wealth and class, and African American attitudes towards consumerism.

THE SOCIAL NATURE OF TELEVISION

The Cosby Show is a television product, aimed at attracting and entertaining a large number of viewers and encouraging them to identify themselves with the characters, situations and events they see on-screen. According to Tueth, the intrinsic nature of television comedy is threefold: it is social, literal and religious. It is literal since comedic characters and plots show

¹ Clair to Vanessa in the episode “Vanessa’s rich” (season 3, episode 8). When Vanessa complains about being rich after she is called a ‘stuck up rich girl’ at school, Clair explains that they are not rich: “rich is when your money works for you, not when you work for the money - and we work hard for the money” (17:30-17:34). This quote not only emphasises the starting point of this thesis, education in The Cosby Show, but also illustrates two different approaches to what it means to be rich. I therefore consider this quote particularly representative of this chapter, in which both The Cosby Show’s social nature and the discrepancy between the black middle class and white middle class are discussed.
awareness of literary traditions and use literature as a source of inspiration, and it is religious since it uses laughter to confront universal and moral issues such as fear and forgiveness (1-2). Most important here is, however, television comedy’s social nature. Tueth describes television comedy as a form of art that, although it uses a timeless set of techniques to generate laughter, depends heavily on contemporary and identifiable images and conversations to reach out to its audience (1). To put it more bluntly: there is nothing funny about a character or show the viewer cannot relate to. Television comedy that acts in accordance with the concerned society’s characteristic qualities has a much greater chance of becoming and remaining a successful television product.

In the late 1940’s and the 1950’s, when television took an upward course towards becoming the number one mass medium of the twentieth century, the television sets in the American households had an important role in providing post-World War II America with a feeling of togetherness (Tueth 11-12). Tueth describes the function of the television set as “nothing less than the new family hearth, encouraging family cohesiveness and [...] promoting patriotism and other traditional American values” (12). Television promoted and stimulated family life and allowed parents and children to be entertained, together, in their own living rooms.

Evidently, the central position of the television set in the American home provided a perfect opportunity for television to convey family values to the American public, and The Cosby Show tried to do just that. A great number of viewers could be reached through television, since by 1960 almost ninety percent of American households owned a television set (Spigel 1). When The Cosby Show was in its fourth season, in 1988, as much as 98 percent of American households had at least one television set (Fuller 36). The Cosby Show was one of many shows that used television’s ability to cater for a broad public to celebrate family tradition and reflect a sometimes highly idealised version of family life, including its values.
and norms. I argue that the social nature of television as defined by Tueth seems to have a deeper meaning than ‘merely’ the necessity for contemporary words and ideas to relate to the society involved. Not only did television prove to have social value in bringing families together in post-war America, but television also “portrays ‘appropriate’ and ‘inappropriate’ social relations, defines norms and conventions, provides ‘common sense’ understandings, and articulates the preoccupations and concerns that define particular historical moments” (Morreale xi).

**APPEAL OF THE COSBY SHOW**

*The Cosby Show* was irrefutably the most popular American sitcom of the eighties: according to the ratings of the A.C. Nielson Company, America’s chief ratings collector, the show held the third place in the ratings list in its first 1984-1985 season, and took the first place the next four seasons (Fuller 37; Hunt, par. 2). But what were the reasons for *The Cosby Show*’s immense popularity, and in what ways was the show criticised?

One of the first reviews *The Cosby Show* received after the airing of the pilot episode came from the New York Times: “In unadorned outline, this is just another family sitcom with loveable Mom and Pop struggling to raise their frisky but loveable children. [...] This particular family happens to be black but its lifestyle and problems are universal middle-class” (qtd. in Fuller 35). Several terms that are used in this particular review –family, black, lifestyle, universal, middle-class– became central terms in discussions of the strengths and weaknesses of *The Cosby Show*. One of the most applauded merits of *The Cosby Show* was the way in which it challenged the stereotypical and mostly negative portrayal of African Americans on television and in films thus far, by offering the American public a picture of a functional, loving and affluent black family. In the audience study conducted by Jhally and Lewis, black as well as white viewers expressed their relief at finding a ‘new’ black image to
relate to: “I really like it [...] because it shows black people are not like the whites think they are” (82). Another aspect that was highly appraised by both black and white viewers was the believability of the show and its realistic representation of family life. A white respondent in the Jhally and Lewis study compares the credibility of *The Cosby Show* to other sitcoms when saying: “I think that *Cosby* is much more true to life; you can put yourself right into the picture. Just about everything they do has happened to you, or you’ve seen it happen” (38). Black audiences appreciated *The Cosby Show*’s realism not only because they could relate to the situations it presented, but also because it showed the universality of family life, stressing the comparability of black and white families (Jhally and Lewis 50). This accentuates precisely what Bill Cosby himself described as one of the main messages in *The Cosby Show*: “What we are telling everyone is that we are human beings, and we have all the same wants and needs that everyone else has” (Gold 44). In order to ensure the believability of the show, Dr Alvin Poussaint –or “*The Cosby Show*’s Secret Ingredient” (qtd. in Fuller 69)– was hired “to ensure all the situations presented in the program [were] possible in real-life families and that the content [focused] on what one can rather than cannot accomplish” (Merritt 92). Many viewers would say that he was very successful at his job.

Despite *The Cosby Show* broadening the spectrum for African American portrayals on television, the position of the Huxtables as an upper middle class, blissful family was also source for criticism. While viewers acknowledged the close resemblance between the Huxtables’ family life and their own, they simultaneously questioned the show’s realism because of its lack to represent “the everyday struggle of living” (Jhally and Lewis 42). The predominantly carefree world of the Huxtables had an “airbrushed quality about it” (42) and failed to integrate the downsides of life. The credibility of the upper middle class position of this African American family was also questioned. Black and white viewers expressed that the affluent lifestyle of the Huxtables by no means represented the lifestyle of most black
people and that it neglected the poor social and economic conditions most African Americans lived in. A black respondent said: “It’s like white America. [...] I mean I like to see the struggle a bit because it’s not at all like that for black America” (85). Particularly striking about this response is that the man talks of the Huxtables’ lifestyle as portraying what white America is like. This highlights the uniqueness of the Huxtables: the idea of a black upper middle class family is so strange to black (and white) people that they talk about them as being white. This sentiment is reflected in the joke that The Cosby Show is like an Oreo cookie: black on the outside, white within (Jhally and Lewis 53). In response to these criticisms, Cosby argued that the show did address social issues such as sexism and manhood, and that the show did not function as a means to provide images of “blackness,” but rather focused on the loving and respectful relationship between parents and children, which was universal (Inniss and Feagin 695-696).

IMPORTANCE OF THE COSBY SHOW

Next to being an important source for family entertainment and an important commercial success for NBC, The Cosby Show proved its significance in initiating a major change in the portrayal of African Americans on television, and in revitalising the situation comedy, presenting a return to family values on television.

The Cosby Show’s portrayal of successful black characters arose from Bill Cosby’s deep concern with the quality of television entertainment. Not only had television become “a showcase for tastelessness, perpetuating and defining a bread-and-circuses mentality into a feeding frenzy of garishness with a nod toward baseless voyeurism” (Roman xv), but also black characters on television were continuously portrayed in degrading roles that were “the worst kind of stereotyping” (Poussaint, qtd. in Jhally and Lewis 2). Cosby, himself a father of five, decided that instead of removing all the television sets from his house he would offer the
American public a show in which black characters would be shown with their dignity and humanity intact (Gold 42). *The Cosby Show* gave America a new and improved image of what it meant to be black. This new image, however, was not only positive: it resulted in severe criticism on how the show negatively influenced race relations by unjustly suggesting that African Americans had overcome racial discrimination. After all, the Huxtables proved that ‘even’ black Americans could attain a wealthy lifestyle, and consequently offered the show’s audience “a false sense of equality and equal opportunity,” as the Huxtables in fact represented the exception to the rule (Jhally and Lewis 86).

The importance of *The Cosby Show* in revitalising the situation comedy is closely connected to what above was called the tastelessness of television. In a time when commercial success could only be realised, it seemed, by broadcasting a mixture of violence, sex and abusive language, Cosby proved that there was still room for family entertainment (Klein 42). *The Cosby Show* returned to what in the post-war years of the 1950’s had been the central thought behind situation comedy: representing domestic family life and illustrating the humour in day-to-day situations (Morreale 4; Tueth 53). As is evident from *The Cosby Show*’s ratings, the show serviced the audience’s need for a more family oriented program. The success of the show started a revival in situation comedies on American television. In 1983, before Cosby’s show aired, the top ten of television shows included only one sitcom; three years later, seven (Tueth 165). Cosby filled the weekly half-hour timeslot with a show parents and children could watch together, relating to and learning from the situations the show presented. The social function of television as it was described for the 1950’s, when television was “the new family hearth,” thus seemed to be revitalised together with the sitcom genre.

**IDEOLOGIES OF THE MIDDLE CLASS**

In order to constructively analyse *The Cosby Show*’s lessons on the cost of middle class life at
a later point in this thesis, I first need to answers several questions concerning the socioeconomic circumstances of the American middle class, to which The Cosby Show’s Huxtable family belongs. What exactly is middle class, what are the ideologies of the American middle class, and how did the African American middle class experience these ideologies?

To identify socioeconomic status from a sociological point of view, three factors are considered: occupation, education and income. In the middle class, occupation is characteristically white-collar, a college degree is the appropriate educational level and yearly income is between $25,000 and $50,000 (Conley 91; Oliver and Shapiro 70; Pattillo-McCoy 97). Objectively, these three criteria must be met to be considered a member of the American middle class. Subjectively, members of the middle class are generally believed to show certain behaviour that makes them identifiable as belonging to the middle class: they “mow their lawns, go to church, marry, vote [...], work, own property, and so on” (Pattillo-McCoy 98).

The American middle class is also characterised by ideologies that express ideas characteristic to the middle class. The most significant concept in American society, and in the middle class in particular, is the American dream: “the dream that all Americans will have the opportunity through hard work to build a comfortable middle class life” (Garfinkle 12). Socioeconomic success and upward mobility are central themes within the pursuit of this dream; both Conley and Hochschild argued that getting ahead and being economically successful are intrinsically linked to being American (88; 55). Middle class ideologies are typically concerned with achieving the ideals of financial success and upward mobility, and securing a promising future for their children. To be successful requires strong bonds with friends and family, religious dedication and making valuable contributions to society (Hochschild 59). Middle class parents are expected to strongly emphasise education and
consider academic schooling vital in becoming a successful professional. They commit themselves to cultivating their children to ensure “they are not excluded from any opportunity that might eventually contribute to their advancement” (Lareau 5). Oliver and Shapiro share this view by arguing that the upbringing, education and social contacts of middle class children eventually allow them to do well in life, emphasising financial success (64).

In *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race and Family Life*, Lareau discusses what it is that middle class children learn and what the ultimate goal of these lessons is. Her research showed that middle class families engage in “concerted cultivation” in raising their children, in which “parents actively foster and assess their children’s talents, opinions, and skills” (238). As a result, middle class children, whether black or white, showed a “sense of entitlement”: they consider themselves individuals with the right to pursue their personal dreams and are comfortable in interacting, reasoning and negotiating with adults (2, 6, 31). Ultimately, concerted cultivation aims at providing middle class children with a broad spectrum of possibilities and opportunities to become both socially and economically successful.

While speaking of a black middle class as opposed to a white middle class essentially seems racist, it is significant to make that distinction when discussing the ideologies of the middle class. In general, African American middle class ideologies can be regarded equal to those of the white middle class. As a result of the history and position of African Americans in American society, however, African American ideologies include “a commitment to improving the situation of the black poor, and to civil rights more generally” (Pattillo-McCoy 100). African Americans living the American middle class dream generally feel a strong responsibility towards the black community. Through religious institutions and social services, socially and financially successful African Americans aim to support less fortunate blacks (Pattillo-McCoy 100). The African American society is very aware of the fact that,
despite the forms of emancipation the civil rights movement brought about, blacks are continuously confronted with social inequality in their quest for the American dream. According to Hochschild, this results in a strong sense of commonality among African Americans and even leads to “the paradox of succeeding more and enjoying it less” (122), where the happiness and well-being of affluent African Americans is affected by the realisation that their success is not granted to other blacks.

**RACE AND CLASS**

Despite their comparable ideologies, the African American middle class is by no means equal to the white middle class. The premise of the American dream is equality: *all* Americans have the right and opportunity to realise a middle class lifestyle. With the passing of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 and the Voting Rights Act in 1965, this equality was theoretically achieved. In reality, however, blatant discrimination was replaced by economic inferiority (Conley 88; Jhally and Lewis 72). Initially, up to the early 1970’s, the civil rights movement resulted in great improvement in social and economic circumstances for black Americans. Since the second half of the 1970’s, though, economic conditions worsened drastically, and statistics on the wealth gap between African Americans and white Americans are as astounding as they are disturbing.\(^2\) In 1984, black households held only twenty cents for every dollar of financial assets owned by white households. The median income of a white household in 1988 was $30,853; for a black household this was $18,098 (Jhally and Lewis 62; Oliver and Shapiro 23-25). Evidently, for an African American to reach the $25,000 mark would be quite an accomplishment, given the disadvantages to overcome. However, even when that mark is reached, conditions in the black middle class are still completely different

\(^2\) I focus on the 1980’s, as *The Cosby Show* was predominantly broadcast in that period.
from conditions in the white middle class.

In *Black Wealth/White Wealth*, Oliver and Shapiro examine how black wealth fundamentally differs from white wealth and how this wealth gap arose. They consider the concept of wealth to be particularly important, as it is an aspect of economic status that, as opposed to income, describes not how much money one has to spend but rather signifies the ability “to create opportunities, secure a desired stature and standard of living, or pass class status along to one’s children” (2). Wealth is related to property, to resources that are transferred between generations. Oliver and Shapiro illustrate that black and white Americans do not have equal opportunities in accumulating wealth. They give three important sociological reasons for wealth inequality: 1) state policies, such as the Federal Housing Authority, create unequal opportunities for black and white Americans to accumulate wealth, for instance by denying black families loans to purchase property in a white neighbourhood; 2) in the years after World War II, blacks were prohibited to set up a business on the open market, denying them business opportunities and the chance to hand over business profits to later generations; 3) the long history of social and economic deprivation of African Americans resulted in the “sedimentation of racial inequality,” where the cumulative disadvantages of blacks sediment into the social structure (39, 46-47, 51). Evidently, African Americans are continuously confronted with social and economic inequalities that obstruct them in building assets to generate wealth (for every $100 worth of wealth possessed by a white man, a black man has only $8 to $19 (Oliver and Shapiro 97)). By being denied a chance to generate wealth, African Americans are also denied a chance to secure what Oliver and Shapiro above called ‘a desired standard of living.’

**AFRICAN AMERICAN ATTITUDES TOWARDS CONSUMERISM**

Next to the sociological reasons for wealth inequality that were named in the previous section,
other reasons for the wealth gap between black and white Americans are the small amount of resources African Americans receive through inheritance, their lacking investment in human capital, and their excessive spending of money (Oliver and Shapiro 36). The latter I consider particularly interesting to examine in the light of this thesis. After World War II, it was believed that black Americans used consumerism as a way to integrate and to express their ‘whiteness.’ In “Presenting the Black Middle Class,” Chambers first states that this notion was not that straightforward and that not all blacks wished to be white, and continues by emphasising the work of recent scholars who argued that a consumer lifestyle was used by African Americans to command respect (55). The ultimate goal of the glorification of black consumerism was, however, “access to the social, political and economic rights for which [black consumers] strove” (Chambers 64). By spending their money on what seemed to be standard items in the white middle class, such as cars and watches, African Americans demonstrated their equality to the whites. Consequently, consumerism became a way to mark black man’s position in society. The African American ideology of equality is an important influence on the way in which black Americans were encouraged to manage their money. Due to the responsibility wealthy African Americans felt towards less fortunate blacks, they strived for a better future for the entire African American society. As Chambers puts it, “the success of one translated in some small way to improving perceptions of the group” (65). Making use of the opportunities consumerism offered thus seemed to be a group ideal rather than an individual goal.

The socioeconomic background to *The Cosby Show* presented in this chapter will prove to be an important contribution to my analyses and interpretations of the show’s treatment of the cost of middle class life and its educational effort. My discussion of television’s social nature and *The Cosby Show’s* significance and impact is important for understanding the show’s
influential and educational role in American society. The discussion of middle class ideologies and issues of race and wealth will help to put the relation between American reality and the propagandistic nature of *The Cosby Show* in perspective.
Chapter Two

“OUR PRIVILEGE AND OUR INVESTMENT”\(^3\)
MONEY IN *THE COSBY SHOW*: THE COST OF MIDDLE CLASS LIFE

Whereas the previous chapter provided the socioeconomic background to this thesis, the present chapter will function as a starting point for later analyses on financial education in *The Cosby Show*. This chapter will be descriptive and inventory, listing episodes of *The Cosby Show* that are particularly representative of the most prominent money-related theme in the show: the cost of middle class life. In the first section of this chapter I will shortly elucidate the method used to select representative episodes, after which I will describe and analyse the episodes to illustrate the Huxtables’ dealing with the cost of middle class life.

**METHOD**

My study of financial education in *The Cosby Show* started by selecting and viewing appropriate episodes from all eight seasons of the show. I selected the episodes with the help of two internet episode guides that provided a fairly detailed account of all *Cosby Show* episodes (Appendix A). The majority of the episodes viewed was selected on the basis of the episode guides’ summaries, and a small number of episodes was viewed because they were referred to in either secondary literary sources or in episodes of *The Cosby Show* itself, or because of my personal interest. My selection of episodes was predominantly based on the

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\(^3\) Clair to Theo in the episode “Theo’s future” (season 8, episode 13). When Theo gets offered a job interview he is relieved to be able to “stop sponging off of” his parents. Clair explains that she and Cliff never thought of their financial support in that way, saying: “paying for your education, well that’s our privilege and an investment” (17:24-17:28). This quote emphasises the parents’ positive attitude towards investing in their children’s future, as well as their realisation that their financial ability to do so is not self-evident. This quote is therefore representative of this chapter, in which the various ways in which the Huxtables deal with the cost of their middle class life are discussed.
presence of situations in which money played or could play a role, regardless of the extent or importance of that role, rather than on the dramatic or aesthetic significance of the episodes. A total number of 65 episodes was viewed, and 42 of these dealt with money. I made a schematic overview of the 42 episodes (Appendix B), after which the various roles and functions of money were considered in order to categorise the episodes. I distinguished one theme that I considered to be the most significant recurring money-related theme in *The Cosby Show*, namely the cost of middle class life. This theme manifests itself through three sub-themes: the cost of children, the cost of living, and children’s dependence and independence. Of the 42 selected episodes, I classified 26 under one or more of the three sub-themes (Appendix C). The role of money in the remaining 16 episodes was either irrelevant to the selected sub-themes, too insignificant to the episode’s plot, or the episode presented a non-recurrent theme. For each of the three sub-themes, I selected several episodes that I considered to be particularly representative of the sub-theme. This selection was based on the extent to which money was pivotal to the episode’s plot, and on the suitability of money-related situations in the episode to exemplify the sub-theme. These selected episodes function as primary examples in illustrating how money functions in each particular sub-theme; the other episodes are secondary examples.

**THE COST OF MIDDLE CLASS LIFE**

In considering the extent to which financial issues affect and shape family relations in *The Cosby Show*, one theme I regard essential: the cost of middle class life. I believe the Huxtables’ position as a wealthy middle class family is of great importance to the family’s attitude towards finances and how both parents and children handle financial situations, making it a suitable starting point for an analysis of financial education in *The Cosby Show*. The cost of middle class life is a theme that is continuously present in the show’s money-
related scenes since it manifests itself in various sub-themes that cover different facets of the cost of middle class life. The cost of children, the cost of living, and children’s dependence and independence are closely connected to each other and together illustrate how the cost of middle class life is fundamental to the Huxtables’ family economics.

THE COST OF CHILDREN

One of the most important and noticeable ways in which the cost of middle class life manifests itself in The Cosby Show’s Huxtable family, is in the support of the family’s children. In The Cosby Show’s episodes, emphasis is on the cost of hobbies, after school activities and education, rather than on expenses for food, shelter, clothing, etcetera. Evidently, all these expenditures together add up to a large sum: a 1988 study by Lazear and Micheal showed that parents on average spent about 38 percent of the family income on their children (Mayer 77). Closely connected to the amount of money spent on a child is the idea that children’s well-being is largely dependent on their parents’ economic possibilities. Mayer discusses the investment theory (76), which argues that “income affects children’s outcomes by affecting a family’s consumption and investments in its children” (81). The assumption is made that affluent parents invest more in their children financially and culturally, and that this benefits children’s well-being (77). The episodes representative of the cost of children illustrate not only how Cliff and Clair Huxtable consider the cost of investing in their children and the desired effects of their investments, but also the Huxtable children’s attitudes toward the money invested in them.

The episode “Theo’s flight” (3–74) demonstrates that while Cliff and Clair show a very positive attitude towards stimulating their children’s activities, their willingness to give

4 Season 3, episode 7.
financial support depends on the cost and the children’s sincerity. When Theo wants to take flying lessons, Clair reminds Cliff of the agreement they made: if the children would show sincere interest in something, they would encourage them. Despite this inspiring approach, which leads them to agree to let Theo take an introductory lesson, both Cliff and Clair show their doubts about their support. Clair expresses how she only agreed on Theo taking the introductory lesson to test his sincerity, and Cliff also questions if flying truly is Theo’s dream by confronting him with his previous ‘dreams’ of playing tennis and playing the guitar. Cliff eventually agrees to pay for half of Theo’s lessons, but only after he has illustrated the cost of buying or renting a plane and taking flying lessons. While Cliff’s promise leads Theo to believe in his parents’ support, Cliff actually sabotages Theo’s plan to fly. Cliff seems very much aware of the fact that Theo will abandon his dream once he understands what it will cost him, but by offering financial support nonetheless Cliff will not lose face as a supporting parent willing to invest in his children.

The episode “Call of the Wild”(4-1) presents two examples of how the Huxtable parents and children have different attitudes towards financial support. Eldest daughter Sondra announces she plans to run a wilderness store with her husband Elvin rather than going to law school like she intended. Clair is furious: “After all the money we spent sending you to Princeton? Sondra you owe us $79,648 and 22 cents and I want my money, now!” (10:02-10:15). Clair’s response illustrates not only the cost of providing Sondra with a good education, but also her fury at the fact that the money spent on her Princeton education did not have the desired effect. By asking her investment back, Clair underlines the great sum Sondra is about to put to waste, and she confronts her with the disrespect she shows her parents by neglecting their investment. Also in “Call of the wild,” Theo shows his parents a ‘business plan’ that demonstrates his misplaced expectations of Cliff and Clair’s financial support. Theo suggests how his parents can help him set up his own business after high school: “All you
have to do is give me the money you were going to spend on my college education, now” (21:40-21:46). Theo reasons that he will cost his parents money anyway, that it is irrelevant to which use the money is put, and that he is simply asking for his share of his parents’ capital. To Cliff and Clair, this is not a desired way to invest in their children, as Clair’s short but telling advice to Theo implies: “If I were you, I would get out of this room while I was ahead and alive” (23:50-23:57).

The episode “57 varieties” (5-25) exemplifies Cliff and Clair’s attitude towards spending money on their children’s education. Theo needs $1500 to go on a school trip to Egypt. Cliff and Clair consider $1500 “a lot of money to give to somebody only making C’s” (4:31-4:35), hereby immediately stressing the relationship between financial investment and academic development. Cliff illustrates this attitude when Theo’s friends argue that the trip will have a good influence on Theo. Cliff replies: “If [Theo] does [go], you two are to be held responsible, and if he comes back the same as he was, you owe us $1500” (6:35-6:45). While Cliff seems to be joking around, there is a serious undertone in his and Clair’s expectation that Theo will be positively affected by the trip. They do not take this financial decision lightly, and expect Theo to understand their reasons to either give him the money or not. Eventually, they agree to let him go to Egypt. In a later episode, “Theo’s future” (8-13), Clair expresses her and Cliff’s point of view when she explains to Theo: “paying for your education, well that is our privilege, and our investment” (17:24-17:28). The parents have their children’s well-being at heart, and giving them options by providing them with a good education and investing in their personal development is their parental responsibility.

THE COST OF LIVING

While the middle class lifestyle of the Huxtable family in The Cosby Show was criticised by both viewers and scholars, it is their position as a middle class family that makes the role of
money in their household such an important and interesting one to consider. The American middle class seems to revolve around one main and omnipresent idea: to get ahead, both socially and financially. Educational institutions and parents provide children with the necessary tools to achieve that much wanted socioeconomic success. While (academic) schooling teaches children basic skills and a predominantly theoretic understanding of the world, Cliff and Clair demonstrate how parents can educate their children in the practicalities of ‘the real world,’ and particularly its economic reality. The Huxtable children, and Cliff, are more than once confronted with the cost of living and what it means to be a member of the middle class. The episodes representative of the cost of living illustrate not only how the Huxtable children are educated on how the real world will treat them and their money, but also how the family deals with their middle class position.

The episodes “Pilot Presentation” (1-1) and “Theo’s Holiday” (2-21) exemplify how Theo’s naivety towards his future and the cost of living prompts his parents to teach him the financial realities of the real world. In “Pilot Presentation,” Theo informs Cliff that instead of going to college, he will just “get a job like regular people” (9:43-9:45). Cliff, provoked by Theo’s low grades and his indifferent attitude towards his future, uses Monopoly money to illustrate the financial realities of Theo’s future life as a ‘regular person.’ After handing Theo $1200 as a month’s salary, the financial wake-up call begins: Cliff first takes $350 for taxes (because “the government comes for the regular people first” (10:52-10:55)), and then, step by step, takes the remaining $850 for an apartment, bike and helmet, clothes and shoes, food and the cost of having a girlfriend. When Theo is left empty-handed, Cliff emphasises that that is what it means to be ‘regular people.’ Cliff not only educates his son about the real world but also provides Theo with an explanation for his parents’ disappointment in his school results: they have high expectations because they want him to be successful. In “Theo’s Holiday,” Theo, despite his bad financial habits, is not worried about how he will
handle his finances once he moves out: “when the time comes, I’ll be ready” (3:02-3:05). Theo’s confidence incites Cliff to turn the house into the real world, and all family members play roles to illustrate the financial situations Theo will find himself in when he leaves the parental home. When the landlord (Cliff) asks for first and last month’s rent and a security deposit and Theo is left with only $200 to buy modelling pictures, furniture and food, he soon learns that life is expensive. While Theo thought he would easily get by on the $2000 in play money he received, the president of the bank (Rudy) aptly describes his financial situation when she declines Theo’s loan application: “you have NOTHING!” (21:42-21:44). At the end of the day, Theo decides: “[the real world] is a lot tougher than I thought it would be, but you know what? So am I!” (23:04-23:08). Theo has a new and improved understanding of the cost of living and is better prepared to handle that financial reality.

The episode “Vanessa’s rich” (3-8) shows how their position as a middle class family affects the members of the Huxtable family in different ways. Cliff demonstrates his weakness towards the materialistic side of middle class life. When Cliff wants to go to Jake’s Appliance Store to buy a new television remote control, Clair is reluctant to let him go. She believes Cliff is addicted to buying appliances, calling him an “electronic gadget junkie” (8:13-8:16) and warning him about the temptations he will have to resist: “those gadgets are going to be sitting on the shelves looking at you and they are going to call and beg: Cliff, Cliff, come over here and buy me, buy me, buy me!” (8:30-8:38). After Clair orders Jake to sell Cliff nothing but a simple remote, Jake later reports back that Cliff had begged to sell him anything, even offering to pay regular prices for things on sale. Cliff’s behaviour in this episode is not new: when, in “The Juicer” (2-2), he bought a state of the art electric juicer, Clair reminded Cliff that it would “end up with the rest of the stainless steel, self-maintenance appliances in the appliance graveyard underneath [the] counter” (5:25-5:32). I see Cliff’s urge to consume not only as a manifestation of African Americans’ use of consumerism to
consolidate their middle class position, but also as a confirmation that materialism is at the heart of the middle class. Cliff seems to be particularly susceptible to the use of materialism as a status symbol, to express and strengthen his position as a member of the middle class. While Cliff indulges himself in the luxuries of middle class consumerism, “Vanessa’s rich” also shows daughter Vanessa struggling with the Huxtables’ wealth. When her friends tell others “about all the nice things” (15:56-15:57) the Huxtables have, particularly the $11,000 painting Clair bought, Vanessa is called a ‘stuck-up rich girl’ at school. Complaining about the strains of being rich, she blames her parents: “none of this would have happened if we weren’t so rich” (17:00-17:03). While Cliff quickly emphasises that he and Clair are the ones who are rich and Vanessa has nothing, Clair explains: “you are rich, not because of things but because you have a family that loves you” (18:29-18:38). Clair presents Vanessa with a new perspective on her middle class position, hereby opposing Cliff’s materialistic attitude.

CHILDREN’S DEPENDENCE AND INDEPENDENCE

The last sub-theme that illustrates the cost of middle class life in The Cosby Show focuses on how the way in which money is handled reflects the children’s dependence and independence. The five Huxtable children differ greatly in age – in the first season of The Cosby Show, Rudy is a five-year-old while Sondra is already in college – meaning Cliff and Clair are continuously faced with their children’s dependence and independence. The children depend on their parents to finance their education, and also depend on them for, for instance, food, clothing and their allowance. While Cliff and Clair have expressed their joy at sharing their wealth with their children, they also long for their children to stand on their own feet and to leave the parental house. Consequently, encouraging independence is an important aspect of Cliff and Clair’s parenting. The road to independence is, however, a long one, which continuously creates tension between children’s dependence and independence. The episodes
representative of this sub-theme illustrate both this tension and Cliff and Clair’s encouragement of independence.

The episode “Cyranoise de Bergington” (5-7) exemplifies how money functions both as a form of children’s dependence on their parents, and as a step towards independence. Rudy has a “business proposition” (1:19) for Cliff, which involves him giving her $31.05 to buy Clair a birthday present. Rudy offers: “I’ll work for it, I’ll do chores around the house, whatever you want me to do” (3:04-3:08), to which Cliff agrees. Despite considering it a lot of work for $31, Rudy cleans out the refrigerator and her bedroom. Much to Cliff’s dismay, Clair – ignorant of Cliff and Rudy’s deal – is impressed with Rudy’s work, wondering “how many children would be industrious enough to do something like this on their own” (8:31-8:35). She rewards Rudy with a special treat and a $2 bill, which Cliff immediately confiscates as soon as Clair leaves the room. When Cliff is satisfied with Rudy’s work he tells her she earned all the $31.05 and gives her back the $2 he took from her. The episode shows how the relationship between money and chores is twofold. Rudy exemplifies how her need for money leads her to work for the money, thereby demonstrating her financial dependence. Clair, on the other hand, exemplifies how good behaviour leads to a financial reward by giving Rudy $2, which she hopes will encourage Rudy’s independent behaviour.

The episodes “Theo’s dirty laundry” (6-21) and “Call of the Wild” (4-1) illustrate the tension that can exist between children’s dependence on their parents and their independence, and the way in which parental control affects independence. In “Theo’s dirty laundry,” Cliff and Clair find out that Theo secretly moved in with his girlfriend Justine while continuing to receive his parents’ money to pay for his own apartment. Theo is renting his apartment, bed and refrigerator to a friend and is saving all that money, together with the left-over money from his parents’ cheques, on a bank account. While Theo considers opening a savings account a sign of his ability to handle money wisely, Cliff and Clair are appalled by his
behaviour: “We sent you to college to get an education, not move in with your girlfriend or take money from us and do dishonest things with” (11:32-11:42). Tension is caused between, on the one hand, Theo’s dependence on his parents and their control over him because of that dependence, and, on the other hand, Theo’s desire to be independent. He feels he is ready to make his own decisions: “For 19 years, I’ve done everything you’ve wanted me to do. [...] Just because you guys give me money doesn’t mean you can control my life. And if you guys aren’t going to get behind us on this, then Justine and I will just have to figure out a way to do it on our own, and live our own lives” (12:40-13:80). Theo, distracted by his newfound sense of independence, disregards his obligation to show his parents the respect and honesty they expect in return for their financial support, leading to a disrupted balance between dependence and independence. This is also the case in “Call of the Wild,” in which Sondra’s decision not to go to law school conflicts with her parents’ wishes and expectations. Sondra’s sense of independence undermines the control Cliff and Clair exert through their financial support, and her responsibilities because of her financial dependence stand in the way of her independent choices.

The episode “Move it” (5-4) illustrates how there can also exist a balance between children’s dependence and independence. Cliff and Clair urge Sondra and Elvin, who are expecting twins, to move to a bigger and better apartment, and offer to help financially. Sondra and Elvin are offended and decline the offer: “We insist on supporting ourselves” (10:16-10:18). Though they show a confident attitude towards their financial independence, Sondra and Elvin quickly realise it is in their babies’ best interest to find a new apartment and agree to take up a loan with Cliff and Clair. They do, however, give a few conditions: “Number one: you have to charge us interest. [...] Number two: if we don’t pay you back within one year, you charge us a 5% penalty. [...] And number three: we offer you, as collateral, all of our furniture” (16:30-17:06). From these conditions I deduce that the soon-to-
be parents handle their loan very responsibly and that Sondra shows a development in her attitude towards her parents’ money since the “Call of the wild” episode in which she was disrespectful towards her parents’ investment. I consider the responsible and mature way in which Sondra and Elvin deal with their financial situation exemplary of a harmonious balance between dependence and independence.
Chapter Three

“DO YOU KNOW HOW MUCH WE PAID FOR THAT?” 5
TEACHING THE COST OF MIDDLE CLASS LIFE

The episodes I considered representative of how The Cosby Show deals with the cost of middle class life, together reveal how the family’s home economics function as a means to bring the Huxtable children up to be financially responsible members of middle class society. As I will show in this present chapter, education is at the heart of the Huxtables’ family life, and particularly the children are continuously educated on how money functions within the middle class and how they are expected to handle their personal finances as members of that middle class. I will first shortly introduce the idea of teaching in The Cosby Show, after which the various levels on which education takes place in the show will be discussed. Finally, I will turn attention to the lessons taught on the cost of middle class life.

TEACHING IN THE COSBY SHOW

In Sitcom: What It Is, How It Works, Taflinger describes the general plot of a domestic comedy, such as The Cosby Show, on the basis of five successive stages in the plot: problem, complications, crisis, climax and denouement. After one of the characters, usually a child, is presented with an often moral or emotional problem, the problem is first complicated by new developments. The crisis presents a turning point at which the situation could develop in different ways, which is followed by the climax that presents the results of the character’s

5 Cliff to Vanessa in the episode “Play it again, Vanessa” (season 1, episode 9). When Vanessa is reluctant to study for her clarinet recital, Cliff asks: “Do you know how much we paid for that [clarinet]? […] $245. […] Do you know what could be purchased with $245?” (8:04-8:16). This quote is exemplary of the way in which educational opportunities concerning the cost of middle class life arise and are seized in The Cosby Show, and therefore representative of this chapter in which teaching relationships within the Huxtable family are concerned.
decision or solution. Finally, the denouement shows how balance is restored and how the concerning character has learned a personal or life lesson (Taflinger 1996). This plot description underlines how teaching is inherent to situation comedy: in the end, there is always a lesson to be learned. This pattern is guiding in how Huxtable family handles the cost of middle class life, since the family members are taught financial lessons throughout the episodes that are representative for the family’s home economics. At times these lessons distinctly contribute to the episode’s plot, making the educational process a very conscious one, while at other times the lessons are not articulated but rather are taught discreetly or unconsciously. *The Cosby Show*’s objective to depict family relations in a contemporary American family is echoed in the teaching undertaken in the show, in which various teaching relations between the family members can be distinguished: parents teach children, parents teach one another, children teach their parents, and children teach one another.

**EDUCATION ENTHUSIASTS: CLIFF AND CLAIR**

In a video interview for the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, producers Carsey and Werner explained how *The Cosby Show* challenged other comedies, in which “the children always knew more than the parents,” by advocating a family life in which “parents [were] taking the household back” (chapter 3, 14:15-14:54). The pilot episode of *The Cosby Show* heralds this shift in control. Theo’s moving speech to Cliff, in which he pleads to be accepted and loved for the regular person he is, is in accordance with the portrayal of family relations in the renowned sitcoms of that time, in which the children knew more than their parents. Cliff, however, replies to Theo that his speech is “the dumbest thing [he has] ever heard” (17:55-17:57), accentuating his authority as a parent and signalling the show’s emphasis on parental control. With this in mind, it comes to no surprise that in the majority of teaching situations in *The Cosby Show*, the children are being educated by Cliff and Clair.
Family life continuously offers the Huxtable parents possibilities to consciously teach their children about the cost of middle class life, and I consider their determination to seize these educational opportunities as attesting to their understanding of their parental responsibilities. When Denise expresses her desire to buy a car in “Denise Drives” (2-7), they inform her about the cost of insurance, gas, parking and maintenance which Denise failed to take into account, and when Theo wants to take flying lessons in “Theo’s Flight” (3-7), Cliff explains to him the cost of flying. While Cliff and Clair seem to have their children’s interest at heart in these examples, I argue that their educational speeches can also be considered as safeguarding the parents’ interests at the expense of their children’s plans. Cliff and Clair feel hesitant about Theo’s dream to fly and do not approve of Denise’s intention to spend all her savings on a car, and by teaching them about the cost of owning a car and wanting to fly they lead their children to change their plans. I find it very interesting to see how Cliff and Clair Huxtable manage to control their children while making it seem as if the children make independent and conscious decisions. In doing so, the parents stimulate their children’s independence and confidence while in fact the parents are pulling the strings.⁶

In addition to Cliff and Clair’s conscious and direct teaching methods, some lessons are taught indirectly, through experience rather than teaching. The episode “Theo’s Holiday” (2-21), in which Cliff and Clair respond to Theo’s confident attitude about his future finances by turning the house into the real world, demonstrates the parents’ ability to know an

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⁶ Other episodes that exemplify Cliff and Clair’s conscious didacticism include “Play it again, Vanessa” (1-9) and “Say hello to a good buy” (3-15). In “Play it again, Vanessa,” Vanessa is reluctant to study for her clarinet recital, and Cliff explains to her that since he and Clair spent $245 on a clarinet, they expect her to make an effort in actually playing it, and to take responsibility for her clarinet solo. Vanessa is taught to take her parents’ financial investment seriously. In “Say hello to a good buy,” Cliff takes Theo to buy a new family car and teaches him the ins and outs of negotiating, explaining how even your clothes can influence the price you eventually pay: “When you go in to negotiate the price of a car, you can’t go in looking like you have a lot of money” (9:30-9:37). Cliff also explains that the price on the sticker is “the suggested retail price,” and that he is going to “negotiate on what will be the actual price” (9:42-9:55). Theo is actively taught the skills to handle a similar financial situation in the future himself.
educational opportunity when they see it, and their commitment to let their children learn by experience. Their willingness to pull out all the stops in order for Theo to learn a financial lesson is admirable. Instead of simply explaining to Theo the cost of renting an apartment and providing for himself, as Cliff did with the Monopoly money in the pilot episode, Cliff and Clair create a situation in which Theo can learn about the financial impediments of the real world himself. They do not just tell him about his financial future; they make him live it. By doing so, the financial lesson taught in this episode is at the same time a personal one, as Theo not only learns more about the cost of middle class life, but also about himself. His realisation that he is a lot more resilient than he thought he was signals an important step forward in being a responsible and successful member of middle class society.\(^7\)

In addition to imparting financial knowledge to their children, Cliff and Clair teach financial lessons to each other. This teaching level could in fact be more aptly described as Clair teaching Cliff about the financial realities of middle class life, considering the lack of examples in which Cliff teaches Clair. The teaching between the two parents is particularly concerned with the financial pitfalls of the middle class, a problem Cliff repeatedly struggles with. As was discussed in the previous chapter, Cliff is very susceptible to the material temptations of middle class, and Clair frequently attempts to educate Cliff on the value of material wealth by condemning Cliff’s proclivity to indulge himself in material luxuries.\(^8\)

\(^7\) Other episodes that exemplify Cliff and Clair’s indirect didacticism include “Off to the races” (2-25) and “It’s all in the game” (7-5). In “Off to the races,” Rudy experiences that she can make money by doing work. Clair rewards her financially for doing chores around the house, indirectly teaching Rudy that work and money are intrinsically linked. In “It’s all in the game,” Denise’s stepdaughter Olivia breaks the washing machine by putting crayons in it. When she apologises to Cliff, she offers to pay for it. Cliff comically discusses the cost of repairing the washing machine with Olivia, saying “the machine cost about two skillion dollars, […] and then another three skillion to have it repaired” (22:15-22:27). Olivia says she’ll save her allowance, which is “8 kabillion” a week. Without having explained it word for word, I believe Cliff does teach Olivia here an important lesson: that money can be used to make things better and to solve problems.

\(^8\) The episodes “The Juicer” (2-2), “Vanessa’s rich” (3-8) (both discussed in chapter two), “Theo’s dirty laundry” (6-21), and “Cliff and Jake” (7-24) all pay attention to Clair’s attempts to educate Cliff on the value of material
Despite her educational efforts, Clair feels compelled to intervene in Cliff’s spending habits and warns the owner of the appliance store not to sell anything to Cliff on several occasions. While Clair is portrayed as having the most responsible attitude towards spending money, *The Cosby Show* does present an example in which Cliff tries to teach Clair about the cost of material luxuries. When, in “The Auction” (2-14), Clair is determined to buy a family painting irrespective of its price, she seems to be falling for a similar financial and material pitfall as she continually tries to guard Cliff from. Cliff’s attempt to make Clair conscious of the amount of money she is about to spend is disregarded and his change to teach falls through. At a later point in this chapter, the way in which Clair eventually undertakes the teaching here will be further discussed.

**ATTEMPTING THE IMPOSSIBLE: THE HUXTABLE KIDS**

*The Cosby Show* presents several examples in which the Huxtable children express their own thoughts about financial situations or attempt to convince their parents of their financial knowledge and abilities. On account of the children’s intention to enlighten their parents on the children’s attitude towards the family economics, I consider their conversations and confrontations with Cliff and Clair to have an educational undertone, making this teaching relationship suitable to discuss here. The children’s attempts to teach their parents about the cost of middle class life are not accepted, though, as they interfere with Cliff and Clair’s powerful position as parents.

Though the Huxtable children’s critical attitude in several financial situations attests to

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wealth. In “Theo’s dirty laundry,” Cliff wants to buy a new kitchen rack via a television commercial. Clair reminds him that he already has the particular rack, and that it lies in a box in the basement. She demonstrates how Cliff is blinded in his financial decisions by his urge to buy new things. In “Cliff and Jake,” Clair asks the owner of the appliance store not to sell Cliff an electric sander, and reminds Cliff that he is weak when it comes to new appliances.
their independent thinking and their ability to voice their opinion, their critical and confident approach negatively influences their efforts to financially educate their parents. In “Denise Drives” (2-7) and “Rudy’s walk on the wild side” (6-18), Denise and Vanessa, respectively, bring a financial matter up for discussion in order to persuade their parents to adjust their view on the matter. When Cliff and Clair forbid Denise to spend her savings on a car, Denise vehemently argues: “It’s my money, and my bank account, and my name. You’re acting like I’m asking you for your money and I’m not. It’s my money and I can do what I want with it” (9:35-9:43). Rather than guiding her parents to a more sympathetic view on Denise’s financial independence, Denise’s speech has the opposite effect: Clair reproves her daughter for her presumptuous attitude and instead teaches Denise a lesson on the cost of owning a car. In “Rudy’s walk on the wild side,” Vanessa presents Clair a “declaration of financial independence,” and argues that as their child, she is entitled to one tenth of one percent of her parents’ income. Clair, however, is appalled by Vanessa’s conviction that she is merely claiming what is rightfully hers, and turns the tables by teaching Vanessa a lesson in financial independence: “You would have more money if you were more responsible. [...] I would strongly suggest that you get a job or learn how to budget your allowance” (8:10-8:22). 9

With the examples above I have shown that situations in which the children attempt to educate their parents on financial matters are characterised by a reversal of roles, aimed at restoring the disrupted balance created by the children’s critical attitude towards their parents. I also argue that the children’s lack of financial experience and financial responsibility calls for a reversal of roles, since the children simply do not yet fully understand what they are

9 Another episode that exemplifies the Huxtable children’s attempts to financially educate their parents includes “Together again and again” (5-1), in which Theo found a one-bedroom apartment in a new condominium complex, starting at $485,000. Theo attempts to convince Cliff and Clair that buying the apartment would be a “golden opportunity” (18:34-18:36): he could live there during his college years, and Cliff and Clair could make $100,000 worth of profits from selling the apartment after four years. Despite Theo’s seemingly well considered arguments, Cliff is unwilling to accept Theo’s financial advice: “Theo, get away” (19:15-19:17).
talking about. By turning the situation into a financial lesson for the children rather than for the parents, Cliff and Clair take over control and reclaim their role as educators of the family, thereby emphasising that their parental authority should not be taken lightly.

While the Huxtable children are not in a position to teach their parents about the cost of middle class life and teaching each other would seem a safer option, *The Cosby Show* only provides a few examples in which one of the children teaches a sibling a financial lesson. Remarkably, these examples all show Denise teaching her brother Theo about the temptations of consumer culture. In “A shirt story” (1-8), Denise calls Theo’s attention to what he is actually paying for when he buys a $95 designer shirt: “Theo, when you pay $95 you’re not just paying for the shirt, you’re paying for Gordon Gartrell’s summer house on the Riviera, you’re paying to feed his Arabian horses, you’re paying for his Rolls Royce. Theo, when you’re buying Gordon Gartrell, you’re supporting an empire” (6:50-7:03). In “The card game,” Theo bought a cheap ring for his girlfriend via a television commercial and thinks it looks very expensive. After ridiculing Theo’s naivety in thinking his girlfriend will believe the diamonds on the ring are real, Denise reassures Theo by explaining that “it’s the thought that counts” (7:33-7:35). Both examples illustrate how Denise teaches Theo about how consumers are lured into spending money on overpriced or fake material goods, thereby emphasising the cost of falling for these financial pitfalls. The fact that Denise and Theo are the only children who clearly demonstrate a teaching relationship is very interesting, and I argue that Denise and Theo mirror the teaching pattern between Clair and Cliff. This I conclude from the fact that both men are tempted by the material possibilities middle class consumerism has to offer, and both women warn and educate the men with regard to the concerning financial pitfalls. This pattern not only discloses the men’s subordination to the women with respect to their financial knowledge, but, more importantly, I also regard it
illustrative of how Cliff and Clair’s parenting and teaching skills are invaluable to the Huxtable children’s financial development.

**LESSONS IN MIDDLE CLASS LIFE**

Having discussed the various levels at which lessons on the cost of middle class life are taught in the Huxtable family, the question arises what these financial lessons exactly are. *The Cosby Show* focuses predominantly on portraying family life in a wealthy African American household, but as the Huxtable children grow older and move out to attend college the transition from life in the family home to life in the real world is also an important source for financial lessons. Hence, I make a distinction between lessons on how money functions in the middle class Huxtable family and how it functions in middle class society.

The lessons taught in *The Cosby Show* on the cost of being a middle class family and how money influences family relations focus on parental rights and responsibilities and children’s financial dependence. Cliff and Clair gladly accept their role as their children’s financial safety net and the financial investments they consider necessary to offer their children opportunities in life and to stimulate their personal development. The Huxtable children learn that the way Cliff and Clair support their children both financially and emotionally is an essential aspect of what it means to be a parent. The various conflicts that arise from financial situations, however, also teach them that parental support is not unconditional and that Cliff and Clair do expect and deserve respect and obedience in return for their investments. When the children disregard their parents’ right to control the children’s financial decisions, their parents’ disbelief and disappointment teaches the children that their financial dependence compels them to recognise and respect their parents’ wishes. Cliff and Clair’s repeated emphasis on how much money they spend on their children echoes their
claim for respect and control and offers the children an idea of what it costs their parents to provide them with opportunities for the future.

Other lessons on the cost of being a middle class family illustrate how family life functions as a means to prepare the Huxtable children for life outside the parental home, as the children learn about the relation between behaviour and money, and about the role of money in social relations. The children are financially rewarded for doing chores or behaving well, for instance when Rudy and her friends earn a dollar each for being quiet\(^\text{10}\) and when Clair pays Rudy for doing extra work around the house.\(^\text{11}\) The financial reward not only teaches the children that showing desired behaviour has a positive effect on their financial situation, but also that having money is related to doing work. Through a simple family situation, the children get a taste of how in society money is related to industrious behaviour: if they want to have money to spend, they are going to have to work for it. Moreover, the way in which money is used to influence family relations, for instance when Cliff urges Theo not to tell Cliff’s secret if he ever wants to get money again,\(^\text{12}\) teaches the children about the power of money and how money can be used to emphasise the balance of power in a relationship. This lesson too not only applies within the boundaries of the family home, but also in middle class society.

Next to the lessons that focus on the function of money in the Huxtable family, *The Cosby Show*’s presents lessons on the cost of middle class life and the function of money in a middle class society. I distinguish between lessons on inevitable expenses and lessons on

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10 In “Slumber party” (1-22), grandfather Russell bets Cliff that he, contrary to Cliff, can get Rudy and her friends to be quiet in one minute. He bribes the children by saying that Cliff will give them all a dollar if they are quiet.

11 In “Off to the races” (2-25), Rudy wants an expensive doll and is willing to pay for it herself. She wants to do chores to earn money, and Clair agrees to pay Rudy 50 cents for cleaning out the cupboards.

12 In “Independence Day” (1-14), Theo wants to tell Clair that Cliff once burnt off his hair in an attempt to straighten it. To stop Theo from telling his secret, Cliff warns Theo: “one of these days, you’re going to need some money…” (19:59-20:05).
wealth and consumerism. Some of these lessons are very factual and straightforward, teaching about the cost of moving out, living on your own, owning a car and how to negotiate when buying a new car. They deal with what it means to be a member of a society in which moving out and owning a car are necessary conditions for a successful middle class life. The emphasis on teaching these financial facts signals the inevitability of these expenses and shows that the lessons, simple as they may be, are important ingredients of a middle class upbringing. Other lessons are ideological rather than factual, and focus on the value that is attached to material wealth. Clair and Denise teach Cliff and Theo about the financial pitfalls of consumer culture and the value of status symbols. Theo learns that he does not need to spend great money on a designer shirt to make a good impression. And in “The Auction” (2-14), Cliff learns that while the kitchen appliances he holds so dear do not have any value, the family painting Clair buys at the auction does. Clair, the most financially responsible member of the family, spends $11,000 on a painting while she continuously condemns Cliff’s expenses, and I argue that this carries out a powerful lesson about the difference in value between a juicer and a family painting. Whereas Cliff’s appliances end up in the “appliance graveyard” (2-2; 5:25-5:32) and thus are worthless, Clair’s family painting has both emotional and cultural value, making it worth every penny. The lessons on material wealth put the relationship between what you own and who you are in the right perspective, and stimulate being true to yourself and your cultural background rather than conforming to middle class consumerism.

13 In “Pilot Presentation” (1-1), “Denise drives” (2-7), “Theo’s Holiday” (2-21), and “Say hello to a good buy” (3-15).
Chapter Four

“THE BEST WAY TO GIVE YOURSELF OPTIONS”
THE HUXTABLES’ VIEWS IN A BROADER PERSPECTIVE

This chapter will put *The Cosby Show*’s focus on education in a broader perspective by shifting attention from the Huxtables’ private learning environment to the show’s influence on the audience and by considering how the show’s lessons fit prevailing American ideologies. First, I will examine the show’s efforts at influencing the audience and making family finances an interesting and attractive issue, after which the effects of these efforts will be discussed. Then, I will consider how the Huxtables’ values and their view on middle class life fit American ideologies and the world of television.

**PROMOTING THE HUXTABLE IDEOLOGY: DRAMATIC STRATEGIES**

Bill Cosby has always stressed that *The Cosby Show* was intended to be more than merely entertainment, and the extent to which the show pays attention to financial and moral lessons attests to the highly educational mission of the show. Cosby once explained that “everything he does has to do with some form of educating people about their options” (Fuller 8). Having already discussed how learning situations are established within the Huxtable family, the question arises how these financial lessons are transferred to the audience.

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14 Theo to Eugene, one of the children from the community center, in the episode “Theo’s future” (8-13). When Theo goes to San Francisco for a job interview, he explains to Eugene that he wants to explore his options, reminding Eugene: “Didn’t I teach you to look at all the possibilities before focusing on something? […] You’re getting an education, which is the best way to give yourself options” (21:12-21:46). I consider this quote to be particularly important to this chapter, as it expresses how the subject of this chapter, education, is pivotal to having options, and, therefore, to getting ahead in life. Having options equals freedom and power: the freedom to choose the direction one wishes to take and the power to take control of one’s life. It can mean the difference between the American dream remaining a dream and it being within an arm’s reach. Moreover, Theo proves the power of the Huxtables’ lessons as he himself is now capable of teaching others.
Andrew Billingsley, a leading scholar in African American studies, argued that family is “the most sensitive, important, and enduring element in the culture of any people” (qtd. in Merritt and Stroman 492). For African Americans this seems to go even more, as the black family is described as “the first line of defence against racism and [...] a primary mechanism for upward social mobility” (Neighbors 280), making it an important aspect of black survival. I am not surprised that my examination of The Cosby Show’s strategies to influence its viewers shows that the most significant way in which the show attempts to manipulate its audience is by taking advantage of the audience’s weak spot: the family.

On the basis of my examination I conclude that family life is the leading element in influencing the audience, and that this is realised by a great emphasis on parent-child relationships and family communication. The Cosby Show reaches out to its family audience by illustrating the strength of family life and how different aspects of life can be tackled through communication. As Taylor observes, the Huxtables, as opposed to other sitcoms families in which every problem results in a fight, “work strenuously and self-consciously at persuading viewers how well they get along” (161). The Huxtables know no screaming or fighting: rather, arguments are solved through effective communication. When Theo asks how much he will get paid for babysitting his sisters in “Jitterbug break” (1-16; 8:50-10:40)), Cliff, instead of scolding Theo for his impudence, calmly explains how his children’s continuous requests for money make him feel, after which Theo resolves to babysit free of charge. This example illustrates Cliff’s determination to handle the issue in a civilised way. It also shows how humour contributes to the effectiveness of family communication, as Cliff threateningly holds a baseball bat in his hands when he explains to Theo that “a long, long time ago […], parents didn’t talk much to their children” (9:07-9:16) and a father would run over his son with a plough had the boy asked him how much ploughing the field would pay. The combination of humour and communication works and appeals to the audience. The
Huxtables exemplify how balanced and harmonious family life can be and emphasise that their way is the right way. I suspect that their ability to communicate on a family level through reasoning and humour is part of the reason why the audience is willing to accept *The Cosby Show*’s lessons. After all, the Huxtable way seems to work perfectly.

An important contributor to the success of audience manipulation that also emphasises the significance of family and communication is the show’s realism. In a video interview for the National Visionary Leadership Project,\(^{15}\) Dr Alvin Poussaint, consultant of *The Cosby Show*, describes his job as making sure “the interactions [were] psychologically believable, so that even though it was a sitcom people could say, ‘oh that happened with my kid, that happens with my family’ and that the solutions or the way you worked it out would also be believable” (Video 9, 2:20-2:33). The realism and believability of the situations make the viewers see themselves reflected on-screen and, more importantly, it convinces the audience that their own families can be like the Huxtables. The viewers are confronted with a new and improved version of themselves, stimulating them to work up to the level of peace and harmony portrayed. At the same time, I argue that *The Cosby Show*’s realistic portrayal of family life’s trials and tribulations makes the audience feel good about themselves, which is essential to creating a long-lasting bond between show and viewer. The audience learns that they are not alone in dealing with day-to-day family problems: even the Huxtables, who personify happiness and success, stumble on children who keep asking for money and husbands who cannot control themselves in appliance stores. Viewers feel close to the Huxtables, and accepting *The Cosby Show*’s lessons becomes like taking advice from a friend.

\(^{15}\) The National Visionary Leadership Project was founded in 2001 by Dr. Camille Cosby, wife of Bill Cosby, and Renee Poussaint, niece of Dr. Alvin Poussaint. The project records and distributes the knowledge of African American leaders and visionaries.
According to George Gerbner, the television viewer is stimulated into making “causal inferences between motives, actions, and consequences” (Livingstone 17). From this I deduce that cause and effect situations are very important in educating the audience. By demonstrating reactions to certain behaviour and the advisable response, *The Cosby Show* instils in its viewers a sense of what is right and what is wrong. The episode “Theo’s dirty laundry” (6-21) is one of the most important examples of how a financial lesson is taught through a cause and effect situation. After discovering Theo has been living with his girlfriend while continuing to collect his parents’ cheques for rent on his own apartment, Clair “[has] had enough” (20:34-20:35) and refuses to let Theo move back into his parents’ house. I consider this a demonstration not only of how to assert parental authority when a child is dishonest, but also of the line between what is forgiven and what is not. Theo crossed the line, and since this is the only one of the episodes analysed for this thesis that does not end in harmony, I conclude that in this particular episode the conveyance of the story’s moral is more important than leaving the audience with a laugh.

The lack of an harmonic outcome in “Theo’s dirty laundry” is an exception: other episodes in which cause and effect are emphasised deal with a conflict that is ultimately solved and harmony is restored. Next to being largely inherent to the genre of sitcom, I propose that conflict-harmony situations provide the show’s makers with another possibility to stress the importance of family and communication. If, as Gerbner claims, violence “is the simplest and cheapest dramatic means available to demonstrate the rules of the game of power” (4), I argue that situations of conflict and harmony demonstrate, at least in *The Cosby Show*, the rules of communication. Sitcom episodes are expected to end on a happy note, and the conflicts that aim to provide excitement and entertainment need to be solved in order for
the episode to be comedic. Episodes such as “Move it” (5-4)\textsuperscript{16} and “Rudy’s walk on the wild side” (6-18)\textsuperscript{17} show that reasoning and effective communication are key to turning a dramatic conflict into a comedic unity. The harmony achieved underlines the strength of family, and family finances proves to be an extraordinarily suitable subject for demonstrating how communication can contribute to a happy and stable family life. Money is not a matter of black and white but rather of grey: money can be negotiated about, making it the perfect subject to demonstrate how family members can discuss an issue and meet each other halfway.

The conflicts in The Cosby Show bring tension to the plot and illustrate the destructive and influential power of money, and I argue that this contributes to making the show’s financial messages appeal to the audience. Family finances are made interesting and exciting by highlighting not only what negative effects money can have on family relations, as demonstrated in for instance “Rudy’s walk on the wild side” (6-18)\textsuperscript{18} and “Call of the wild” (4-1),\textsuperscript{19} but also by showing the versatility of the subject. The episodes analysed show divergent functions of money: money is used as a reward (e.g. “Off to the races” (2-25), “Cyranoise de Bergington” (5-7)), as a bribe (“Slumber party” (1-22)), to blackmail

\textsuperscript{16} In “Move it,” the conflict concerns Elvin and Sondra’s refusal to accept Cliff and Clair’s financial help to move to a new apartment, and the situation gets tense because of Elvin and Sondra’s stubbornness. Eventually Denise persuades Elvin and Sondra to accept Cliff and Clair’s offer, after which Elvin and Sondra offer Cliff and Clair a few conditions under which they will borrow the money.

\textsuperscript{17} In “Rudy’s walk on the wild side,” Vanessa wants her allowance to be raised to one tenth of one percent of her parents’ salary. Clair and Vanessa both give their reasons why the allowance should or should not be raised. Clair concludes that if Vanessa wants more money to spend she should get a job or handle her expenses more responsibly, and Vanessa gives in.

\textsuperscript{18} In “Rudy’s walk on the wild side,” Rudy needs $2.30 to buy the same sweater as her friend has. After failing to get an advance on her allowance, Rudy takes some of the money Clair left in the kitchen to pay the dry-cleaning with. Clair thinks she is losing her mind when she finds out she is missing $2.30. Eventually, Rudy confesses to Cliff she took Clair’s money and apologises to Clair. After initially celebrating that she is not going crazy, Clair is very disappointed in Rudy that she did not tell the truth when she saw Clair being so upset. Rudy finds out the sweater, which has lights in it, does not work and learns the sweater was not worth all the trouble.

\textsuperscript{19} In “Call of the wild,” tension mounts when Sondra announces she will open a wilderness store with Elvin rather than going to law school. Clair is furious, reminding Sondra of all the money they spent on her Princeton education and even suggesting to Cliff that Sondra should divorce Elvin. Cliff and Clair do not approve of Sondra’s choices and are disappointed that she seems to be throwing a successful future away.
Moreover, money can be used to solve a situation. In a broader perspective, money is an important element in parental support and control and, as such, can make or break the relationship between parent and child. By thus emphasising that family finances constitute an important part of daily life and that its influence on family relations should not be underestimated, the subject gains attractiveness and proves to the audience of *The Cosby Show* that it is a subject worth learning about.

*The Cosby Show*’s mission to educate the audience was well received by many viewers, and various sources reflect on the show’s influence on the audience’s view on family and parenting. Participants in Payne’s study on the perception of *The Cosby Show* in Caribbean society claimed that the show encouraged them to reconsider their parenting skills and to experiment with new ways of communicating with their children. The show was considered to provide “the best possible advise for children and adolescents with regard to the development and maintenance of present and future interpersonal relationships” (243-4). Viewers’ anecdotes led Alvin Poussaint to conclude that viewers “used Cosby as model for being a father” and to “help them use humour and see their family in a different way” (“Television” 52). A direct declaration of *The Cosby Show*’s influence comes from Meghan Harvey, who in her online blog confesses to being addicted to the show’s reruns because they are a lot more helpful than any parenting book: “Got a problem getting your kid to do homework? Watch the *Cosby Show*. Eating vegetables? *Cosby Show*. Teaching you child manners on how to follow through with commitments? The value of a dollar? All these lessons and many more are at your fingertips with the simple push of the TV remote” (par. 2).

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20 In “It’s all in the game,” Oliva, Denise’s stepdaughter, breaks Clair’s washing machine by putting crayons in it. To make up for it, she offers Cliff to pay for the damage. Cliff tells Olivia repairing the machine cost 5 skillion dollars. Olivia says she will save her allowance, which is 8 kabillion dollars a week. Problem solved!
Other sources tell of *The Cosby Show* being used as educational material by teachers and counsellors, who use episodes, for instance, as a means to raise awareness on learning disabilities (in “Theo’s gift” (6-5), Theo is diagnosed with dyslexia) or as problem-solving training (“Class discussion”; Fuller 10).

I did not find sources that specifically confirm the significance of the show with regard to influencing the audience’s view on family finances and the cost of middle class life. From the evidence above, however, I do conclude that the show really did succeed in its educational mission. My findings suggest that it is very likely that the audience was not only positively affected by *The Cosby Show*’s lessons on family and parenting, but also by its financial lessons. I consider the lack of evidence of the show’s influence on the audience’s family finances the result of the lack of research conducted on *The Cosby Show*’s thought for financial issues. I am convinced that, had the effect of the show’s active audience manipulating with regard to finances been studied, testimonies of its influence would had been found.

**PROMOTING THE HUXTABLE IDEOLOGY IN AMERICAN SOCIETY**

*The Cosby Show* purposefully manifests itself as “a role model and something to aspire to” (Jhally and Lewis 73). The Huxtables demonstrate the life the show’s audience both could and should strive for, simultaneously educating the American audience on important lessons that fit that middle class life. Since the Huxtables are both black and wealthy, however, the question arises what ideology actually is propagated by *The Cosby Show*. Is the Huxtables’ view on middle class life a distinctively African American one, or is it characterised by class rather than race? To determine how the show’s ideology fits prevailing American ideologies, I assume a spectrum of ideologies relevant to the subject of this thesis, marked by two extremes. On the one hand I take black radical ideology as an extreme, and on the other hand
white middle class ideology. The ideology promoted by the Huxtables needs to be placed
somewhere between these two extremes.

The reason I chose to judge black radical ideology and white middle class ideology as
the two extremes lies in these ideologies’ levels of social criticism. Whereas black radicalism
expresses a very critical attitude towards social structure, white middle class ideology does
not. Dawson discusses black radicalism’s emphasis on the need to change America’s political
landscape by actively fighting for social change and racial equality. He argues that black
radical activists such as W.E.B. du Bois (before 1930), Ida B. Wells, and Frederick Douglas
considered progressive activism “necessary to demonstrate black worthiness for full
economic, social, and political equality and participation in American society” (260). With
respect to the black middle class, black radicalism strongly believes in the duty of the black
elite, or “talented tenth,” to provide leadership for all African Americans and to “live under
[Martin Luther] King’s credo that none of us is free until each of us is free” (Gates and West,
qtd. in Dawson 271). Contrary to black radicalism’s call for social change, white middle class
ideology assumes that all Americans have the same opportunities in life and, therefore, does
not advocate social change. The firm belief in the American dream, that anyone can achieve
anything through hard work and determination, is the cornerstone of white middle class
ideology. This leaves little room for a critical view on how American society is structured
socially, economically, and politically. After all, to say that minorities such as African
Americans experience social and economical subordination that diminish their chances in life,
would mean “that opportunity is not universal” (Jhally and Lewis 139). In other words, it
would mean the shattering of the American dream and the core of white middle class
ideology. Therefore, white middle class ideology focuses on what America has to offer and
attaches great value to socioeconomic success, upward mobility, education, and concerted
cultivation. The question now is: between these two extremes, black radicalism and white middle class ideology, where does *The Cosby Show*’s ideology stand?

According to Gray, ideology in popular culture is established “through the psychological appeal to utopian values and aspirations and a simultaneous repression and displacement of critical sensibilities that identify the social and economic organisation of American society as the source of inequality” (377-8). The view on middle class life propagated by *The Cosby Show* and the ideology created accordingly are in line with Gray’s understanding of ideology on television, and this already indicates with which of the two extremes *The Cosby Show* mainly agrees with. Based on the show’s preference for utopian values over social criticism, I conclude that the show agrees with white middle class ideology. The values and lessons carried out by the Huxtables share a decidedly utopian vision on middle class life. As was discussed in the first chapter, respondents in Jhally and Lewis’ audience study have critiqued the Huxtables’ failure to give a realistic portrayal of what it means to be black in America, and this view is generally shared by scholars studying the socio-cultural implications of *The Cosby Show* (Fuller 1992; Gray 1989; Inniss and Feagin 1995; Jhally and Lewis 1992). The Huxtables’ values and the lessons they teach turn attention to positive qualities that contributed to their happiness and their achievement of the American dream, such as diligence, respect and responsibility. Their success and harmony paints an idealistic picture that disregards the inferior social and economical position of African Americans. The Huxtables appear to be unaffected by what Jhally and Lewis call “the black experience” (81). Issues of inequality in education, health, employment and wealth simply do not exist in the world of *The Cosby Show*, but do characterise black experience and constitute an important part of black radical ideology. The show’s implication that neither class nor race prevents anyone from achieving the American dream (Holtzman 127; Jhally and Lewis 137) makes the Huxtables’ ideology incompatible with black radicalism’s social critique.
The Huxtables’ lack of attention for the subordinated position of African Americans in American society has led the majority of black respondents in the Jhally and Lewis audience study to interpret *The Cosby Show*’s utopian portrayal of middle class values as them having become “like white people” (83). However, marking the show’s ideology as equal to white middle class ideology would, in my opinion, go too far. After all, the Huxtable family does express, be it sometimes in a subtle way, a sincere sense of pride towards their African heritage. Their recognition of their African background is evidenced, for instance, by the artwork by black artists on the walls of the Huxtable home, Cliff and Clair’s love for jazz music, and the promotion of African American colleges. Moreover, the plots of several episodes revolve around black artists (“The auction” (2-14)\(^{21}\)), black musicians (“Cliff’s birthday” (1-24), \(^{22}\) “A touch of Wonder” (2-18)\(^{23}\)), and black politicians (“The march” (3-6)\(^{24}\)). While I agree with the respondents in Jhally and Lewis’s study that the Huxtables are very much “like white people” in the value they attach to social and economic success and their disregard of social inequality, I consider the ideology *The Cosby Show* propagates not a strictly white middle class one but rather one that is predominantly white middle class with traces of blackness.

\(^{21}\) In “The auction,” Clair buys a painting called ‘Funeral Procession’ by her great-uncle, Ellis Wilson, that used to belong to Clair’s grandmother.

\(^{22}\) In “Cliff’s birthday,” Clair and the children surprise Cliff by taking him to Lena Horne’s private club, where Lena sings Cliff a birthday song.

\(^{23}\) In “A touch of Wonder,” Denise bumps her car into Stevie Wonder’s limousine, after which Stevie invites the entire family to a recording session in his studio, where they all sing “I just called to say I love you” together.

\(^{24}\) In “The March,” Theo has to re-write a report on the March on Washington in 1963, where Martin Luther King Jr. held his famous ‘I have a dream’-speech, and his parents and grandparents, who were all present at the March, tell him how they experienced that day.
Conclusion

This Master thesis was written to analyse how the popular American sitcom *The Cosby Show* used the theme of the cost of middle class life in educating both the show’s Huxtable family and its audience, and in constructing and propagating an attitude towards middle class life that fits American ideologies. The following questions structured my analysis of the subject: how is the theme of the cost of middle class life presented in selected episodes of *The Cosby Show*, how does the show interpret and present various teaching relationships, how are the show’s lessons taught to the Huxtable family members and the show’s audience, and how do these lessons and the ideology created accordingly fit American ideologies?

Chapter one provided the socioeconomic background to *The Cosby Show* by examining the social nature of television, the significance and impact of the show, and ideologies, wealth, and consumerism in the American middle class. While the Huxtables’ portrayal of a blissful and wealthy family won high praise for its realism and positivity, the show was also condemned for its disregard of the downsides of life, those faced by African Americans in particular, and the incredibility of the family’s upper middle class position. The Huxtables’ realisation of the American dream is in sharp contrast with the reality of many African Americans who face social and economic setbacks in their quest for a successful middle class life and are confronted with the significant negative influence of race on wealth and class. African Americans that do achieve the American dream continuously struggle to demonstrate their equality to the white middle class.

Chapter two illustrated how the cost of middle class life is presented in *The Cosby Show* by focusing on episodes dealing with the cost of children, the cost of living, and children’s dependence and independence. Financial investments are presented as a form of
parental responsibility and control, for which parents deserve sincerity and respect in return. Other parental responsibilities include educating children about what it means to be a member of the middle class and how to handle money in the real world, and encouraging independence, even if this creates tension when children’s independent decisions go against the parents’ wishes and expectations.

Chapter three turned attention to the role of education in *The Cosby Show*, marking how teaching is largely inherent to the genre of sitcom, analysing the various levels on which teaching is present in the show, and describing the financial lessons taught. Cliff and Clair are the chief educators, which is illustrated by their ability to seize every educational opportunity and their ability to turn financial lessons taught by the children into lessons taught to the children. Only Denise and Theo demonstrate a teaching relationship that mirrors that of their parents, emphasising Cliff and Clair’s role as financial role models. In the financial lessons that are ultimately taught, I distinguished between lessons on the function of money within the Huxtable family and its function in middle class society.

Finally, chapter four put the Huxtables’ educational intentions in a broader perspective by considering how *The Cosby Show*’s lessons were taught to and accepted by its audience and how the ideology constructed and propagated fit American ideologies. The show’s emphasis on family, effective family communication, and realism makes viewers susceptible to the show’s lessons, while cause-effect and conflict-harmony situations make the financial situations more interesting. The ideology that is eventually created by the Huxtables is much more in line with white middle class ideology than it is with black radical ideology, since black radicalism’s view on social change is completely absent in *The Cosby Show*, while white middle class’s fervent belief in the American dream is preserved through the Huxtables’ utopian life that knows no social critique.
The various chapters on *The Cosby Show*’s educational intentions and their lessons on the cost of middle class life all answered this Master thesis’s ‘how’-questions. What now remains to be answered is: why? We already know that Cosby’s personal ideas about family relations and the quality of television programs instigated *The Cosby Show*’s emphasis on teaching family values and life lessons, but why was the Huxtables’ middle class position and ideology of vital importance to *The Cosby Show*’s commercial and educational purposes? Why do they teach the lessons they teach and propagate the ideology they propagate?

The majority of the lessons taught by the Huxtables focus on being a socially and economically successful member of society, on how to conduct oneself and handle one’s finances now and in the future. The lessons are therefore in line with what in chapter one was described as the ideology of the middle class: financial success and upward mobility. *The Cosby Show* portrays the Huxtables’ middle class life as the epitome of happiness and success and, through the lessons taught, offers viewers a guide to achieving that life. Not only the members of the Huxtable family are brought up to be respectable members of the middle class, but the viewers are also encouraged to strive for their personal American dream.

From a commercial point of view, the reasons for depicting the Huxtables as a wealthy middle class family with matching ideas about money and finances lie in *The Cosby Show*’s intention to take advantage of the audience’s needs and feelings, and in the need to make the show appeal to a broad audience. Banner-Haley writes that African Americans traditionally turned to the black middle class for guidance and inspiration, believing that they “would lead the masses to greater consciousness in social, political, and economic matters” (9-11). I follow Banner-Haley’s analysis by arguing that *The Cosby Show* makes use of the African American viewers’ need for guidance by offering them a role model family that was living the American dream. The Huxtables’ portrayal of a successful middle class life is one of the keys to the show’s commercial success, as it meets the demands of the African American public.
Moreover, I believe the Huxtables’ social position is an important condition for the show’s messages to be accepted. The audience was being educated by a family that clearly knew what they were talking about, given the signs of success and prosperity that surrounded them, making the lessons all the more easy to accept.

Also, according to Jhally and Lewis’s audience study, the majority of African American respondents assume that “a less affluent image is a negative image” (85). Hence, the more affluent the image, the more positive. An important motivation for Cosby to make *The Cosby Show* was, as was discussed in chapter one, his wish to portray African Americans in a way the public had never seen before. Making the Huxtables an affluent family was a way to do so, and the positivity that radiated from this image strengthened the show’s appeal as it played on African American viewers’ feelings. It put African Americans in a positive light and allowed attention to be turned to their talent and determination rather than the negative racial stereotyping that was usual on television. And while the Huxtables were the first black television family to be portrayed as wealthy and successful, Jhally and Lewis point out that a middle or upper middle class life was in fact the norm on television. Television created “a world that shifts the class boundaries upward so that the definition of what is normal no longer includes the working class” (133). *The Cosby Show* fit right into this world: another key to commercial success.

In order to appeal to a broad audience, *The Cosby Show* constantly balances between expressing black and white sensibilities, and between upper class and working class sensibilities. Chapter four indicated that the Huxtables act “like white people” but do at times emphasise their African background. Hence, by being black and acting white at the same time, the show aims to attract both black and white audiences. Similarly, the Huxtables’ contradictory position towards white middle class consumerism is an example of how the show aims to appeal to viewers from different layers of society. While the Huxtables’ lessons
on the cost of middle class consumerism particularly focus on the worthlessness of material goods, hence opposing consumerism, the Huxtables do continuously display “all the right commodities: lots of bright sportswear, plants and paintings, gorgeous bedding, plenty of copperware, portable tape players, thick carpeting, innumerable knickknacks, and, throughout the house, big, burnished dressers, tables, couches, chairs, and cabinets” (Miller 69). I argue that this demonstrates a conflict between a moral state of mind that condemns consumerism, and the need to express social status through possessions. The Huxtables appear to seek inclusion into white middle class society while simultaneously distancing themselves from part of its values. This illustrates the wish of The Cosby Show’s makers to appeal to a broad audience. The Huxtables reflect a variety of values in order for all viewers, whether close to the family’s race or social class or not, to be able to identify with the show.

From a dramatic point of view, I argue that the Huxtables’ wealth also served to allow the show to focus on the themes that instigated the making of The Cosby Show in the first place, namely parenting and the universality of family relationships. While Cosby originally wanted to make a show about a lower class family, him being a limousine driver rather than a physician, producers Carsey and Werner felt that this specific situation was not in line with what Cosby talked about in his monologues, namely “the commonality of human experience” (Carsey-Werner interview, chapter 3, 11:07-11:09). Moreover, I wish to propose the hypothesis that by portraying the Huxtables as wealthy, the show could turn all its attention to family matters. Had the family been lower class, they would automatically have to deal with problems such as housing, unemployment, and financial liabilities. In the world of The Cosby Show, these problems were not relevant, allowing Cosby and the show’s writers to focus on where Cosby’s heart lay: parenting and family relations. As I hope to have proven in this thesis, however, this does not mean that money plays no role in The Cosby Show.
Several findings from the analyses I made in this Master thesis I consider particularly salient and wish to reflect upon. First, I was struck by the extent to which, as Jhally and Lewis describe, “we have two worlds: one grounded in social reality, where social injustice is rife; one rooted in television fiction, where social and economic prosperity abound without division or discrimination” (87). What I find specifically interesting about the discrepancy between these two worlds, is that the show both preserves and reduces the discrepancy. While the Huxtables’ wealth gives “a false sense of equality” (Jhally and Lewis 86), the show simultaneously accentuates the subordinated position of African Americans in American society. This conclusion I draw from reasoning that if the ideology taught is white in its core, then the people teaching that ideology, in this case the Huxtables, are essentially white. The fervour with which the Huxtables adapt themselves to white standards proves, in my opinion, that, despite the efforts of black movements to improve the socioeconomic position of African Americans in American society and The Cosby Show’s opportunity to contribute to that, the Huxtables (and, thus, the makers of the show) preserve the belief that acting white is a prerequisite for achieving the American dream.

Second, I believe that from my analysis of The Cosby Show’s financial lessons, a number of significant life lessons can be deduced that are offered to both the Huxtable children and the show’s audience. These life lessons are more general and broader than the financial lessons discussed in chapter three, and together they promote an appropriate attitude towards middle class life. The lessons address parenting, getting ahead in life, middle class wealth, and being African American. The Huxtable family offers a “vision of what a financially secure family life might be like” (Downing, qtd. in Fuller 134), and consequently functions as a role model to the American audience, and to the African American audience in particular. The Huxtables illustrate how investing financially in children’s education and social development is a pivotal aspect of children’s advancement. Parents can and should take
pride in how their financial support contributes to their children’s possibilities in life, as their support is both a responsibility and, more importantly, a privilege. The Huxtables also show that good behaviour is rewarded. An industrious and respectful attitude is valued highly in family life as well as in society, and displaying desired behaviour will not only improve your finances but also your chances in life. Being financially responsible and successful gives you options and gets you ahead, and allows you to build a secure middle class life. At the same time, the Huxtables teach that money alone does not determine how rich you are. Rather, wealth is interpreted as the sum of financial and emotional fortune. As much as the importance of financial success is stressed, money is worth nothing if it cannot be shared with a loving circle of family and friends. Furthermore, the Huxtables emphasise that you are not defined by what you own. While your possessions may say something about the money you are able to spend, they do not solely determine who you are. Nevertheless, Clair’s purchase of a family painting (“The Auction,” 2-14) does demonstrate that what you own can attest to what you consider important in life. The painting is a symbol of Clair’s cultural heritage and has great cultural, historical and emotional value. Clair’s commitment to buying the painting underlines the value she attaches to her African background and illustrates her taking pride in her cultural heritage, offering the African American audience a view of how to be black and American at the same time.

Third, I find it very striking that the majority of examples of financial education brought forward in this thesis include the only son in The Cosby Show, Theo. Not only do I believe that Theo’s character has been created as a vehicle for conveying the show’s educational messages, but I also suggest that Theo’s characterisation offers possibilities of studying gender roles in The Cosby Show. Having a fairly ignorant boy like Theo in the family, the kind of boy that does before he thinks and spends before he earns, offered the show plenty of opportunities to teach him about life in general and the cost of middle class
life in particular. While all Huxtable children are involved in the show’s financial lessons, Theo’s overconfident attitude and lack of responsibility guaranteed educational opportunities. Another explanation for Theo’s distinct role in The Cosby Show’s educational mission could be that, as a man, he is expected to provide and take responsibility for his own family in the future, making it of the utmost importance that he learns the social and financial skills to do so successfully. This explanation, however, is contradictory to the Huxtables’ own family situation in which Clair and Cliff share the financial responsibility for their family and in which Clair makes (and spends) her own money. Therefore, I believe that a study on the portrayal of gender roles in The Cosby Show, especially in combination with an analysis of the show’s attitude towards black feminist ideology (for a description, see chapter 4 of Dawson, 2001), could give very interesting results as to how the Huxtables deal with traditional African gender roles in an American society.

This Master thesis took The Cosby Show’s educational mission as a starting point and focused on the show’s conveyance of financial lessons and middle class ideology. While I believe my research and analyses have offered various interesting insights in the way in which The Cosby Show incorporated and propagated a particular middle class view on the cost of middle class life, I also believe that there is enough left unsaid for the topic to be explored to a greater depth. The combination of a popular sitcom and a socioeconomic point of view opens up many possibilities for further research, besides a study on gender roles in The Cosby Show as I suggested above. For example, an analysis of how financial situations in The Cosby Show relate to specific socioeconomic circumstances in America in the 1980’s and early 1990’s could reveal the influence of social developments on the show’s scripts, and a comparative study on audience manipulation in a number of American sitcoms could lead to a greater understanding of how the values and ideologies of the American audience are influenced by television programs. In my opinion, the fact that now, in 2011, almost thirty years after the
first episode of the show was aired, there is a student of English Language and Culture that
considers *The Cosby Show* worth studying for an extensive period of time, not only attests to
the show’s continuing appeal, but also proves that *The Cosby Show* continues to have an
educational function. In the show’s final season, in the episode “Theo’s Future” (8-13), Theo
Huxtable urges a student from the community centre to remember that “life isn’t about getting
things,” but rather about exploring your options. And “getting an education,” Theo explains,
“is the best way to give yourself options” (20:20-21:49). I could not agree more.


# Appendices

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Appendix A


Season 1, Episode 1 – Aired: 9/20/1984
**Pilot**
Clair is furious when Theo brings home a report card with 4 D’s. He tells Cliff that he has no intention of going to college, as he feels that he is destined to be a “regular person.” Cliff uses Monopoly money to teach him about the economic realities that many blue-collar workers must face. He assures Theo that he only wants him to try his best. Cliff is alarmed to meet Denise’s latest beau, a former merchant marine who once spent time in a Turkish prison.

Season 1, Episode 2 – Aired: 9/27/1984
**Mr. Fish (a.k.a. Goodbye, Mr. Fish)**
Rudy becomes very sad after her pet goldfish, Lamont, dies. Cliff accuses the rest of the family of being insensitive to her plight, and forces everyone to get dressed up and attend a funeral for Lamont in the bathroom. The event ends abruptly after Rudy becomes bored and decides to leave to watch television.

Season 1, Episode 3 – Aired: 10/4/1984
**Bad Dreams**
Vanessa goes behind her parents back and sees a scary movie, but comes to regret it.

Season 1, Episode 4 – Aired: 10/11/1984
**Is That My Boy?**
Theo makes Cliff proud when he joins the football team, until Cliff learns that Theo’s not exactly a natural.

Season 1, Episode 5 – Aired: 10/11/1984
**A Shirt Story**
Cliff forces Theo to return an expensive designer shirt, so Theo agrees to let Denise try to make a copy of the pricey duds.

Season 1, Episode 6 – Aired: 10/24/1984
**Breaking With Tradition**
Denise ponders her college choices and the family tries to persuade her to go to Hillman.

Season 1, Episode 7 – Aired: 11/1/1984
**One More Time**
After babysitting for a friend, Clair becomes obsessed with the idea of having another child. The kids are terrified at the implications this would have on them, and Cliff isn’t too thrilled either. Clair’s mother visits and suggests that she simply wait a few years for grandchildren. Theo beats Cliff at basketball for the first time. This prompts Cliff to warn Clair that they are too old to keep up with another child. He wants them to be able to spend time together and travel after their retirement. Clair tells him that she had already come to her senses.

Season 1, Episode 8 – Aired: 11/8/1984
**Play It Again, Vanessa**
Discouraged by her lack of ability, Vanessa decides to give up the clarinet. She does not want to take part in an upcoming recital because she is afraid of embarrassing herself. Cliff refuses to let her quit yet, as she has made a commitment to the recital. He enlists the help of the music teacher, Mr. Hampton, to give her extra lessons. Vanessa and the other students improve enough that the audience can almost tell what song they are playing.

Season 1, Episode 9 – Aired: 11/15/1984
**How Ugly Is He?**
Vanessa tells Cliff that Denise has purposely keeping her boyfriends away from him because she feels that he is rude to them. He is the only member of the family who has yet to meet her latest boyfriend David, an intelligent young man who writes poetry. Cliff promises to behave himself, and convinces Denise to invite David over for dinner. David initially impresses Cliff by bringing him a jazz record, but soon begins to get on his nerves. He infuriates Cliff with his comments about the medical profession. Although Clair claims that she enjoys the discussion, she changes her mind after David not only puts down lawyers, but
opines that Clair should stay home with the kids. Denise whisks David away for his own protection. She seems poised to dump him after he makes additional sexist comments during their date.

Season 1, Episode 10 – Aired: 11/22/1984

**Bon Jour Sondra**

Sondra comes home for Thanksgiving and reveals plans to spend the summer with some friends in Paris. Clair feels that it is a wonderful idea, and gives Sondra some pointers on winning over Cliff. When Cliff hesitates to give his approval, Clair calls a family meeting. All of the children vote in Sondra’s favor. Cliff takes her aside and explains that he is worried about Paris’s reputation, as he fears she will party too much. He eventually agrees to let her go. Theo anxiously awaits the opportunity to carve the family’s Thanksgiving turkey for the first time. Cliff has him practice on a chicken and a cabbage so that he can acquire the proper technique. He tries to blackmail Theo into siding with him against Sondra by threatening to revoke his carving privileges, but lets him do it anyway.

Season 1, Episode 11 – Aired: 12/6/1984

**You’re Not a Mother Night**

Clair becomes fed up with the pressures of her job and the constant demands of the children. Cliff decrees that evening to be “You’re Not a Mother Night.” He takes her out to dinner and rents a room at the Biltmore for the night, leaving Denise to look after the other kids. Theo handles a call from a patient very well and gives her the number of another doctor. As a joke, the kids call up their parents’ hotel room and warn them not to have another baby.

Season 1, Episode 12 – Aired: 12/13/1984

**Rudy’s Sick**

Clair prepares for an interview with her firm’s senior partner, which will determine whether she makes partner. She wants to bring in a babysitter to look after the ailing Rudy, but Cliff insists that he can handle things. Mr. Halifax, the man interviewing Clair, rambles on endlessly. The interview goes on for so long that Cliff has to move Rudy down to the living room so that he will be closer to his basement office as he goes into work. He tries to help a father-to-be who faints at the mere mention of his wife’s labor. Clair finally walks out on the interview after Mr. Halifax falls asleep, but later learns that she has made partner.

Season 1, Episode 13 – Aired: 12/20/1984

**Father’s Day**

Clair notices that Cliff is still wearing his worn-out pajamas and wonders why he doesn’t wear the ones she gave him for Father’s Day. This sets Cliff off on a speech about how no one gives fathers what they really want or need for Father’s Day. He digs out a box of gifts the children have given him over the years, and shows off an array of ties, belts and hats that light up. He walks around the house in the tacky clothing and asks the children to put some thought into their gifts the next time Father’s Day comes around. The kids agree that they haven’t been thoughtful, and set out with Clair to buy him some better Father’s Day presents—even though it is two weeks until Christmas. Meanwhile, Cliff encounters a macho father-to-be who insists that he is the boss of the household and must always get his way. Cliff sets him straight, explaining that he and his wife must band together to keep the children from taking over.

Season 1, Episode 14 – Aired: 1/10/1985

**Independence Day**

Theo reveals to Denise that he got his ear pierced, courtesy of a friend’s younger sister. He claims that the earring is a symbol of independence, but he is actually trying to impress a girl. Denise notes that his ear is infected, and urges him to seek help from Cliff. He refuses, but Denise drops a hint to her parents so that Cliff will discover the truth. Cliff treats Theo’s problem and decides to punish him by turning him over to his visiting grandfather, who is very conservative. However, Russell proves to be surprisingly understandable. He shares that a teenage Cliff once tried to impress Clair by straightening his hair, only to burn off all his hair. Cliff’s mother chimed in with a story about Russell. He decided to have her name tattooed on his chest, but was suffering from a cold at the time. The artist misunderstood him and tattooed the name of Anna’s chief rival, Adda. Anna forced Russell to have the tattoo removed, leaving him with a permanent scar. Russell, Cliff and Theo bond over their antics.

Season 1, Episode 15 – Aired: 1/17/1985

**Physician of the Year**

Cliff prepares to receive the Physician of the Year award. The entire family gets dressed up, and Cliff teaches Theo how to shave for the occasion. Just as the Huxtables are about to leave, Cliff receives a phone call from a woman who has gone into labor. As she is a first-time mother, he decides to go to the hospital to
reassure her, rather than sending a substitute. The woman turns out to be much closer to delivery than Cliff had anticipated, and he must miss the ceremony. He has Theo read his speech and accept the award on his behalf.

Season 1, Episode 16 – Aired: 1/31/1985

**Jitterbug Break**
Cliff and Clair make plans to go dancing with some friends. Clair admits that Cliff's dancing embarrasses her. Denise tries to convince her parents to let her sleep on the street in the hopes of getting tickets to a concert. Cliff refuses to consider this. Denise's friends come over and admit that their parents also turned them down. However, an acquaintance has agreed to stand in line and buy tickets for everyone. The teens decide to hang out at the Huxtable house instead. They move the furniture so that everyone can dance in the living room. Theo shows off his breakdancing skills. When Cliff and Clair's friends arrive, the adults take to the floor and compare moves with the kids.

Season 1, Episode 17 – Aired: 2/7/1985

**Theo and the Joint**
Clair accidentally knocks one of Theo's books off the kitchen table and discovers a joint. Clair initially jumps to the conclusion that Theo is a drug addict and that all of his friends are dangerous criminals. Cliff tries to calm her down. They confront Theo, who adamantly declares that the joint is not his and that he has never done drugs. Cliff and Clair insist that they believe him, but Theo is furious that he was subjected to accusations because of someone else's actions. He discovers that the joint belongs to classmate Anthony Braxton, who shoved it into the book to hide it from a teacher. Theo is prepared to fight the much larger Braxton to convince him to come to the Huxtable house and confess. Theo tells Cliff the truth and agrees to consider counseling. Cliff assures Theo that he did not need to put himself in danger, as he did believe his denial. Braxton seems impressed by the level of trust between father and son, and joins the other neighborhood kids in their touch football game. Meanwhile, gossip Vanessa annoys Cliff and Theo with her constant pathetic attempts to pry information about Theo's situation.

Season 1, Episode 18 – Aired: 2/14/1985

**Vanessa's New Class**
Vanessa prepares for the science fair. She believes that her project is very good, but Denise warns that she may need to work harder to keep up with the kids in her new advanced class. Vanessa is shocked by the quality of the other kids' projects, and begins to feel embarrassed. She finishes 14th in the competition, and alienates best friend Janet by accusing her of getting help from her parents. Vanessa assures Cliff that she is capable of succeeding in the class, but needs to put in more of an effort. Clair tries to keep the status of the broken dishwasher a secret from Cliff. As usual, he insists on trying to repair the appliance himself. His efforts prove so disastrous that he has to replace the machine altogether. He unsuccessfully tries to hide the truth from Clair.

Season 1, Episode 19 – Aired: 2/21/1985

**Clair's Case**
Sondra sues an auto mechanic after he charges her for services that he did not perform. Clair becomes angry when her colleague tries to settle the case, and insists on taking over. Cliff asks the children to take over the household chores as Clair spends all of her time preparing for the trial. The family must also endure Cliff's cooking, which seems delicious until he reveals the ingredients. Clair grills the mechanic on the stand and proves that he billed Sondra for a new engine when he had actually repaired the original engine. Cliff leaves a courtroom spectator bewildered by pretending that he and Clair are strangers and approaching her for a date during the recess.

Season 1, Episode 20 – Aired: 2/28/1985

**Back to the Track, Jack**
Cliff's college track coach recruits him to join the members of his old mile relay team for a grudge match against the Norton University team, who handed Cliff the only defeat of his career. Cliff made up a twenty-yard deficit on his anchor leg, but Norton's Tailwind Turner bumped him across the track and kept him from passing. Cliff struggles in his training and concludes that he cannot get in shape for the race. He changes his mind after Turner calls him up and taunts him. Cliff gets the baton with the lead, and gets revenge on Tailwind by bumping him to prevent him from passing. The race ends in a tie. An exhausted Cliff enjoys the praise of his family, but wonders if he'll ever be able to move again.

Season 1, Episode 21 – Aired: 3/14/1985
**The Younger Woman**
Cliff and Clair invite a widower friend and his girlfriend over to the house. They are very surprised to discover that Mike’s girlfriend is young enough to be his daughter. However, they are very impressed with the young woman, and realize that the couple is quite compatible and seems to be very much in love. They conclude that age really shouldn't make a difference in a relationship. Clair continually torments Cliff by asking him questions about whether he would ever re-marry or date if he were a widower. She inflicts bodily harm upon him whenever he gives the wrong answer.

Season 1, Episode 22 – Aired: 3/28/1985

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**Slumber Party**
Rudy feels left out when her siblings refuse to include her in their activities, so Cliff agrees to let her have a slumber party. Peter, a neighbor boy who never seems to say a word, ends up joining the party when he follows Cliff and the girls into the house. Cliff tries to keep the children entertained by playing a game called “bucking horse,” where the kids ride on his leg as if it were a bronco. Russell comes over and bets Cliff that he can quiet the rambunctious kids within sixty seconds. He succeeds by telling the children that Cliff will give them money if they calm down.

Season 1, Episode 23 – Aired: 5/2/1985

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**Mr. Quiet**
Cliff and Clair volunteer at a friend’s community center. Clair provides legal aid, while Cliff talks to a class of women about what to expect during pregnancy. Many of the women insist on showing their appreciation for his work by giving him food. Theo comes to the aid of a young boy being assaulted by two older kids. The boy receives treatment from Cliff, but is hesitant to speak to anyone. He refuses to reveal his name. He later calls his mother, who explains that Enrique has become reticent around strangers following the release of the man who murdered his policeman father. Enrique opens up a little to Tony, the head of the community center.

Season 1, Episode 24 – Aired: 5/9/1985

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**Cliff's Birthday**
Clair plans the perfect birthday surprise for Cliff, but she will need the kids to help keep their snooping Father from finding out.

Season 1, Episode 24 – Aired: 5/9/1985

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**First Day of School**
The Huxtable kids begin a new school year and each one has their own set of challenges to face. In the meantime Clair and Cliff celebrate the first day of school by reclaiming their freedom.

Season 2, Episode 2 – Aired: 10/3/1985

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**The Juicer**
Rudy and Peter can’t resist trying Cliff’s new juicer, even though Cliff has forbidden them to go near it.

Season 2, Episode 3 – Aired: 10/10/1985

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**Happy Anniversary**
Russell and Anna celebrate their 49th wedding anniversary and are entertained by Cliff, Clair and the kids with a special song and dance routine.

Season 2, Episode 4 – Aired: 10/17/1985

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**Cliff in Love**
Sondra breaks up with her boyfriend Elvin and makes the family so miserable that they convince her to go out with someone new. Cliff falls head over heels for the pre-med student, but Sondra only has eyes for Elvin.

Season 2, Episode 5 – Aired: 10/24/1985

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**Theo and the Older Woman**
The Huxtable family becomes part of Denise’s sociology project while Theo tries to round up a date.

Season 2, Episode 6 – Aired: 10/31/1985

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**Halloween**
Vanessa hosts a Halloween party and invites Robert, the cutest boy in school. Cliff dresses up to take Rudy trick or treating.

Season 2, Episode 7 – Aired: 11/7/1985

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**Rudy Suits Up**
Rudy decides to join the pee-wee football team against Clair’s better judgment and to everyone’s surprise earns the nickname “Sweet Feet”.

Season 2, Episode 7 – Aired: 11/7/1985

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Season 2, Episode 8 – Aired: 11/14/1985

**Denise Drives**
Denise gets her driver’s license and is anxious to buy a car. The car she picks out is not exactly what Cliff and Clair had in mind.

Season 2, Episode 9 – Aired: 11/21/1985

**Clair’s Sister**
Clair’s sister Sarah announces her engagement and Clair offers advice on what it is really like to have a husband.

Season 2, Episode 10 – Aired: 12/5/1985

**Clair’s Toe**
Cliff and Clair decide to celebrate their anniversary by holding a smooth contest, but Clair breaks her toe and the antics begin.

Season 2, Episode 11 – Aired: 12/12/1985

**Denise’s Friend**
Denise’s friend consults Cliff about a medical problem that she has kept from her parents, which urges Cliff and Clair to talk to the kids to assure them that they can come to them with any problem.

Season 2, Episode 12 – Aired: 1/2/1986

**Mrs. Westlake**
Theo’s math teacher, the infamous Mrs. Westlake requests a meeting with Cliff and Theo fears that he has failed a test.

Season 2, Episode 13 – Aired: 1/9/1986

**The Auction**
The Huxtable family attends an auction to purchase a painting that was in Clair’s family years ago while Elvin tries to impress Clair with learning to cook.

Season 2, Episode 14 – Aired: 1/16/1986

**Vanessa’s Bad Grade**
Vanessa’s study partner/boyfriend Robert proves to be a bad mix when they both get D’s on an exam. Vanessa hides the grade from Cliff and Clair so that she can attend a dance.

Season 2, Episode 15 – Aired: 1/30/1986

**Theo and Cockroach**
Theo and Cockroach use “Cleland Notes” to prepare for a test. They pass the test, but Clair isn’t happy about the shortcut and decides to give her own test.

Season 2, Episode 16 – Aired: 2/2/1986

**The Dentist**
Peter is scared to go the dentist, so Rudy offers to go with him. Clair gets upset about an article in the newspaper, which keeps Cliff from getting any sleep.

Season 2, Episode 17 – Aired: 2/13/1986

**Play It Again, Russell**
Cliff’s father Russell plays in a jam session to honor an old friend. Rudy drives Denise, Theo and Vanessa crazy with her constant jokes.

Season 2, Episode 18 – Aired: 2/20/1986

**A Touch of Wonder**
After Denise and Theo car crashes into Stevie Wonder’s limo, he invites the family to a recording session in order to make amends.

Season 2, Episode 19 – Aired: 2/27/1986

**Full House**
Cliff tries to get some much needed rest from being at the hospital each night for the past week, but he can’t find an empty room in the house.

Season 2, Episode 20 – Aired: 3/13/1986

**Close to Home**
Cliff’s friend Dr. Morgan comes to the house to discuss the annual charity benefit, while Theo and Cockroach prepare a rap song for speech class.

Season 2, Episode 21 – Aired: 3/20/1986

**An Early Spring**
Theo and Cockroach prepare for an important math test, which gets postponed when Mrs. Westlake goes into the hospital to have her baby. Rudy learns to ride a bike and Vanessa tries to hide a zit.
Season 2, Episode 22 – Aired: 4/3/1986
**Theo’s Holiday**
Cliff and Clair decide to teach Theo a financial life lesson by turning the house into the “real world”.

Season 2, Episode 23 – Aired: 4/10/1986
**The Card Game**
Cliff’s college English professor, Dr. Foster offers to fill in when Cliff’s pinochle partner becomes ill. Theo buys a ring for his girlfriend.

Season 2, Episode 24 – Aired: 5/8/1986
**Off to the Races**
Cliff is challenged to a relay race against Tailwind Turner, his old school rival. Rudy tries to do enough chores to purchase a doll.

Season 2, Episode 25 – Aired: 5/15/1986
**Denise’s Decision**
Deadlines are fast approaching for Denise to make a final decision about college. Russell tries to convince her that Hillman should be her choice.

Season 3, Episode 1 – Aired: 9/25/1986
**Bring ’em Back Alive**
The Huxtable family tries to capture a loose snake in the house, while Theo and Cockroach plan an all girl party.

Season 3, Episode 2 – Aired: 10/2/1986
**Food for Thought**
Following Clair asks Cliff to cut back on fatty foods after a friend has a heart attack.

Season 3, Episode 3 – Aired: 10/9/1986
**Golden Anniversary**
Denise and Sondra come home from college for the weekend to celebrate Russell and Anna’s 50th wedding anniversary.

Season 3, Episode 4 – Aired: 10/16/1986
**Man Talk**
Theo faces a dilemma in his relationship with his girlfriend when he is attracted to a girl that is flirting with him. Rudy asks Cliff to attend a tea party.

Season 3, Episode 5 – Aired: 10/23/1986
**Mother, May I?**
Vanessa tries to get away with wearing make-up even though Clair has forbidden her to wear it until she is 15. Theo drives the family crazy with his study of fire safety.

Season 3, Episode 6 – Aired: 10/30/1986
**The March**
Vanessa wants to ask a boy to the “Turnaround Dance”, but is nervous she will get turned down. Theo has to re-write a paper on the 1963 March on Washington.

Season 3, Episode 7 – Aired: 11/6/1986
**Theo’s Flight**
Theo and Cockroach want to take flying lessons after a member of the Tuskegee Airmen makes a speech at their school. Rudy brings home her new boyfriend “Bud” aka Kenny.

Season 3, Episode 8 – Aired: 11/13/1986
**Vanessa’s Rich**
Vanessa has problems at school after she tells some friends that her family bought a painting for $11,000. Clair tries to control Cliff’s spending at the appliance store.

Season 3, Episode 9 – Aired: 11/20/1986
**Denise Gets a D**
Denise and Sondra come home for a weekend visit and keep Clair company as she recovers from a back injury. Rudy is unhappy about her role in the dance recital.

Season 3, Episode 10 – Aired: 12/4/1986
**A Girl and Her Dog**
Rudy and Peter find a lost dog and Cliff agrees to let them keep it until the owner is found. Vanessa is unhappy when she realizes that she will miss a party because the family has to go to Washington to hear Clair give a speech.
Season 3, Episode 11 – Aired: 12/11/1986

**War Stories**
Cliff plays pinochle with Russell and his friends as they share stories about their military days. Vanessa goes on a skating date.

Season 3, Episode 12 – Aired: 12/18/1986

**Cliff in Charge**
Clair heads to Hillman to help organize a ceremony honoring Hillman's president. Cliff creatively manages work and taking care of the kids while Clair is away.

Season 3, Episode 13 – Aired: 1/8/1987

**Monster Man Huxtable**
Sondra is home from Hillman with Elvin in tow demonstrating to the family that she and Elvin are getting along better than ever. Vanessa tries to teach Rudy the ABC's of writing a letter.

Season 3, Episode 14 – Aired: 1/15/1987

**Rudy Spends the Night**
Cliff organizes the "Huxtable Men's Club" in an effort to cheer up Theo after a girl he likes doesn't call. Rudy spends the night with Russell and Anna.

Season 3, Episode 15 – Aired: 1/22/1987

**Say Hello to a Good Buy**
Cliff and Theo make a deal for a new car. Vanessa tries to help Rudy with a school project, but her advice only brings trouble.

Season 3, Episode 16 – Aired: 2/5/1987

**Denise Gets an Opinion**
Denise is home for the weekend and goes on a blind date. Robert makes an unexpected visit and follows Cliff and Theo around trying to get advice on love and dating.

Season 3, Episode 17 – Aired: 2/12/1987

**Calling Doctor Huxtable**
Cliff juggles the delivery of three babies while Vanessa tries to convince her friend not to smoke in her room.

Season 3, Episode 18 – Aired: 2/19/1987

**You Only Hurt the One You Love**
Cliff is upset to learn that the hospital is laying-off his favorite employee. Theo spends the day playing with Rudy.

Season 3, Episode 19 – Aired: 2/26/1987

**The Shower**
Clair keeps Cliff and Theo busy with a shelving project, while she and Denise throw a bridal shower for one of Denise's friends.

Season 3, Episode 20 – Aired: 3/12/1987

**Cliff's 50th Birthday**
The Huxtable family throws a lunch and dinner party for Cliff's 50th birthday.

Season 3, Episode 21 – Aired: 3/19/1987

**I Know That You Know**
Theo plays pranks on the family after he receives a joke kit he sent away for but he can't seem to fool Cliff. Sondra and Elvin make a surprise visit.

Season 3, Episode 22 – Aired: 4/2/1987

**Andalusian Flu**
Cliff and Clair have the flu and Theo offers to help out with the house and the kids, so that that they can get some rest.

Season 3, Episode 23 – Aired: 4/9/1987

**Bald and Beautiful**
Cliff is visited by an old Navy friend. Theo and Cockroach are offered a chance to appear in a music video.

Season 3, Episode 24 – Aired: 4/30/1987

**Planning Parenthood**
Cliff treats Rudy and her friends to lunch at an upscale restaurant, while Clair is visited by her sister Sarah.

Season 3, Episode 25 – Aired: 5/7/1987

**Hillman**
The Huxtables attend the retirement ceremony for Dr. Hanes the president of Hillman. Cliff is asked to serve as master of ceremonies.

Season 4, Episode 1 – Aired: 9/24/1987
Call of the Wild
Sondra and Elvin have a big announcement that doesn't sit well with Cliff and Clair. Theo wants to start his own business.

Season 4, Episode 2 – Aired: 10/1/1987
Theogate
Theo tries to explain the reason he was late coming home, but doesn't convince Clair who is determined to get to the real reason Theo was late.

Season 4, Episode 3 – Aired: 10/8/1987
It's Not Easy Being Green
Rudy thinks she is old enough to pick out her own clothes, but Clair thinks otherwise. Robert and Vanessa have a study date.

Season 4, Episode 4 – Aired: 10/15/1987
Cliff's Mistake
Cliff's neighbor Jeffrey gets angry when Cliff can't find the drill that he borrowed. The Huxtable kids prepare for Halloween by building a haunted house in the basement.

Season 4, Episode 5 – Aired: 10/22/1987
Shakespeare
Theo and Cockroach have to read Julius Caesar for history class. Cliff decides to barbeque for Dr. Foster who has come for a visit from Hillman with Denise.

Season 4, Episode 6 – Aired: 10/29/1987
That's Not What I Said
Cliff and Clair have a punishment to hand out after Theo is caught riding in a car with a friend who only has a learners permit, which sparks an argument between them.

Season 4, Episode 7 – Aired: 11/5/1987
Autumn Gifts
Rudy tells Cliff that her friend Mrs. Hickson was tired and confused when she visited her, so Cliff and Russell decide to drop in on her to see if she is okay. Sondra and Elvin ask the family to try out sleeping bags for the wilderness store.

Season 4, Episode 8 – Aired: 11/12/1987
Looking Back (1)
The Huxtable's try to comfort Elvin with family stories after he and Sondra have a fight.

Season 4, Episode 9 – Aired: 11/12/1987
Looking Back (2)
The Huxtable's try to comfort Elvin with family stories after he and Sondra have a fight.

Season 4, Episode 10 – Aired: 11/19/1987
Where's Rudy?
Theo and Vanessa are charged with watching Rudy, while Clair enters her squash in a contest at the mall.

Season 4, Episode 11 – Aired: 12/3/1987
Dance Mania
Theo and Cockroach get tickets to their favorite TV show Dance Mania. Vanessa teaches Cliff the "new math" she learned in school.

Season 4, Episode 12 – Aired: 12/10/1987
The Locker Room
Theo tries to prevent Vanessa from dating his friend Lyle. Cliff wants to know how Rudy's magic tricks work.

Season 4, Episode 13 – Aired: 12/17/1987
The Show Must Go On
Cliff treats Rudy and her friends to a Vaudeville show, while the rest of the family try to avoid Vanessa's old boyfriend Robert.

Season 4, Episode 14 – Aired: 1/7/1988
Bookworm
Clair's book club invites men for the first time and when only the women show, Clair tries to discourage Cliff from attending. The kids spend the night with Sondra and Elvin.

Season 4, Episode 15 – Aired: 1/14/1988

**Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star**
Rudy hides a note from her teacher summoning Cliff and Clair to school for a meeting. Theo develops a new study technique.

Season 4, Episode 16 – Aired: 1/21/1988

**The Visit**
Theo learns a friend has cancer and struggles with going to the hospital to see him. Elvin spends time at the Huxtable house while Sondra is out of town.

Season 4, Episode 17 – Aired: 2/4/1988

**The Drum Major**
Vanessa tries out for drum major at school. Russell and Cliff pay a visit to one of Russell's friends, Slim Claxton who is in town playing at a club.

Season 4, Episode 18 – Aired: 2/11/1988

**Waterworks**
Clair tries to remain calm when Cliff wants to repair the tile in the bathroom, but when the repairs begin to get out of hand, Clair and Theo panic and call a plumber.

Season 4, Episode 19 – Aired: 2/18/1988

**Once Upon a Time**
The Huxtables (with some family friends) act out Rudy's fairy tale, in which the Nasty People declare war on the Happy People.

Season 4, Episode 20 – Aired: 2/25/1988

**Petanque**
Cliff and Clair invite the Harmon's over for dinner which gives Cliff a reason to resume his rivalry with Dr. Harmon in the game of Petanque. Theo is interested in the Harmon's daughter Lindy.

Season 4, Episode 21 – Aired: 3/3/1988

**Trust Me**
Clair gets Cliff to take a couple of days off of work to rest. Clair helps a friend with a misunderstanding she is having with her husband.

Season 4, Episode 22 – Aired: 3/17/1988

**Home for the Weekend**
Denise is home from Hillman for the weekend and spends most of her time with friends instead of the family.

Season 4, Episode 23 – Aired: 3/24/1988

**The Prom**
Theo and his friends make big plans for Prom night. Vanessa and Rudy convince Cliff to hold a Prom at the house.

Season 4, Episode 24 – Aired: 4/28/1988

**Gone Fishin'**
Theo catches a dead body of a mobster while on a fishing trip with the Huxtable men.

Season 5, Episode 1 – Aired: 10/6/1988

**Together Again and Again**
Theo prepares to move into the dorms as he begins his freshman year at NYU. He is puzzled by the fact that he never received his dorm assignment. Cliff discovers that Theo forgot to send in the application. They try desperately to find him a place in one of the dorms. Moments before she is scheduled to leave for Hillman, Denise announces that she has dropped out of school. She fears that Cliff will throw her out of the house, and he becomes angry that she would make such an assumption. Clair actually agrees that college probably isn't right for Denise. However, she is perturbed when Denise says that she didn't look for a job over the summer because it was her vacation. Sondra and Elvin are expecting a baby. They offer Denise a job at their store, but she turns them down because she only wants to work in the fashion or entertainment industries. She later gets a job as receptionist for a record label. Theo approaches his parents with a stupid idea about renting a condo near the university for over $400,000 per year. Cliff concludes that the children want to take over the house. He tells Clair that they should flee and never return.
Season 5, Episode 2 – Aired: 10/13/1988

**The Physical**

After a weekend eating binge, Cliff hopes to flush out his system before his upcoming physical. The doctor tells him that he is in pretty good shape, but has very high cholesterol. Cliff admits that he has a tendency to overindulge in high-fat foods. Clair promises to help him stick to a more reasonable diet to help him lower his cholesterol before his next blood test. Denise commits many mistakes on her new job, but complains that she doesn't receive any credit when she does something right. She goes to her boss and demands some respect, as well as a promotion. He hires her. While mourning her sorrows at a pizza parlor, she gets a job as a waitress. She is confident that this will somehow pave the way for her big break.

Season 5, Episode 3 – Aired: 10/20/1988

**Rudy's All-Nighter**

Theo is frustrated when he receives a D on his first paper in English composition, as well as many critical remarks from the professor. He must work all weekend to revise it. Rudy invites his friend Caroline to stay the night. Cliff becomes somewhat annoyed by the fact that Rudy's friends always expect him to be funny and perform certain characters. He pretends to be depressed, but then delights the girls with his "pirate" impression. Rudy and Caroline stay up extremely late and get on everyone's nerves with their obnoxious behavior. Caroline, the daughter of a newspaper editor, offers Theo tips for his paper. Caroline wakes up Cliff in the middle of the night and demands to go home after getting into an argument with Rudy. By the time Cliff has called her parents and is ready to drive her, they have already made up and gone to sleep. Cliff is left exhausted. Theo gets some feedback from his professor. He is surprised to hear that Cliff would be proud if he got a C on the paper, but Cliff feels that the fact that he is working is so hard is what is important. Theo vows that he will eventually get good grades.

Season 5, Episode 4 – Aired: 10/27/1988

**Move It (a.k.a. The Baby Game)**

Cliff and Clair go to Sondra and Elvin's apartment for dinner. They are disgusted by the brown water, jammed windows, and major plumbing and electrical problems. Sondra and Elvin, however, cheerfully announce their plans to make a "room" for the baby by putting up a screen in the corner. Cliff and Clair order them to call the landlord, who shows up quickly after Clair has Elvin tell him that she is an attorney. He quickly has someone page him so that he can leave without having to do any repairs or answer any questions. Cliff and Clair insist that a child should not be raised in such conditions. They offer the Tibideauxs some money to help find a better place, but they angrily refuse. Anna reminds Cliff that he was just as stubborn as Sondra when he was her age. Denise visits Sondra and Elvin and convinces them that a move would be in the baby's best interests. They agree to borrow some money from Cliff and Clair, and Theo finds a listing for an affordable apartment that isn't a dump. A newlywed couple takes the old apartment and inquires about the furniture. Cliff offers it to them for ten dollars.

Season 5, Episode 5 – Aired: 11/3/1988

**Out of Brooklyn**

Denise continues to run through various jobs because of her screw-ups. She finally finds a job that she likes, but wants to quit after meeting a photographer. Denise tells Cliff and Clair that she wants to go to Africa and serve as the woman's assistant as she completes a photo essay about pygmies. Cliff and Clair are extremely skeptical, especially after hearing about the rugged living conditions. Denise does not back down, even claiming that she has no problem with eating bugs. Cliff and Clair decide to let her go on the trip. Vanessa falls into a funk after a rumor passes through school that her boyfriend, Roy, has been telling people that they have broken up. Vanessa becomes very clumsy as she deals with her depression, and is angry that Roy could not even call her to officially break up. He finally calls, but reveals that he is happy and never said anything about wanting to break up.

Season 5, Episode 6 – Aired: 11/10/1988

**The Birth (1)**

Sondra and Elvin come by the house for a visit. Elvin is certain that Sondra is about to go into labor, while she insists that he is overreacting. She tells Clair that Elvin has rushed her to the hospital three times, only to be told that it was a false alarm each time. However, she has another contraction in the kitchen, and Cliff declares that it is time for her to go to the hospital. Elvin begins to panic and initially drives off without her. Sondra and Elvin ask Cliff and Clair to stay home, but they begin to go crazy as they await news. They decide to go to the hospital, and Sondra and Elvin are grateful. Elvin begins to hyperventilate, while Cliff forgets that Sondra is not his patient and instinctively takes over. Clair asks the men to go into the waiting area. Cliff tries to calm Elvin until it is time for him to...
rejoin Sondra for the delivery. Meanwhile, Theo and Justine study at the house with Howard, a brilliant student from their philosophy class. Howard's girlfriend, Julia, joins the group. Justine notes that Theo seems attracted to her. Kenny hangs out with the foursome while waiting for Rudy. Julia and Justine decry the lack of women in the field of philosophy. They discuss society's attitudes toward women, and are disgusted to find that Kenny already has very sexist views.

Season 5, Episode 7 – Aired: 11/10/1988
**The Birth (2)**
Cliff and Clair await the birth with Anna and Russell and Elvin's parents. Mr. and Mrs. Tibideaux lament the fact that Elvin cannot afford everything he needs for the baby because of his decision to not attend medical school. Everyone is shocked to learn that Sondra has given birth to twins--a boy and a girl. She and Elvin wanted it to be a surprise. They name the kids Nelson and Winnie. Elvin announces that he was so amazed by the births that he has decided to go to medical school. Sondra thanks Cliff for being such a good father to her, and hopes to follow his example by raising her kids well. Clair has a hard time adjusting to the fact that she is a grandmother. She and Mrs. Tibideaux suggest that they should instead be called "mother: the sequel." Justine becomes annoyed when Theo tries to impress Julia by offering to cook dinner for his parents. As he and Howard prepare the meal, Howard gets Theo to admit his attraction to Julia. Howard doesn’t seem upset, but Theo is concerned to learn that intelligence is the quality that Julia finds most attractive. Howard baffles Theo by revealing that Julia wants to commit to him, but he isn't ready.

Season 5, Episode 8 – Aired: 11/17/1988
**Cyranoise de Bergington**
Theo learns that Howard has broken up with Julia to devote more time to his studies. Howard knows that Theo wants to ask her out, and offers his blessing. Theo justifies his behavior by saying that his relationship with Justine is already in shambles. Theo is nervous about talking to Julia, so he has Denny approach her on his behalf. Theo is outraged when Julia ends up asking Denny for a date. Theo impatiently goes over to Julia's apartment and asks her out. He claims that he and Justine aren't seeing each other. Julia learns the truth from Justine, and neither woman will speak to Theo. Rudy asks Cliff for $31.05 to buy Clair a fake gold diamond necklace for her birthday. She promises to do chores in exchange for the money, but soon loses her enthusiasm. Cliff criticizes the job she has done. However, Clair sees Rudy working and lavishes her with praise because she thinks she is just trying to be helpful. Cliff eventually approves of Rudy's work and tells her that the debt is paid.

Season 5, Episode 9 – Aired: 12/1/1988
**How Do You Get to Carnegie Hall?**
Vanessa, Janet and Kara record a music video of "The Loco-Motion" at a local store. They name themselves The Lipsticks and plan to re-record the video for entry in a contest at a television station. The winning group could receive a record contract. The girls realize that they dance well but are not great singers. They sign up for vocal lessons, but become bored when the teacher puts them through a series of exercises instead of letting them dive into the song. They decide that they can win on their dance moves and costuming and just have their voices fixed in the studio. They perform for Cliff and Clair, who are horrified when Vanessa comes downstairs in a neon sports bra and lycra shorts. Clair also dislikes Kara and Janet's outfits, and thinks their dance moves are too suggestive. She discovers that Vanessa stuffed her bra and goes on a very long rant. The girls later attend a performance by their teacher, Ms. Woods, and are very impressed. Cliff and Theo pick up Russell and Anna's mail while they are out of town. They learn that Russell won a sweepstakes, and Clair must take extreme measures to keep them from opening the envelope. Cliff has a major letdown when he finds that Russell has only won a toaster.

Season 5, Episode 10 – Aired: 12/8/1988
**If the Dress Fits, Wear It**
Clair discovers that the dress that she wants to wear to an upcoming benefit no longer fits. Her designer friend estimates that she would have to lose five pounds in the next six days to fit comfortably into the dress. She wants to keep her quest to lose weight a secret from Cliff, but he overhears her discussing it with her friend. Clair signs up for an exercise class, where the demanding instructor belittles the students--especially Clair. She realizes that Emma's criticism is exactly what she needs, and decides to hire her as her personal trainer for the week. Clair suffers severe leg cramps in the middle of the night. Cliff cooks a fabulous Mexican meal for the sole purpose of tempting Clair and getting on her nerves. She resists the urge to break her diet. However, she nearly lets her hunger get the better of her a few days later. She stops herself from eating the leftovers when Cliff comes home early from the hospital. On the night of the benefit, Clair
tricks Cliff into believing that she failed to lose the weight. She then stuns him by emerging from their room in the dress.

Season 5, Episode 11 – Aired: 12/15/1988
Is There a Hamster in the House?
Caroline convinces Cliff to let Rudy watch her hamster, Darren, for the night while she is at her grandmother's house. Vanessa becomes upset and assumes that Cliff will eventually let Rudy get her own hamster. The kids believe that Cliff dislikes animals, but he claims that he fears that the kids will not be able to take care of pets properly. With some prompting from Theo, he reveals that he once sat on his pet bird Charlie. He survived, but never trusted Cliff again. Rudy is concerned when Darren becomes ill. Cliff thinks that Darren is okay, but later begins to worry. They take the hamster to the clinic and pay for X-rays, but it dies during the exam. Cliff buys a new hamster for Caroline and tries to pass it off as Darren. Caroline isn't fooled, but takes the news in stride. She says that the same thing happens every time someone else looks after her hamster. Russell tries to ease Cliff's guilt about his bird by telling him that his mother also had an accident with Charlie. She inadvertently put him in the washing machine, and he crashed into the walls after she revived him with brandy.

Season 5, Episode 12 – Aired: 1/5/1989
Truth or Consequences
Vanessa shows up late for dinner several days in a row, and gives an excuse about working with a school committee. She claims that she needs to go over to Kara's house to help her study; but confesses to Theo that she has a date with her boyfriend, Jeremy. Vanessa asks Rudy to cover for her if she misses curfew. However, Clair sees through Rudy's lie and gets her to come clean. Vanessa becomes uncomfortable as she and Jeremy kiss in his car and asks to go home. However, Jeremy pressures her into staying by questioning her commitment to the relationship. Cliff and Clair wait up for Vanessa, and ground her for a month. Much to her horror, Cliff insists on calling Jeremy over to the house for a talk. Vanessa irritates her parents by repeatedly yelling down to Jeremy from her room. Clair explains her point of view to Jeremy, who apologizes for his behavior. Cliff then takes him into the kitchen to make sure that nothing happened with Vanessa. Jeremy assures him that they only kissed. Cliff gets Jeremy to realize that he would not defy his own parents, and thus was wrong to expect Vanessa to disobey the Huxtables.

Season 5, Episode 13 – Aired: 1/12/1989
Cliff Babysits
Russell gets eight tickets to the sold-out Michael Jackson concert from a friend. They are one ticket short of being able to take the whole family, so Clair suggests that she and Cliff babysit and let Sondra and Elvin go to the show. Kenny takes the extra ticket. Elvin is afraid to leave the twins for an evening, but Sondra convinces him that they need to get out. Kenny becomes jealous when Rudy pays extra attention to her appearance in the hopes of attracting Michael. Kenny accuses her of failing to recognize that Kenny is the "real thing," and vows to leave her for Whitney Houston. Clair has to go to work to deal with an emergency after another lawyer becomes ill, leaving Cliff alone with Nelson and Winnie. He tries his best to keep them entertained. He tells them a story about his brother, James Theodore Huxtable, who died of rheumatic fever at the age of seven.

Season 5, Episode 14 – Aired: 1/26/1989
Mrs. Huxtable Goes to Kindergarten
Clair buys a new couch, and tries to have the old one taken away to Sondra and Elvin's apartment while Cliff is busy with a patient. Cliff uncovers her plans and refuses to allow the movers to take the couch. Clair is asked to appear on a local television show that includes discussions of important historical issues. The other panelists are ill-prepared, constantly bicker, and refuse to take Clair's opinions seriously. When she produces evidence that exposes a mistake in one man's argument about the causes of the Great Depression, the men ignore her. The host calls for a commercial break and demands that she be removed from the show. The men only want her to discuss issues directly related to women or African-Americans, but she refuses to be stifled. The producer is thrilled by the show and asks Clair to be a regular. She turns down the offer because she doesn't want to wake up at 4:30 in the morning every week just to prove herself to foolish, petty men. She takes the family to church instead of watching the show on TV. Clair convinces Cliff to let go of the couch, and he actually asks for time alone to say goodbye to it.

Season 5, Episode 15 – Aired: 2/2/1989
The Lost Weekend
Cliff and Clair plan to spend the weekend in the Poconos. Vanessa stays with Janet, while Rudy goes to her grandparents' house with Kenny, Howard and
Denny learn that Theo will have the place to himself, and convince him to throw a party. The three guys and their dates are supposed to be the only guests, but several other friends manage to finagle invitations. Theo is left without a date to his own party when Justine comes down with the flu. More and more people show up, and the party quickly gets out of control. The guests eat all of the food and trash the house. Theo meets a girl and tries to find a place to talk, only to discover that partygoers have taken over his parents' bedroom. He becomes angry and kicks everyone out. Theo, Howard and Denny try to clean up the mess and repair the damaged items, but there are many things that can't be fixed. Theo immediately tells his parents the truth about the party. Cliff drags Theo out of the house and tries to force him to drop out of school and join the army. He eventually settles on making him work at a mission every morning.

Season 5, Episode 16 – Aired: 2/6/1989

**No Way, Baby**

Cliff contacts Ray Palomino, the estranged grandfather of a young woman who is about to have a baby on her own. Ray has not seen any of his family for 18 years. However, Cliff asks him to come to the hospital to support Louisa because they have been unable to find any other family members. Ray does not have a lot of faith in Cliff's ability as a doctor. Louisa is very glad to see Ray, who also manages to charm the nurses. He wants to help care for his great-grandchild, but bristles when Cliff offers him some pamphlets about child-rearing. Clair listens to Cliff describe Ray's behavior, and opines that Ray doesn't know how to read or write. Cliff disagrees, as he feels that Ray is just a rude person. Cliff believes that he is right when Ray produces a list of relatives; but he claims to have lost his glasses when Clair asks him to read a name. He also doesn't know how to spell the name "Tom." Louisa gives birth to a baby boy. Ray tells Cliff that he is aware that the Huxtables know he is illiterate. He insists that he doesn't need to learn to read at his age. A man whom Ray befriended in the waiting room says that he is a former English teacher and offers to help him.

Season 5, Episode 17 – Aired: 2/9/1989

**Can I Say Something, Please?**

Rudy and her friends have a video-watching party. They are annoyed because Cliff always forces them to watch "Old Yeller" and "Treasure Island." When Cliff leaves the room, Kenny slips in a copy of a comedy called "The Gross-Out Gang." Clair comes home early and is offended. She stops the kids from watching. Rudy is upset that she has to follow so many rules, while Vanessa can even stay out late on school nights. She presents a list of her grievances to her parents. Clair is very impressed, and she and Cliff agree to rescind one of the rules. They tell Rudy that she can stay up as late as she wants, but must get up in time for school. Rudy stays up half the night and winds up tired and cranky at school, leading to complaints from her teacher. Rudy reveals to Vanessa that Kenny told her that the family is just setting her up to fail. Cliff tells Rudy that he is going to stay up all night and watch movies with her. Determined to prove herself, Rudy shows up in the living room as scheduled. However, she immediately falls asleep.

Season 5, Episode 18 – Aired: 2/16/1989

**The Dead End Kids Meet Dr. Lotus**

While Theo is at the café with some friends, Justine comes in with another guy. Howard, Denny and Lou tell him that they have seen Justine with Scott several times in the past few weeks. Theo confronts Scott, but Justine points out that he is the one who wanted to see other people. Theo becomes annoyed by Scott's comments and challenges him to a fight. He refuses, and an embarrassed Justine decides to leave with Scott. Theo's friends show him an ad for a doctor who promises that he can make someone go away. They go to see Dr. Lotus, only to learn that his spell costs $800. Theo tries to convince Cliff to lend him the money, but doesn't want to say why he needs it. After Theo explains, Cliff teaches him a foolproof method of getting rid of the guy (which Cliff's great-grandfather once used on him when another guy was hitting on Clair). He mixes a bunch of goo together and has Theo put it on his hands and face with a towel over his head, as though he is concocting some spell. He then has him repeat, "I will pay more attention to my woman." Theo follows his dad's advice and gives Justine a call.

Season 5, Episode 19 – Aired: 2/23/1989

**The Boys of Winter**

Cliff receives a visit from Bill Barry, who coached him on a youth city league team. When Cliff refuses to join Elvin, Theo, Howard and Lou in a backyard basketball game, Theo explains that his father recently had an experience that soured him on basketball. Cliff is tight-lipped about the incident, and refuses to even share the details with Coach Barry. When the coach and his wife come over for dinner, Clair produces a videotape of the game that left Cliff so upset. He and some doctors played a basketball game against a squad of much younger lab
technicians—who all happen to be women. The women defeated Cliff's team soundly. Cliff had a few highlights, but struggled other times and was exhausted by the end of the game. The coach insists that he is proud of Cliff for giving such a good effort. Cliff tells Clair that he has no problem with losing to women, but is embarrassed by his poor physical condition. They reminisce about a game where he scored the winning basket as a 16-year-old, and agree that memories are the most important thing about sports.

Season 5, Episode 20 – Aired: 3/9/1989
**It Comes and It Goes**
Sondra grows frustrated with staying home to care for the twins all day while Elvin is at medical school. She notes that he only spends a few minutes with them at night before leaving the room to study. Although she is exhausted, Sondra wants to keep a dinner date at her parents' house because she longs for adult conversation. Everyone ignores her as they coo over the babies or ask Elvin about medical school. Elvin tries to change the topic to get Sondra included in the conversation, to no avail. However, Clair, Mrs. Tibideaux and Anna notice Sondra's mood and encourage her to have some dessert and express what is bothering her. They can all sympathize with her plight, and realize that she has things even tougher because she has twins. She vents about Elvin's lack of sensitivity, and vows to be just as rude when he cares for the kids while she is in law school. Cliff realizes that the women are getting worked up about something, and blames Elvin. The men try to give him tips on helping out without appearing to question Sondra's judgment. Cliff tells a story about taking Sondra and Denise fishing because Clair needed a break. Clair tells the same story, but learns from Anna that Cliff left the girls at her house all weekend. Everyone is appalled by his behavior, and Sondra comes to appreciate Elvin.

Season 5, Episode 21 – Aired: 3/16/1989
**Theo's Women**
Justine's friend Delores asks her to fill in for her at work. Justine is reluctant to break her date with Theo, but assures her that it is okay. After Justine leaves, Theo helps a girl named Jade with a temperamental vending machine. She is a theater major, and is upset because her scene partner failed to show up to run lines. Theo agrees to help her out, but she complains about his lack of acting ability. She encourages him to show his emotions, and he ends up kissing her. Justine and Delores walk in to see them making out on a couch in the dorm lounge. Justine is devastated, and is especially upset that Theo would make a fool of her by betraying her in public. She storms off in tears and refuses to take Theo's calls. Vanessa catches Jeremy with his arm around another girl and declares that their relationship is through. She is upset when Theo (because of his own situation) seems to sympathize with Jeremy. Theo seeks advice from Cliff, who tries to teach him the proper way to beg. Theo publicly pleads with Justine for forgiveness, but she doesn't want to hear him out. To make matters worse for him, Jade says that she was only acting when she kissed him—and doesn't remember his name.

Season 5, Episode 22 – Aired: 3/30/1989
**Birthday Blues**
Clair celebrates her 46th birthday. She becomes annoyed when everyone patronizingly tells her that she "still" looks good. Theo, Vanessa and Rudy dress up in old clothes and put together a skit describing the way things were when Clair was each of their ages. Clair's friend's husband serenades her in Spanish before the two couples go to lunch together. After Clair refuses to eat dessert, Cliff tries to tempt her by bringing a bunch of cakes home.

Season 5, Episode 23 – Aired: 4/13/1989
**A Room With No View**
Vanessa and Rudy are banished to the basement after too much fighting.

Season 5, Episode 24 – Aired: 4/27/1989
**What He Did for Love**
While walking down the street, Denny finds an expensive watch lying in the grass. He believes he should take it to the police, but his friends insist that he must give it to his girlfriend, Jade. She is very impressed. However, the police soon track her down and tell her that the watch meets the description of one that was reported stolen. She has to go to the station because she refuses to remove the watch and let them see the serial number. Denny is cleared of all charges because he has an alibi for the time of the theft, but must publicly tell Jade that he found the watch on the ground. She is appalled, and dumps him. Denny decides to seek Cliff's advice on how to win her back, but he only confuses Theo and Denny with a long, pointless story. The guys hang out in the basement because they have no dates. They decide to leave when Cliff shows up and starts in on another story.
Day of the Locusts
Sondra comes down with strep throat. Clair is appalled to learn that Cliff simply told her to wear a mask around the twins. She fears that the babies will get sick, and calls on Elvin's mother to accompany her to the Tibideauxs' apartment and get the kids out of harm's way. They try to convince Sondra to rest, and she finally agrees that it is a good idea for them to take the babies. However, Elvin comes home and gets her worked up by suggesting that Clair and Francine were just looking for an excuse to spend more time with their grandkids. Sondra becomes hysterical and forces Elvin to drive her to her parents' house, where she accosts Cliff and Theo. She starts ranting and raving, before taking off again in search of the kids. Clair and Francine bring the babies to the house after taking them to the mall and the hair salon. Sondra returns and accosts them. She has Elvin collect the kids, and warns the grandmothers never to attempt such a stunt again. Cliff teases Clair about the incident.

57 Varieties
Theo wants to join his classmates on an archaeological dig in Egypt. However, he doesn't believe that his parents will give him the $1500 he needs for the trip. He spent all of his money repairing the damage caused by his unauthorized party and paying parking tickets. Howard and Lou try to convince the Huxtables that the trip will have a good influence on Theo and help him improve as a student. Cliff and Clair agree to consider the idea, but ask to talk to his professor so that they can learn more of the details. Professor Grayson eagerly agrees to this. During a discussion of the diverse ethnic backgrounds of the Egyptians, she encourages the students to guess her own heritage. Theo, Howard and Lou try to get Cliff to make a guess during the get-together with the professor. He fails miserably, even after she gives him several hints. Cliff and Clair agree to let Theo take the trip. Meanwhile, Clair tries to warn Kenny of the possible consequences of constantly repeating his brother's sexist opinions. However, he later gets into another war of words with Rudy.

Denise: The Saga Continues
Denise returns from Africa a week earlier than expected. She is accompanied by Martin Kendall, a naval lieutenant whom she recently married. Just before they enter the house, Denise stuns Martin by confessing that she has yet to even make her parents aware of his existence. Cliff and Clair are thrilled to see Denise, and Cliff tries to convince her to return to college. She interrupts with the news of her marriage. Her parents go to the kitchen, where Clair goes on a rant while Cliff is left speechless. Denise introduces Martin to Cliff and Clair. She leaves him to tell her parents that he is divorced and has sole custody of a three-year-old girl. A flummoxed Cliff and Clair have to go to the kitchen again. Denise follows them and announces that Martin will be shipping out in a few weeks (for three months); and that they have nowhere to stay. There is some space in the house because Theo has moved into an apartment, but Cliff is still less than thrilled. Clair is annoyed by Denise's cavalier attitude; she is sure that everything will work out just because she is in love. Denise and Martin introduce the family to his daughter, Olivia. Rudy quickly befriends her and gives her advice on how to get along in the Huxtable house. Clair worries that Denise is too irresponsible to take care of Olivia. She and Cliff peek in her room and overhear Denise reading to Olivia. They conclude that she might not be completely hopeless.

Surf's Up
Cliff buys a refrigerator for Theo's apartment. He is upset to learn that Clair has already been to the apartment, while Theo has failed to invite Cliff because he is worried that he will bore his friends. Cliff angrily heads over to the apartment and demands to come in. He takes pity on Theo and cuts short one of his tales. However, Theo's roommates find Cliff to be very interesting and keep pleading with him for more stories. Theo is impressed, and later tells Cliff that this is the first time he has seen him as a friend. Theo and his roommates get evicted after recreating one of Cliff's stories by dumping soap and water on the floor and sliding around with sponges tied to their rears. They end up damaging the landlord's ceiling. Theo must move back in with his parents. Clair presses Cliff to resolve the situation. Cliff goes to see the landlord and offers to pay him more each month if he allows the guys to return.

I'm 'In' With the 'In' Crowd
Everybody loses when Vanessa and friends play drinking games at an unsupervised get-together.
Season 6, Episode 4 – Aired: 10/12/1989

**Denise Kendall: Navy Wife**

Denise and Martin prepare to drive to Rhode Island to check out the house where they will be living on the naval base. Clair notices that Denise seems troubled. She confesses that she forgot to call the base and confirm the housing arrangement while Martin was away at sea. Clair encourages Denise to tell Martin the truth immediately, but she is too afraid. She does not tell him until they are called before the head of the base, causing Martin to look like a fool in front of the captain. They have to go back on the waiting list, and must make other arrangements for six months. He feels bad about continuing to impose on Cliff. They cannot stay with Martin's parents because his mother thinks that Denise is a flake. Cliff spends time with Olivia while Martin and Denise are away. She offers her theory about the origin of babies. When Denise and Martin return, he takes the blame for the housing snafu. Clair suspects that Denise screwed up on purpose because she was worried about having to care for Olivia on her own and wanted her family nearby. Clair tells Denise that she must eventually learn to take responsibility for her family; but assures her that she can always call on Clair for help.

Season 6, Episode 5 – Aired: 10/19/1989

**Theo's Gift**

Theo studies for a mythology exam with Justine, and seems to have a complete mastery of the subject. He is disgusted when he only receives a C on the test. He cannot understand why he continues to do poorly, and is tired of working so hard for mediocre grades. He says that he just could not understand the test questions. Theo tells his parents that he even went to the learning center for testing to try to get a grasp on his problem. When Cliff tells him to concentrate harder, Theo accuses him of failing to be supportive. Cliff and Clair accompany Theo to the learning center. The woman running the center tells him that he may have a form of dyslexia. After the diagnosis is confirmed, she gives Theo some tips on organization and suggests that he take some classes on dealing with the syndrome. Theo and his parents are thrilled that there is a way to treat his problem. His grades begin to show a marked improvement, and Theo predicts that he will soon get A's.

Season 6, Episode 6 – Aired: 10/26/1989

**Denise Kendall: Babysitter**

While visiting the Huxtables, Sondra and Elvin discuss how exhausting it is to care for the twins. Denise believes that they are exaggerating, and doesn't think that looking after two babies is any harder than taking care of one child. Sondra and Elvin ask her to babysit that night so that they can go to a movie. Olivia agrees to help her. Denise criticizes Sondra and Elvin for serving processed foods and using a videotape to calm the twins. She brings her own food to fix the kids' dinner. She soon has her hands full as the twins run amok and cry constantly. Denise finally resorts to putting in the video, as it really is the only thing that quiets the kids. Just when things seem to have settled down, the power goes out. A weird hippie neighbor offers candles, but Denise doesn't let him into the apartment. Denise forgets the specifics about Winnie's food allergy, and has thrown away the number where Sondra and Elvin can be reached. Olivia saves her by suggesting she call Clair about the allergy. When the power returns, all of the appliances that Denise was using shoot food everywhere. Sondra and Elvin return to find the apartment in chaos. Everyone goes to the Huxtable house for the night after another blackout hits the area. Meanwhile, Rudy and Vanessa torment Cliff about his gray hair.

Season 6, Episode 7 – Aired: 11/2/1989

**Shall We Dance?**

Vanessa discovers that Rudy has a crush on one of her classmates, Clarence, and teases her about it. Rudy's teacher, Mrs. McGee, teaches the class a series of lessons on etiquette. Clarence eagerly volunteers to sit beside Rudy during a demonstration on dinner table manners, and they stare at each other lovingly. Clarence's friends get on his case, and force him to prove that he doesn't like Rudy by harassing her. Rudy and her girlfriends go to the Huxtable house and rant about how stupid the boys are. They go to the mall and ignore them, and continue this behavior the next day. When Rudy comes back after school to retrieve a book, Clarence knocks her books out of her hands and shoves her. Mrs. McGee catches Rudy beating up Clarence, and orders the two to be partners at the dance that is to conclude the etiquette lesson the next day. Cliff tries to counsel Rudy on why ten-year-old boys behave the way they do, but only confuses her. The boys and girls, not surprisingly, are reluctant to socialize at the dance. Kenny has to dance with Mrs. McGee after he cannot find a partner.

Season 6, Episode 8 – Aired: 11/9/1989

**The Day the Spores Landed**
Cliff dreams that the eruption of a volcano in Peru has sent spores into the drinking water and caused men to become pregnant. Cliff, Elvin, Martin and Theo are all pregnant. Theo deals with stares and unkind comments because he is an "unwed father." The pregnant men all become very emotional, while the women act insensitive toward them most of the time. The guys all go into labor at the same time, and suffer excruciating pain. Martin gives birth to a toy sailboat, while Theo has a mini sports car. Cliff has twins: a gigantic hoagie and a bottle of orange soda. After "experiencing" pregnancy and childbirth, Cliff wakes up and tells Clair how much he appreciates her and how much he admires all women.

Season 6, Episode 9 – Aired: 11/16/1989
Cliff's Wet Adventure
The Huxtables host a large gathering for Thanksgiving dinner. Cliff must go to the market in the midst of a terrible storm to gather ingredients for the meal. Unfortunately, he keeps forgetting items on his list and getting sent back out into the rain. Martin's ex-wife, Paula, calls from the airport during a long layover. Denise invites her to join the family for Thanksgiving so that she can spend time with Olivia. Martin feels uncomfortable about the situation, but Denise assures him that everything will be fine. Paula and Denise have a talk while Martin helps Olivia prepare a gift for her mom. Paula explains why she ended her marriage. She had always made decisions based on what her parents wanted, and could no longer stand it. Although it was painful, she felt that she needed to live her own life.

Season 6, Episode 10 – Aired: 11/30/1989
Grampy and Nu-Nu Visit the Huxtables
Denise fears her first meeting with Mrs. Kendall, who hates her, according to Martin.

Season 6, Episode 11 – Aired: 12/7/1989
Cliff la Dolce
Clair leaves for Washington, D.C. for a conference, while Denise heads to the Caribbean to spend time with Martin. Clair worries that Cliff won't be able to handle the girls alone. Before she leaves, she catches Vanessa making plans to sneak out to a college friend's party. Rudy seeks Cliff's advice in dealing with a disagreement with her friends at school. Cliff suggests that she try to reason with the girls, who have accused her of insulting someone. She follows his advice, only to have it all blow up in her face. She blames Cliff for her problems. Cliff turns to Rudy's teacher, Mrs. McGee, for help. She says that the situation will blow over soon, and recommends that Cliff stay out of it. She also calls him to task for giving Rudy too much help with her history paper. She realizes that Clair must be out of town. Vanessa tries to trick Cliff into letting her go to the party, but Clair calls and finds out what she is doing. Theo takes Olivia to the cafe and uses her to impress a waitress.

Season 6, Episode 12 – Aired: 12/14/1989
Getting to Know You
Cliff and Martin meet at the cafe for coffee. Two women hit on them and are disappointed to learn that they are married. Cliff and Martin introduce them to Theo. The Huxtable women spend the day on a shopping excursion. They convince Elvin to dress up in an elf costume when he visits sick children at the hospital. He is initially put off by the costume, but eventually becomes very enthusiastic about lifting the kids' spirits. Cliff and Martin are left alone in the house. Cliff pushes him for details about his courtship with Denise. They later bond over their experiences in the Navy. Cliff says that he is glad that Denise married such a good man, but is disappointed that he didn't get to give her away. The family organizes an impromptu ceremony in the living room so that Cliff can officially give his daughter away. Olivia and Cliff discuss Santa Claus and his racial background.

Season 6, Episode 13 – Aired: 1/4/1990
Elvin Pays for Dinner
Sondra and Elvin make plans to have dinner with his old friend from college and her sister. However, Sondra decides to stay home because she is preoccupied with her personal statement essay for law school applications. Elvin offers to cancel, but she encourages him to go out and have a good time. He promises to return by 9:30 to take babysitters Vanessa and Rudy back home. He calls from the restaurant to tell Sondra that he might be late, and she encourages him to stay out. When Elvin returns home, Sondra is furious that she had to interrupt work on her essay to drive her sisters home. She acts cordial toward Elvin's guests, but refuses to speak to Elvin after they leave. She is especially upset that he paid for dinner. They have dinner with Cliff and Clair the next day. Cliff gives Elvin advice on being psychic so that he will know how to keep from upsetting his wife. Clair sympathizes with Sondra, but points out that she could have avoided the whole
fiasco by being honest with Elvin. They eventually make up. Vanessa and Rudy get hooked on old movies. They become too caught up in the films and fear that Sondra is going to kill Elvin in a jealous rage.

Season 6, Episode 14 – Aired: 1/11/1990

**Cliff's Nightmare**
Cliff arrives home in the middle of the night after a long series of deliveries. He insists on eating a sausage sandwich, despite Clair's warnings that it will disagree with him and cause him to have bad dreams. He has a very bizarre nightmare that begins with Vanessa forming a jazz-funk combo and Olivia travelling back in time. He ends up back in the Navy and reporting to Theo, who chides him about his diet. Clair then becomes caught in a tornado that sucks her out of the house and leaves her hanging to the window. She calls out to Cliff for help, but he is distracted when his sandwich starts talking to him (literally disagreeing with him). A weird puppet doctor tells him that he has to make a delivery at the hospital, and brings in two monsters to drag him away. He is forced to make a delivery in front of a bunch of creatures. When the delivery does not happen, they tie him down and try to operate on him. Cliff wakes up and vows to change his diet. The food in the refrigerator starts talking and doubts that he will make good on this promise.

Season 6, Episode 15 – Aired: 1/18/1990

**Denise Kendall: Singles Counselor**
Vanessa spots a cute guy while she is at the cafe with Denise, but is reluctant to talk to him. Denise gives her an opening line to break the ice, and it proves successful. Denise leaves the two alone and brags to Clair that she might have what it takes to become a singles counselor. A furious Vanessa then comes home and announces that Elliott failed to tell her that he had a girlfriend, who showed up at the cafe. Elliott arrives at the house. He claims that he has been trying to break up with his girlfriend, Shayna, and wants to date Vanessa. He asks for Denise's advice on ending his relationship. Elliott comes by for a date with Vanessa, but Shayna is with him. Shayna confronts Denise about her advice, and proves that Elliott is so spineless that he will do whatever anyone tells him. Vanessa loses interest in Elliott, and orders Denise to break the news to him. Shayna also dumps him, leaving him without a ride. Denise nearly has to drive him back to Connecticut, but Shayna takes him back. Denise hopes that she will never see them again.

Season 6, Episode 16 – Aired: 1/25/1990

**The Birthday Party**
Denise and Martin host Olivia's fourth birthday party. Cliff is unsure of how the children will react to Denise's menu, which includes healthy food such as all-natural (sugarless) cake. The kids arrive and begin running wild. Denise and Martin discover that they have forgotten to rent the video for the party. Denise is busy with the food, so Cliff watches the kids while Martin goes to the video store. The kids find the video boring, so Olivia leads them through the house in search of her present, a tricycle. They raid the basement fridge and help themselves to a chocolate cake. However, they still enjoy Denise's food, and take a nap after wearing themselves out. Martin and Denise give Vanessa and Rudy's old tricycle to Olivia. She is a little disappointed that they didn't buy her a new one, but likes the gift after Denise explains that it is a way of accepting her into the family.

Season 6, Episode 17 – Aired: 2/1/1990

**Not Everybody Loves the Blues**
Theo frets to Elvin about his relationship with Justine. He is worried about losing her if she decides to go to graduate school, but says that he isn't ready for a serious relationship. Theo and Elvin attend a performance by legendary blues singer/guitarist Riley Jackson. Theo brings one of Riley's records to the Huxtable house to introduce his music to his parents. He is stunned to find that Riley is at the house having dinner. He is a longtime friend of Russell and Anna, and visits with them whenever he is in town. He came to see Cliff and Clair because Cliff's parents are away. Vanessa is depressed because she doesn't have a boyfriend, and declines to listen to Riley sing. She thinks that blues music is too whiny. Kenny, a fan of the blues because of his brother's influence, comes over and does a duet with Riley. Rudy is not impressed. Theo seeks relationship advice from Riley. He is confused because he loves Justine, but still doesn't know if she is "the one." Riley says that all relationships move at their own pace. Theo is very happy when Justine returns to town and joins him at Riley's performance. Vanessa loves the show and gets overly enthusiastic. Theo talks to his parents about Justine. He says that he is afraid that Justine wants to get married and will be disappointed if he doesn't commit. His parents point out that he has no reason to believe Justine feels this way, and suspect that Theo is using this as a cover because he is the one starting to think about marriage. Theo is a little freaked out.
Danielle comes to the house and shows off her new shirt. Rudy and Kim decide that they must buy identical shirts while they are still available, but Rudy doesn't have enough money. She searches her room, but comes up $2.30 short. Kenny offers to give her the money in exchange for the autographed Magic Johnson poster that Cliff had given her. He doesn't have any money at the moment, but says that his brother owes him money and will be getting his paycheck that night. Rudy decides to ask Clair for an advance in her allowance in the meantime. Unfortunately, Vanessa first approaches Clair and tries to demand a raise in her allowance (which she feels her parents "owe" her). Clair becomes angry and says that she's not giving out any more money, so Rudy keeps quiet. She swipes some of the money that Clair had left out for the dry cleaners. Clair drives herself crazy tearing apart the house while looking for the missing cash. Kenny tells Rudy that his brother couldn't come up with the money, so she turns to Theo for help. Cliff makes the connection and realizes that Rudy took the money. He advises her to come clean with Clair. Clair is relieved that she isn't losing her mind and misplacing things. She scolds the guilt-ridden Rudy for taking the money, but goes easy on her because she seems to have learned her lesson. Cliff realizes that Kenny lied about getting money from his brother so that he could stake a claim on Rudy's poster. Cliff accompanies Kenny to his house to get it back.

Cliff and Clair receive a phone call from Rudy's teacher, Mrs. McGee. She reports that she has assigned Rudy and classmate George Thompson to put together a dance routine as part of a class presentation about the 1920s. However, Rudy has refused to cooperate. Rudy tells her parents that she feels self-conscious around George because he is a talented and experienced dancer. She fears that she will just make a fool of herself. Clair forces Rudy to attend dance classes, but assures her that she only wants her to make an effort. Cliff attends one of Rudy's classes. While she and George are away with the choreographer, he gets into a dance-off with the instructor, Mr. Sims. Mr. Sims quickly wears him out. Rudy continues to struggle, but Mr. Sims promises to keep working with her until she gets the hang of it. Rudy and George preview their routine for her family. Meanwhile, Olivia pretends that a bunch of clothespins are a family and plays with them.

Cliff finds women's underwear in Theo's laundry. Clair does some sleuthing and soon discovers that Theo has moved in with Justine. Theo explains that Justine lost her roommate, and that he moved in so that she wouldn't lose the place. The rent is cheaper, so he has been putting the extra money from his parents into a bank account. Clair is furious that Theo has lied to them. She and Cliff declare that they must buy identical shirts while they are still available, but Rudy doesn't have enough money. She searches her room, but comes up $2.30 short. Kenny offers to give her the money in exchange for the autographed Magic Johnson poster that Cliff had given her. He doesn't have any money at the moment, but says that his brother owes him money and will be getting his paycheck that night. Rudy decides to ask Clair for an advance in her allowance in the meantime. Unfortunately, Vanessa first approaches Clair and tries to demand a raise in her allowance (which she feels her parents "owe" her). Clair becomes angry and says that she's not giving out any more money, so Rudy keeps quiet. She swipes some of the money that Clair had left out for the dry cleaners. Clair drives herself crazy tearing apart the house while looking for the missing cash. Kenny tells Rudy that his brother couldn't come up with the money, so she turns to Theo for help. Cliff makes the connection and realizes that Rudy took the money. He advises her to come clean with Clair. Clair is relieved that she isn't losing her mind and misplacing things. She scolds the guilt-ridden Rudy for taking the money, but goes easy on her because she seems to have learned her lesson. Cliff realizes that Kenny lied about getting money from his brother so that he could stake a claim on Rudy's poster. Cliff accompanies Kenny to his house to get it back.

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him out. She plans to take him back if he grovels, but worries when he doesn't return for several hours. They soon learn that Theo is staying with Justine's parents. They are not upset because her father wants to keep an eye on Theo. Inspired by a conversation with Paula, Denise announces plans to become a teacher and help children with learning disabilities. She tries to convince her parents that she is serious, and promises to move out soon. Clair dissuades her, noting that she will need help with Olivia if she wishes to go back to college. Cliff thinks that Clair is crazy to pass up the opportunity to get one of their kids out of the house.

Season 6, Episode 22 – Aired: 3/22/1990
What's It All About?
Clair must work grueling hours as she takes on the most difficult case of her career. She gets very little sleep for several days. She is unable to relax when she returns home from court because the children repeatedly demand her attention. Clair becomes extremely irritable. She tells Cliff that she has “nothing left to give.” Cliff tries to help by getting a surgeon friend to allow her the use of his desolate cabin for the weekend. She is thrilled for the chance to be alone and rest, but ends up freezing when the pipes and a window break. She wants to come home, but no trains are available until the next day. Clair convinces the manager of the lodge to drive her to the nearest bus station. Cliff offers to do his best to help her continue her vacation at home, but Clair elects to help Rudy with her history paper instead of resting.

Season 6, Episode 23 – Aired: 4/5/1990
Off to See the Wretched
Vanessa and friends go to see their favorite group, the Wretched, and don't tell any of their parents that the concert is in Baltimore.

Season 6, Episode 24 – Aired: 4/19/1990
The Moves
Clair tries to prevent a community center from losing its playground. She meets with opposing counsel, her friend Bernadette, in the hopes of arranging a settlement. The Huxtables' neighbor Jeffrey, whose wife recently left him because of his lack of spontaneity, undergoes a series of lifestyle changes to prove that he is not boring. He begins wearing bright-colored clothing and a series of ridiculous hairpieces, and considers buying a sports car. When Clair brings Bernadette to the house, Jeffrey is instantly smitten with her. She has read many of his novels and seems interested in him, but Jeffrey calls the whole thing off. He concludes that she is attracted to his "flashy" new personality, and fears he would be living a lie. Cliff believes he has a fool-proof method to keep Olivia out of his hair when he repeatedly sends her after personal items. However, she consults Rudy about his behavior and comes up with a plan of her own.

Season 6, Episode 25 – Aired: 4/26/1990
Live and Learn
Denise becomes discouraged after learning that Medgar Evers College will only accept transfer credit for one of the courses she took at Hillman (archery) because it is the only class in which she received at least a C. When she goes to pick up Olivia at preschool, she is impressed by the teaching methods of "Uncle" Wilton, who uses rap to teach the multiplication tables. She decides that she can reach the children through alternative methods, and does not need to return to college. She ignores the advice of both her teacher friend Rebecca and Clair and decides to approach Wilton about becoming his assistant. She is crushed when Wilton tells her that she needs a master's degree, as he also employs traditional teaching methods. Rebecca convinces her that she still has a lot to learn about communicating with children. Cliff and Clair expect Denise to find yet another calling, but she surprises them by enrolling in college as a freshman.

Season 6, Episode 26 – Aired: 5/3/1990
The Storyteller
The Huxtables eagerly anticipate a visit from Cliff's great aunt Gramtee, who is coming to town to celebrate her 98th birthday. She embarrasses Cliff with stories about his childhood, and mesmerizes the children by sharing accounts of a relative who lived during times of slavery. Olivia is upset by the family's plans to attend church after Gramtee's birthday celebration, as a friend's parents had invited her to come to the zoo and Playland at the same time. She continually pleads with Denise to let her go to the zoo, but Denise stands her ground. Clair is impressed by Denise's resolve, but warns her to expect a tantrum. Olivia eventually talks to Gramtee, who tells her that she can make her own decision about whether to attend church. However, Olivia elects to go to church after all because she likes spending time with Gramtee.

Season 7, Episode 1 – Aired: 9/20/1990
**Same Time Next Year**

Cliff is ecstatic as the first day of school arrives. Vanessa, who took summer school courses and graduated high school a year early, leaves for Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. Denise begins her first semester at Medgar Evers, while Olivia enters preschool. Rudy becomes nervous about her first day of the sixth grade and refuses to leave her room. She confesses to Cliff that she is upset about the fact that she doesn't have breasts yet. He cheers her with a story about his youth and convinces her that her personality, intelligence and smile are what matters. She is prepared to go to school—until her friend Margie, who "developed" over the summer, appears at the door. Rudy's friend Amy brings over a cream that will supposedly enhance their bust within 48 hours. Clair tells Rudy that she shouldn't worry about the reactions of boys her age, as they laugh at everyone whether they have breasts or not. ("They're dumb," she explains succinctly.) She convinces Rudy to toss the cream and go to school. Cliff and Clair have a few moments of peace and quiet, until Theo returns from his trip to Europe. Rudy comes home in a much better mood, as most of the girls in her class have yet to develop.

Season 7, Episode 2 – Aired: 9/27/1990

**Bird in the Hand**

Cliff prepares to take on rival Jim Harmon in an auction for an original copy of Charlie Parker's Night in Tunisia. He volunteers to drive Olivia to preschool so that Denise can complete a paper. However, Denise had forgotten that she is supposed to watch the preschool class all day. The teacher insists that Cliff must take her place if she does not show up. Denise offers to come down, but Cliff takes the assignment because he does not want Denise to lose her newfound dedication to her studies. He calls the auction house and arranges to place bids over the phone. He beats out Harmon, and is on the verge of winning the recording when a late arrival enters the bidding. Clair inadvertently bids against Cliff and drives up the price. Even after Cliff bows out, the overly enthusiastic man at the phones continues to shout out bids. His error is eventually revealed, and Clair wins the record for $450 (only $150 more than what Cliff would have paid!).

Season 7, Episode 3 – Aired: 10/4/1990

**The Last Barbecue**

The Huxtables hold a barbecue as Denise and Martin's first anniversary approaches. After learning that Denise had a wedding shower but Martin never had a real bachelor party. Theo decides to rectify this problem. Denise is horrified by Theo's plans to hire a stripper for the event. Martin delivers a mixed message by smiling and laughing as he tells Theo not to do this. Denise believes that Martin should have rejected the suggestion outright. Denise and Sondra rant and rave over the sexism involved in having strippers at bachelor parties, and Sondra criticizes Elvin for agreeing to attend the party. An all-out battle of the sexes breaks out as the couples fight at the barbecue. Cliff and Clair stay out of the fray, although Clair repeatedly criticizes Theo for causing trouble. Cliff's parents arrive, and Anna seems not to mind as Russell recalls the fan dancer at his bachelor party. The Tibideauxs and Kendalls decide that their arguments are trivial, and make up. However, a furious Anna confesses to Russell that she hates his bachelor party story; she didn't want him to have a stripper either. Everyone eventually ends up hugging and kissing, and Cliff gives the credit to his special barbecue sauce.

Season 7, Episode 4 – Aired: 10/11/1990

**It's All in the Game**

Cliff and Clair return from a relaxing weekend in Vermont to find total chaos in the house. Theo repeatedly asks to "borrow" household items for his apartment. Rudy successfully begs for permission to sign up for ice skating lessons, at a cost...
of $200. Olivia breaks the washing machine by trying to wash some of her crayons. Vanessa comes home from the library and tries to hide the fact that she broke a headlight by crashing the station wagon into a parked car. Cliff and Clair begin to rant about the various calamities associated with parenthood, and compile a list of the most common lies told by children. Theo, Denise, Vanessa and Rudy fight back by naming off a series of embarrassing things that Cliff has done to them. They complain about the heavily embellished stories that Cliff constantly tells about his childhood.

Season 7, Episode 6 – Aired: 10/25/1990

**Getting the Story**

As a school project, Rudy and Kenny plan to make a video of a typical day of Clair on the job. They believe that their video will be a shoo-in for first prize in the school's contest and earn them a trophy. However, they soon discover that Clair's work entails a lot of paperwork, and is not nearly as exciting as they had anticipated. When Cliff has to go to the hospital to deliver a baby, Rudy and Kenny plead with him to let them tag along. They are supposed to stay in the waiting room, but try to sneak around the hospital to film the doctors at work. They eventually loan the father-to-be the video camera, and convince him that Cliff wants a copy of himself delivering a baby. Cliff learns what Rudy and Kenny have done, and accuses them of being dishonest. Rudy and Kenny believe they have failed the project, until the new father comes over with the videotape and begins raving about the importance of Cliff's work. The kids intersperse clips of patients talking about Cliff with the birth video, and give Mr. O'Royo credit for the footage. They easily win first prize.

Season 7, Episode 7 – Aired: 11/1/1990

**Just Thinking About It (1)**

Slide tries to convince Pam to sleep with him. He insists that all of their friends are sexually active, including Lance and Charmaine. Pam asks Charmaine why she didn't confide in her about this. Charmaine insists that it is a lie, and publicly confronts Lance. He manages to talk his way out of the situation. Slide continues to pressure Pam. She has a talk with Cliff and Clair and says that she may be in love. They understand what she is feeling, but try to explain that love may be more complicated than she believes. Cliff is stunned when Pam asks him for birth control pills. Meanwhile, Olivia plays with an imaginary dog.

Season 7, Episode 8 – Aired: 11/1/1990

**Just Thinking About It (2)**

Cliff tells Pam that he will refer her to a gynecologist if she gets permission from her mother. Clair has a talk with Pam. She tells her that if she elects not to have sex, a good man will respect her decision. Charmaine adds that she should not sacrifice her beliefs just to hold on to a guy. Pam tells Slide that she wants to wait. Slide is unhappy, and expresses outrage when he learns that Pam has obtained condoms from her doctor (instead of going on the pill). He doesn't even seem to think it would be a big deal if she got pregnant. Pam breaks up with him, but is miserable. Theo assures her that many guys who act like dogs in high school eventually mature. Slide comes to see Pam, and they get back together. However, he immediately begins pressuring her again. She storms off after he suggests that he will move on to another girl. Slide realizes that he made a mistake. He uses Lance as a go-between to facilitate communication, and tells Pam that he is sorry and does not want to make her do anything that she will regret. Meanwhile, Cliff finds a way to keep Olivia from blaming all of her misdeeds on her invisible dog.

Season 7, Episode 9 – Aired: 11/8/1990

**The Infantry Has Landed (and They've Fallen Off the Roof)**

Clair receives a call from the school nurse and learns that Rudy has gotten her period. She makes plans for "Women's Day," a family tradition in which Clair spends a fun day with her daughter and answers any questions that she might have. However, Rudy claims to be fine and refuses to talk to Clair. She instead receives a visit from two of her girlfriends, who proceed to share several ridiculous myths. Rudy eventually agrees to stay up late with Clair and watch "Gone With the Wind" over ice cream. She remains a bit reluctant to discuss the matter with Clair, but eventually opens up to her. Meanwhile, Theo attempts to build a psychological profile of Cliff as a class assignment. Cliff flustered his son by refusing to give him a straight answer about anything.

Season 7, Episode 10 – Aired: 11/15/1990

**You Can Go Home Again**

Denise and Martin become frustrated by their lack of privacy and decide to look for an apartment. This news thrills both Cliff and Rudy, who believes that she will finally get her own room. Olivia, however, vows that she will never leave the Huxtable house. Denise and Martin are unable to find a halfway decent apartment
that fits within their budget. Theo learns of an opening through a friend's psychic, and passes along the information to the couple. Martin is horrified to find a tiny room (patterned after a ship) with a shower in the living room and a refrigerator that folds out into a bed. Olivia would have to sleep in a drawer. Denise believes the place has potential for some reason, and pouts when Martin rejects it. She eventually realizes that he was right, and they make up. Cliff and Clair have a good laugh at their expense, and share stories of a houseboat where they once lived. Everyone becomes terrified of Rudy after she learns that she must continue sharing her room with Olivia.

Season 7, Episode 11 – Aired: 11/29/1990

**It's a Boy**

A father-to-be panics after learning that he will have a son, as he is terrible at sports. He seeks Cliff's help to improve his athletic skills. His wife is a good athlete and insists that she can teach sports to the child, but Mr. Phelps fears that this would diminish him in his son's eyes. Theo eases his mind by assuring him that there were many things about his father--other than sports--that impressed him as a young boy.

Season 7, Episode 12 – Aired: 12/6/1990

**Clair's Liberation**

Clair learns that she has begun menopause, and doesn't seem to have any trouble dealing with it. Theo, Vanessa and Pam share ridiculous stories that they have heard about menopausal women. They conclude that Clair will suffer hot flashes all the time, become incredibly moody, and lose the ability to make simple decisions. They begin to treat Clair like an invalid. She and Cliff play a practical joke on the kids and make them believe that Clair has gone completely insane. Pam's new boyfriend, Aaron, wins her heart with a series of thoughtful and romantic gestures. Lance tries to impress Charmaine by following Aaron's example.

Season 7, Episode 13 – Aired: 12/13/1990

**It's Your Move**

Elvin looks forward to watching the Giants-Eagles playoff game at the Huxtable house. Sondra foils his plans by agreeing to help some friends move at the same time. Although several of the couple's friends have promised to help out, Sondra and Elvin are the only ones who show up. Panicked to discover that Nancy and Walter haven't even finished packing, Elvin seeks the aid of Martin and Theo. Theo cannot stay long because his girlfriend has tickets to the game. Nancy continually naggs the men for not packing with enough care, and she and Sondra thwart their efforts to watch the game instead of working. Walter purposely gets lost on the way to the new apartment, and the guys scheme to watch the rest of the game at Cliff's house. However, Sondra and Nancy quickly track them down and remind them that they must return the moving truck or face higher rates. Cliff tapes the game for them, but Olivia seemingly spoils the outcome. Cliff admits that he told Olivia to give them a phony score as a prank.

Season 7, Episode 14 – Aired: 1/3/1991

**Theo's Final Final**

Theo performs very well in his classes, and will make the dean's list for the first time if he earns a good grade on his final in a tough economics class. He is determined to see all of his hard work pay off, and insists that he will go home and study instead of attending a party at the apartment. However, he meets an exchange student at the cafe and is instantly smitten with her. After learning that she must fly back to Barbados the next day, Theo suddenly decides that his priorities are screwed up. He elects to go to the party instead of studying, and justifies his actions to his parents with a convoluted speech. He tries to have a good time with Cheryl, but cannot stop talking about economics. She tells him that he needs to focus on his exam, as it is obviously important to him. He is thrilled to learn that she has enrolled for another term and will return from Barbados after vacation.

Season 7, Episode 15 – Aired: 1/10/1991

**Attack of the Killer B’s**

Pam experiences a marked improvement in her grades after picking up a few study tips from Theo. Slide claims that it is pointless for Pam to strive for academic achievement, as she will not be able to afford college. Charmaine urges her not to give up, and points out all the times she has beaten the odds in the past. Pam and her friends discuss their futures with their history teacher. Miss Hobbs agrees with Slide's statement that people can succeed without attending college,
but points out that he would still need a business plan. She talks to the teens about ways of achieving their goals. Pam returns to the Huxtable house and speaks enthusiastically about college. Although she seems intent on working her way through school, Cliff believes that Pam secretly wants the Huxtables to pay for her tuition.

Season 7, Episode 16 – Aired: 1/31/1991

**Total Control**
A successful high school basketball coach and his wife prepare for the birth of their first child. They have prepared extensively, and insist that they are ready for every possible scenario. However, Ray panics when his wife goes into labor. He is also taken aback when she becomes irritable and snaps at him in the delivery room. He runs into the hallway and begins crying. Cliff is able to get him back into the delivery room by convincing him to treat the situation the same way he would handle adversity in a basketball game.

Season 7, Episode 17 – Aired: 2/7/1991

**Adventures in Babysitting**
Cliff and his friend Jim Harmon decide to become partners for the annual pinochle tournament, rather than continuing to play with their wives. They are certain that they will win the championship and take home the big trophy. Clair and Jim's wife Nicole elect to team up, much to their husbands' amusement. The men continually mock them. Clair and Nicole defeat the three-time defending champions, setting up a grudge match with Cliff and Jim. The women win easily without having to put up much of an effort, and Cliff and Jim are forced to settle for the pocket-size second place trophy. Meanwhile, Rudy convinces Martin to let her babysit Olivia while he and Denise are out of town. Despite Rudy's pleas, Olivia insists on staying up late to watch a horror movie. She becomes convinced that vampire/werewolves are going to descend upon them at any moment. Rudy tries to calm her, but becomes almost as terrified as Olivia after a storm begins creating strange noises. Cliff and Clair are amused to come home to a booby-trapped house, and find the girls sleeping on their bed while surrounded by cloves of garlic.

Season 7, Episode 18 – Aired: 2/14/1991

**27 and Still Cooking**
Cliff plans a special surprise for Clair to celebrate their 27th anniversary. He decides to re-create the restaurant where they shared their first dinner as a married couple. He tracks down the same chef, Mr. Atkins, and hires him to prepare dinner. He also hires a calypso band; and Theo, Pam and Rudy volunteer to supply decorations. Mr. Atkins believes that the meal Cliff has requested is too "simple" for a chef of his caliber, and refuses to make it—until Cliff threatens to withhold his check. However, Atkins still tries to slip unnecessary ingredients such as tofu into the soup. Cliff asks Elvin to keep an eye on Atkins, and he saves the meal by secretly shoving the unwanted items down the garbage disposal. Unfortunately, Cliff becomes ill before Clair comes home from work and falls asleep. She thanks him for his sweet gesture, and enjoys the dinner and music alone at his insistence.

Season 7, Episode 19 – Aired: 2/21/1991

**The Return of the Clairettes**
Clair's good friend Kris comes for a visit with her husband, Herb. Clair and Kris immediately don wigs and act silly, performing a song and dance routine from their youth. They reminisce about the past and exchange humorous stories about their present lives. Cliff and Herb plan to fill up on dessert while their wives are talking, but the women enter the kitchen and thwart their plans. Although she is not supposed to date until she is thirteen, Rudy convinces Cliff to let her go on a "group outing" to the movies with her friends Susan and Danielle and three boys. Unfortunately, the other girls get sick, and Vanessa refuses to double-date with her little sister. Cliff and Clair agree to chaperone Rudy and her date, Scott. Rudy forces Cliff to promise to behave himself. Scott is so nervous when he arrives at the house that he is literally shaking; he finds it difficult to speak, and mistakenly gives Rudy's flowers to Cliff.

Season 7, Episode 20 – Aired: 2/28/1991

**No More Mr. Nice Guy**
Cliff and Clair go away for a skiing weekend and agree to let Theo use the vacant house for a date with Cheryl. His friend Denny's girlfriend Ellen comes over to discuss plans for Denny's birthday surprise the following night. She drinks a glass of wine before remembering that she is not supposed to mix alcohol with her antihistamines. Theo believes that she has left, but she becomes ill and has to run upstairs to the bathroom. She then feels dizzy and falls asleep in Cliff and Clair's room. A worried Denny arrives and shares his suspicions that Ellen is cheating on...
him. Theo discovers that Ellen is in the house, and tries to hide her. Cliff and Clair return home after their ski trip is rained out, but Theo can't get them away from Denny long enough to explain what is going on. The situation becomes even more complicated when Martin gets a weekend pass and unexpectedly arrives home with Denise; and Theo's grandparents come over with Sondra and Elvin to pick up a saw. Denny discovers movie tickets with Ellen's name on the envelope and concludes that she is seeing Theo behind his back. Cheryl arrives as Denny is tossing around more accusations. Ellen overhears and sneaks out the back door. She comes around to the front and tells Denny that she has bought him the tickets as a surprise. Theo tells an understanding Cheryl the entire story over dinner.

Season 7, Episode 21 – Aired: 3/7/1991

**Home Remedies**
Olivia gets sick and develops laryngitis, spoiling her plans to sing at the party for Russell and Anna's 55th wedding anniversary. Everyone horrifies Cliff by suggesting possible home remedies for her malady. Olivia feels that she has let everyone down, and is so disappointed that she decides to stay in her room instead of coming to the party. Cliff arranges for her to put on a lip-synch performance to a blues record, with Cliff and Rudy as her "backup band."

Season 7, Episode 22 – Aired: 3/21/1991

**Nightmare on Stigwood Avenue**
Rudy suffers a nightmare after an argument with Olivia. She dreams that Olivia is a tyrant who constantly gets her own way by manipulating Cliff and Clair with her cuteness. She schemes to take over Rudy's room; and Rudy is eventually forced to the basement after losing her bed to Olivia's new pony. However, Cliff and Clair suddenly stop catering to Olivia's whims. ("It's my dream," Rudy explains to the furious Olivia.) Vanessa, Pam and Charmaine serve as a musical chorus throughout the nightmare.


**There's Still No Joy in Mudville**
Cliff goes out bowling with his father, Elvin and some friends. Everyone makes fun of him after his terrible play causes their team to lose. Cliff takes everyone back to the house for Chinese food. Cliff, Russell and former Negro League players Frank Potter and Joe Simms sit around telling baseball stories. Jim Harmon and his friend Carleton become extremely bored. They get their revenge on Cliff by forcing him to listen to cricket stories. After Cliff puts down the sport, they challenge him to a cricket game in the living room. The game ends abruptly when Clair returns home. As a prank, Rudy has Olivia memorize all the answers from a TV quiz show so that she can trick her parents into believing that Olivia is an amazing child prodigy.


**Cliff and Jake**
Despite the family's best efforts, Cliff learns that his friend Jake is holding a sale at his appliance store. Clair tries to convince Jake not to sell Cliff a power sander, as she is afraid that he will become obsessed with sanding the entire house. Cliff inadvertently sets Jake off on a rant about an incident from ten years earlier, in which Jake's best friend Stanley forced him to pay for car repairs after a traffic accident that Jake insists he did not cause. Jake's daughter Cookie sets up a meeting with Cliff to introduce him to her fiancé, Jonathan, who is Stanley's son. They have been seeing each other secretly for almost a year to avoid their fathers' wrath. Although they will marry even without their fathers' approval, they plead with Cliff to serve as a mediator between the men. Jake behaves very stubbornly, but Stanley proves to be more reasonable. Not wishing to miss his son's wedding, he admits that he caused the crash when he absent-mindedly backed up his car. He had argued with his wife, and wanted to return home to apologize. The men apologize for their behavior and renew their friendship.


**Theo and the Kids (1)**
Theo excitedly begins an internship as 7th grade junior counselor at the community center. The students try to trick him in the hopes of getting out of doing their homework, but he is able to handle them. A boy named Stanley repeatedly refuses to do his homework. His classmate, Latisha, mocks him for doing poorly on a recent history test. However, Stanley seems to know all of the material when Theo quizzes him about it. Theo takes Stanley outside and asks him to read a short passage. His struggles prompt Theo to suspect that he is dyslexic. Meanwhile, Cliff bewilders the family by insisting on fixing the sink himself.

Season 7, Episode 26 – Aired: 5/2/1991
Theo and the Kids (2)
Theo contacts Mrs. Hudson, the head of the community center, about Stanley's problem. She recommends that Stanley undergo tests to determine whether he has dyslexia. Stanley refuses to consider this because he does not want to be different from everyone else. Another student, Rahim, must leave the center and get a job after his father is laid off. A weary Theo confesses to Cliff that his work is beginning to depress him, as he wishes that he could do more for the kids. He describes the helplessness he felt after discovering that a girl was taking leftover food from the garbage to feed her family. Cliff and Mrs. Hudson remind him that he cannot solve everyone's problems, and advise him to just keep trying his best. After Theo explains how much progress he made following the diagnosis of his dyslexia, Stanley agrees to take the tests as a favor to him.

Season 8, Episode 1 – Aired: 9/19/1991

With This Ring?
Vanessa stuns her parents by suddenly announcing that she is engaged. She has been engaged for six months, and has known her fiancé for a year without mentioning him to her family. She reveals that he is a maintenance man at her school named Dabnis Brickey. Vanessa brings Dabnis inside to meet Cliff and Clair. They are surprised to discover that he is in his late twenties. They reluctantly invite him to the family dinner that night, and are put off when he mentions his past relationships with several women. The conversation grows so uncomfortable that most of the family is ordered out of the dining room. Clair confronts Vanessa and demands to know why she kept her relationship with Dabnis a secret for so long. She believes that her daughter is over her head, but Vanessa insists that she is really in love. Cliff assures Dabnis that they are not snobs; they would dislike him regardless of his profession. Cliff seems to reconsider his attitude after Dabnis reveals that he owns his own home--meaning that he and Vanessa would never move into the Huxtable house.

Season 8, Episode 2 – Aired: 9/26/1991

There's No Place Like This Home
Cliff surprises Clair by showing her plans for an addition to the house, a soundproof room where she could be free from the children and their demands. Cliff and Clair co-sign a loan for Sondra and Elvin to help them secure financing on their new house. Elvin suffers a panic attack after the papers are signed as he thinks about just how much money he will have to spend each month. Cliff tries to calm him by reminding him that he and Sondra are both successful professionals. Sondra and Elvin complete the final paperwork and move out of their apartment. Unfortunately, the couple selling the house suddenly files for divorce, complicating the sale and leaving the Tibideauxs homeless. They plead with Cliff and Clair to let them stay in the Kendalls' bedroom while Denise and Martin are in Japan. They lay it on thick, talking at length about the sleazy motel where they will otherwise stay and having the twins trudge sadly across the living room. Cliff and Clair let them stay, but abandon the idea of Clair's room because they feel they can never escape the children. They later decide to build an addition for the kitchen.

Season 8, Episode 3 – Aired: 10/3/1991

Particles in Motion
Theo prepares for his first parents' night at the community center, and worries about how to handle parents whose kids are having problems. During a parent-teacher conference, he develops a mutual attraction with single mother Lisa. She asks him out for coffee, but he declines. He explains that it would not be in the child's best interest for the two of them to get involved. Lisa agrees that their relationship should remain professional. When Theo describes the situation to Clair, she shocks him by announcing that her clients hit on her all the time. Rudy meets Stanley at the open house and is instantly smitten. Stanley gets her phone number from Theo and asks her out. A jealous Kenny shows up at the house before Stanley in the hopes of sabotaging their date.

Season 8, Episode 4 – Aired: 10/10/1991

Pam Applies to College
Pam is intent on attending the same college as Charmaine. She decides to apply to the same schools: Hillman, Bowling Green and the University of Pennsylvania. Charmaine doubts that Pam can meet the rigorous academic standards of these schools, but doesn't want to burst her bubble. The guidance counselor informs Pam that she has virtually no chance for admission, as her grades for all but one semester are terrible. She vows to find a way to get in, and takes the applications anyway. However, she quickly begins to doubt herself. Olivia tries to provide counsel while practicing her show-and-tell routine. Pam tells Charmaine that she will probably move to California after graduation to live with her mother and grandmother and study fashion design. The girls lament their impending separation, but vow that they will always remain friends. Olivia enters, and they
all end up hugging each other while blubbering. Meanwhile, Cliff continues to interfere with work on the new kitchen. He tries to blame the children for a hole in the wall, but no one is buying it.

Season 8, Episode 5 – Aired: 10/17/1991

**Warning: A Double-Lit Candle Can Cause a Meltdown**

Rudy and her friends are determined to get into a 16-and-over club to see a birthday performance by rapper JT Freeze. They also hope to win a drawing and get to dance with him. Rudy tries to con her parents into letting her go by claiming that they will be going to a cultural center. Cliff and Clair learn the truth about the club from Lance, Pam and Charmaine. They admit that it is common for junior high kids to frequent the establishment; and explain that the only real threat comes from "old heads"—men in their late teens or early twenties who hit on the younger girls because they can't get women their own age. Cliff and Clair agree to pay the teens to go to the Exchange in disguise and keep an eye on Rudy. Lance scares away one of the "old heads" who repeatedly approaches the bewildered Rudy, Susan and Danielle. Pam ends up winning the dance with JT. She introduces him to the girls, who make fools of themselves. Rudy and her friends are forced to work at a retirement home as punishment for their deception, while Pam, Charmaine and Lance party with JT at his hotel.

Season 8, Episode 6 – Aired: 10/24/1991

**It's Apparent to Everyone**

Sondra and Elvin get on Cliff and Clair's nerves by letting the twins constantly wreak havoc and generally monopolizing the house. Every time Cliff or Clair tries to object, Sondra and Elvin use the children to lay another guilt trip on them. Sondra is furious when Cliff builds a "fort" for the kids to keep them out of trouble while he cleans up their messes. Sondra and Elvin reveal that they will not be able to move into their house for sixty days. Cliff hopes that his parents will take in the foursome for a while, but Russell refuses to go for it.

Season 8, Episode 7 – Aired: 10/31/1991

**The Iceman Bricketh**

Russell learns of Vanessa's engagement through a friend who attends church with the Brickeys. The woman erroneously reports that Dabnis is 45 years old. Outraged, Russell and Clair's mother grill Dabnis when he and Vanessa come for a visit. He assures them that Russell's friend always gets him confused with his older brother. He informs the pair that he loves Vanessa and has a good job as head of maintenance. However, nothing he says seems to satisfy them. Vanessa constantly makes speeches about how happy she is, and vows to stand by Dabnis. The grandparents realize that Dabnis is a good man after watching him give Cliff some much-needed help with household repairs. After the whole family offers its blessing and inquires about the wedding date, Vanessa begins to panic.

Season 8, Episode 8 – Aired: 11/7/1991

**Olivia's Field Trip**

Cliff and neighbor Jeffrey supervise Olivia's class on a field trip to the museum. Theo organizes a fundraiser for the community center. He plans to put messages on T-shirts and sell them at street fairs. He believes that he has gotten a great deal on the shirts, only to discover that they do not have neck holes. Theo hopes to handle the situation himself, but Clair eventually steps in to save the day with her legal expertise.

Season 8, Episode 9 – Aired: 11/14/1991

**For Men Only**

Theo convinces Cliff to teach a course for young men at the community center. Cliff brings Olivia's doll to the class as a symbol of innocence, but the students misinterpret his intentions and assume that he is going to give a sex education lecture. This sparks a discussion about negative impressions of inner city youth. The teens feel that they are blamed for all of society's problems. A guy named Cal draws the ire of his classmates after he admits that he has fathered children with two different women, but rarely spends time with either his son or daughter. Another student declares that he plans to marry his pregnant girlfriend and get a job. Cal insists that he wants to provide for his children, but has no training and doesn't want to be stuck in a minimum wage job where he is treated like garbage. Cliff tries to help the guys take the necessary steps toward beginning careers. Meanwhile, Russell becomes hooked on a video game after babysitting Olivia and her friend.

Season 8, Episode 10 – Aired: 11/21/1991

**Olivia Comes Out of the Closet**

Cliff and Clair invite famed singer Miriam Makeba to the house for dinner, and try to discourage the children from crashing the event. Olivia enjoys a visit from her father, but is saddened because he must soon return to the ship. She will not
see him again for three months. Olivia disappears during Miriam's visit. While the others search the house frantically, Miriam finds Olivia hiding in the front closet. Olivia explains that she is trying to keep her father from leaving. Miriam takes her outside to talk. She tells her that everyone is very worried about her, and convinces her that she is lucky to have so many family members who care about her. Olivia agrees to go back into the house, and everyone poses for pictures with Miriam.

Season 8, Episode 11 – Aired: 12/5/1991

Two Is a Crowd
Vanessa unexpectedly drops by for a visit, claiming that she needs some peace and quiet to study. Dabnis arrives a few hours later and shows Cliff and Clair a cryptic note that Vanessa had left him. He confronts her and notes her continued reluctance to set a wedding date. He reminds her that she was the one who pursued him, and wonders why she is now pushing him away. Vanessa apologizes and asks Dabnis to be patient as she deals with her fears about marriage. Kenny waits around the house all day, hoping to console Rudy after her break-up with Stanley. Stanley shows up first and boasts that he will mend his rift with Rudy. He wins her back by repeating Kenny's heartfelt words about caring and friendship (although Kenny had stolen the speech from Dabnis anyway). Kenny gets back at Stanley by tagging along on the couple's date. Meanwhile, Cliff works Clair's last nerve by dropping hints about the outcome of a book she is trying to read.

Season 8, Episode 12 – Aired: 12/19/1991

Clair's Place
Cliff surprises Clair by finishing her room earlier than expected. Although it doesn't yet have furniture, Clair is thrilled to finally have some privacy. The kids grow depressed when Clair spends the whole day in the room. Pam, Rudy and Olivia initially claim that they need Clair's help to make Christmas cookies, but finally admit that they just have more fun baking with Clair. Cliff leaves Theo bewildered by trying to pass on the "tradition" of putting up the Christmas lights.

Season 8, Episode 13 – Aired: 1/2/1992

Theo's Future
Cliff and Clair are thrilled when Theo is accepted to graduate school. They agree to continue paying his tuition. Theo and a friend attend a corporation's recruiting dinner for the sole purpose of filling up on free food. However, an executive is impressed with Theo's off-hand comment about the corporation's philosophy. He is offered the chance to fly to San Francisco and interview for a position that would pay $30,000 a year. He excitedly tells Cliff and Clair that the job would allow him to become the first one of their kids to stop sponging off of them. Although they often tease him, they assure him that they do not think of him that way. They consider paying for his tuition an investment in his future. Eugene, one of the kids from the community center, is upset to learn that Theo may take a job and leave them. However, Theo insists that he is merely keeping his options open. Meanwhile, Clair tries to stifle Cliff's habit of stealing the remote control while she is watching a program.

Season 8, Episode 14 – Aired: 1/9/1992

The Price Is Wrong
Pam drives her old babysitter, Mrs. Whitaker, to the market each Saturday. Mrs. Whitaker invites her friends to join them, and there are soon so many women on the excursion that Pam, Lance and Charmaine have to take them in shifts. The market has much lower prices and higher quality products than the outlet that the same company runs in the women's neighborhood. Word begins to spread, and everyone begins clamoring for transportation to the better market. Pam, Lance and Charmaine cannot possibly handle the demand, so they decide to organize a protest to force the company to stop its unjust practices. They realize that they cannot organize a boycott because many of their neighbors have nowhere else to buy groceries. They finally settle on buying all the dented cans at the shoddy store and taking them to the Brooklyn store for refunds, thereby creating chaos and driving away the regular customers. Unfortunately, the store learns of the plans ahead of time and is prepared for them. One of the women suggests paying for everything in pennies. This method proves effective, and the women decide to try it every Saturday until their demands are met. Pam, Lance and Charmaine are reluctant to sacrifice all of their weekends, but the women assure them that they can handle the protests on their own. The teens decide to continue helping them.

Season 8, Episode 15 – Aired: 1/16/1992

Bring Me the Lip Gloss of Deirdre Arpelle
Pam fills in for Cliff's assistant on a Saturday. They must deal with Mrs. Minnifield, an extremely eccentric patient who has difficulty following Cliff's directions. Mrs. Minnifield calls Cliff to report her contractions much later than
he asked, and he instructs her to take a cab to the hospital immediately. She instead has the cabbie stop at Cliff's house, and ends up giving birth in the car. Rudy, Stanley and Kenny prepare to work on a group project together. Kenny shows up with a girl named Deirdre and claims that she is his girlfriend. Rudy becomes jealous, but soon concludes that Kenny made the whole thing up just to get to her. Kenny feels guilty after learning that Deirdre has actually liked him for a long time. He apologizes to her and convinces her to give him another chance. He also apologizes to Rudy, and they agree to go on double dates.

Season 8, Episode 16 – Aired: 1/30/1992
Eat, Drink and Be Wary
Clair goes away to a law conference in Washington, D.C. Everyone expects Cliff to follow his usual pattern of gorging himself on junk food while she is away, but he surprises them by serving a healthy dinner. After learning that some classmates are planning to take a cab to the school dance instead of being driven by parents, Rudy, Susan and Danielle decide to prove how "cool" they are by taking the subway. Cliff refuses to allow this, but reconsiders after Pam and Charmaine agree to ride with the girls both ways as they attend a movie in the area. Sondra drops by to see Cliff just as a take-out guy arrives with pizza, buffalo wings and ice cream. He still plans to eat everything, but Clair calls a that moment and makes him feel guilty by talking about trust.

Season 8, Episode 17 – Aired: 2/6/1992
The Getaway
Almost everyone is thrilled as the Tibideauxs prepare to finally move into their own house in New Jersey. However, Cliff refuses to get too excited until the move has actually happened. Elvin and a reluctant Sondra ask Cliff to watch the twins while they unload everything at the new house. The kids refuse to let Cliff take a nap. He finally plays hide-and-seek with them, and accidentally breaks the grandfather clock. The movers see what has happened, and save him by shipping the clock to a repair shop. Elvin returns for Nelson and Winnie. He tries to convince Cliff to sell him his station wagon, as he and Sondra will now need a second car.

Season 8, Episode 18 – Aired: 2/6/1992
Cliff Gets Jilted
Sondra and Elvin prepare for their housewarming party. They experience problems with the furnace and decide to move the party to the Huxtable house, much to Cliff's chagrin. Russell tells Cliff and Clair that he heard a rumor that Vanessa and Dabnis have set a wedding date. Cliff is very excited, as he really likes Dabnis and wants to have him fix stuff all the time. However, they instead tell Cliff and Clair that they have broken up. The couple asks that they keep this a secret, leading to many uncomfortable moments during the party as everyone welcomes Dabnis to the family. Vanessa confesses to her parents that she simply isn't ready to get married. Dabnis doesn't want to speak ill of Vanessa, but Cliff finally gets him to admit that he is annoyed by her habit of talking in convoluted metaphors instead of simply stating what is on her mind. Cliff is saddened by his impending separation from Dabnis, but does get him to repair Sondra and Elvin's furnace so that their family will get out of his house.

Season 8, Episode 19 – Aired: 2/13/1992
Cliff and Theo Come Clean
Theo decides to turn down his job offer and go to graduate school. Cliff is pleased, as he did not want his son to move across the country. As a school project, Olivia and Marlon plan to write about what Cliff was like at their age. However, they realize that his colorful stories are all lies. They call on Russell to tell them the truth about Cliff's childhood. Cliff finally impresses them with a true story about how he was pictured in the newspaper because of his work collecting tin foil for the war effort during World War II. Rahim finds a wallet containing 600 dollars at the community center, as one of their customers at a plant sale left it behind. He wants to keep the money, so Theo has the kids debate what he should do. He ends up returning the cash to the rightful owner, but feels like a fool because his family could have really used the money. He admits that his father would not have allowed him to keep it anyway. Theo convinces Rahim that he should be proud of his actions.

Season 8, Episode 20 – Aired: 2/20/1992
Clair's Reunion
Clair and several college friends meet to plan a retirement dinner for their old philosophy professor, Professor Capel. The women first compare notes about their "ungrateful" children before reminiscing about their college days. They recall Professor Capel as a stimulating but extremely challenging woman who always had very high expectations for her students. The women remember the
terrifying and exhilarating experience of taking part in a demonstration at a lunch counter that refused to serve blacks. Professor Capel took part in the demonstration and urged the women to hold their ground. She then instructed her substitute to fail the women for the day because they had skipped her class to go to the protest. Meanwhile, Olivia and Winnie have a sleepover. Olivia convinces a bewildered Cliff to get a "touch-up" at her make-believe beauty salon. Vanessa brings an exchange student from Senegal, who does not speak English, home for the weekend. Cliff dislikes the guy because he still misses Dabnis.

Season 8, Episode 21 – Aired: 2/27/1992
**Rudy's Retreat**
Cliff and Clair realize that the baby of the family has morphed into a hormonal teenager. Elvin and Sondra fret over who would take in their children, if he and Sondra were to die suddenly.

Season 8, Episode 22 – Aired: 3/26/1992
**You Can’t Stop the Music**
Cliff and Clair go to a radio station to attend a live performance as part of the Pan-American Music Festival. Cliff is ecstatic about the opportunity to meet many of his favorite musicians and see them in action. Kenny agrees to babysit Olivia, but cannot get her to eat her carrots. Theo comes over to check on things, and finds that Olivia has left Kenny so worn out that he can barely stay awake. Theo sends Kenny home, and ends up falling asleep on the couch.

Season 8, Episode 23 – Aired: 4/23/1992
**Some Gifts Aren’t Deductible**
When Kenny lies to Deirdra about planning her birthday party, he asks Rudy and Cliff to help him cover his tracks. Meanwhile, Cliff believes that all of his "Dependants" will net him a large check from the IRS.

Season 8, Episode 24 – Aired: 4/30/1992
**And So We Commence (1)**
Cliff drives Theo crazy by inviting everyone he knows to Theo’s graduation. Olivia gets ready to leave for Singapore.

Season 8, Episode 25 – Aired: 4/30/1992
**And So We Commence (2)**
Denise calls and announces that she is pregnant. Kenny manages to get a hold of the last three tickets the Huxtables need to get all their guests to the graduation. Vanessa confuses everyone by calling Dabnis "honey." As the ceremony begins, Cliff thinks back to a time when he feared that Theo would never live up to his potential. Cliff becomes upset to learn that the students graduate by section, rather than being called to the stage by name. With everyone out of the house that night, Cliff and Clair share a dance.

Season 8, Episode 26 – Aired: 5/19/2002
**The Cosby Show: A Look Back**
In this two-hour special, cast and crew members and frequent guest stars reminisce about their experiences on the show; and discuss its impact on the sitcom genre and the way it re-shaped society’s perceptions of African Americans. Celebrity fans also share their feelings about the series.
SEASON 1

1-1 "Pilot"  Jay Sandrich    Michael Leeson    Ed. Weinberger    September 20, 1984  101
Cliff and Clair deal with the daily pressures of having children. Theo gets four D's on his report card, while Denise goes on a date with an older boy. Cliff illustrates the cost of living to Theo using Monopoly money. When he tries to reason with his father about loving him regardless of his grades, Cliff responds by saying, "That's the dumbest thing I ever heard in my life!" Theo resolves to do better in school. Meanwhile Rudy can't sleep because Rudy claims she heard the Wolfman growling in her closet, so Rudy and Vanessa sleep with Cliff & Clair.

2-2  "Goodbye Mr. Fish"  Jay Sandrich    Earl Pomerantz    September 27, 1984  102
When Rudy's pet fish, Lamont, dies, Cliff tries to bring the family together for a funeral in the bathroom. The festivities end when Rudy gets bored and leaves to watch TV.

3-3  "Bad Dreams"  Jay Sandrich    John Markus    October 4, 1984  103
Vanessa claims that she is old enough to watch a scary movie that Theo saw, but Cliff still forbids it. Vanessa sneaks out anyway, and ends up having nightmares as a result.

4-4  "Is That My Boy?"  Jay Sandrich    John Markus    October 11, 1984  105
Freshman Theo tries out for the football team and makes it. Cliff is overjoyed, but his pride falters when he discovers his son will never be a star. Theo, however, is just happy being on the team. Meanwhile, Rudy believes that her older brother and sisters don't like her.

5-5  "The Shirt Story"  Jay Sandrich    John Markus    October 18, 1984  108
Theo wants to impress a girl by wearing an expensive shirt by designer Gordon Gartrelle. Since Cliff and Clair will not pay for it, Denise offers to make a copy of the shirt for him. Guest appearance by Kadeem Hardison, who years later would portray Dwayne Wayne on the Cosby Show spinoff, A Different World.

(NOTE: The name "Gordon Gartrelle" was taken from a staff member, who eventually became a writer/producer for The Cosby Show during the final two seasons of the series.)

6-6  "Breaking With Tradition"  Jay Sandrich    Earl Pomerantz    October 25, 1984  106
Cliff's father, Russell, pays a visit and begins questioning Cliff about the kids' college choices. He asks Denise about Hillman, his and Cliff's alma mater. Denise is dead-set against it at first, until Russell tells her that the males outnumber the females there. Also Cliff reveals that he went to Hillman because of a young woman who later will be his wife. First appearance of Earle Hyman as Russell Huxtable, Cliff's father.

7-7  "One More Time"  Jay Sandrich    Earl Pomerantz    November 1, 1984  107
While Clair cares for a friend's baby, she begins to consider having another. Cliff desperately tries to talk her out of it, claiming that babies are "false advertising", and grow up to be a nuisance. Clair's mother, Carrie, then reminds her that the older you are when you have kids, the older you'll be if they end up having to come back and live at home. First appearance of Ethel Ayler as Carrie Hanks, Clair's mother.

8-8  "Play It Again, Vanessa"  Jay Sandrich    Jerry Ross    November 8, 1984  109
Vanessa plays the clarinet in the school's orchestra. Though she tries her best and practices daily, she simply cannot play the instrument. She plays an embarrassing solo at the school concert, but her parents support her anyway. Guest Dizzy Gillespie as Mr. Hampton, Vanessa's music teacher.

9-9  "How Ugly Is He?"  Jay Sandrich    John Markus    November 15, 1984  110
Denise has a new boyfriend, David, but is reluctant to bring him home. She fears that Cliff will, like always, make fun of the boy and ruin her chances with him.
Cliff and Clair are initially impressed with David until he expresses some unwanted opinions about medicine and the law at dinner. Kristoff St. John plays boyfriend David.

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<tr>
<td>10-10</td>
<td>&quot;Bon Jour, Sondra&quot;</td>
<td>Jay Sandrich</td>
<td>November 22, 1984</td>
<td>111</td>
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Sondra, the eldest Huxtable child, makes her first appearance when she visits home for Thanksgiving. She plans on going to Paris for the summer with her friends, and hopes that her parents will support the decision. While Clair, Vanessa, Rudy, Theo, and Denise agree that she should go, she barely makes it with the head of household, Cliff.

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<td>11-11</td>
<td>&quot;You're Not a Mother Tonight&quot;</td>
<td>Karyl Geld Miller Korby Siamis</td>
<td>December 6, 1984</td>
<td>104</td>
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<td></td>
<td>&quot;Knight to Knight&quot;</td>
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Clair is exhausted from constantly caring for the children, so Cliff decides to take her out on the town for "You're Not a Mother Night." Cliff reserves a suite in the Biltmore Hotel. While there, some of Clair's motherly instincts start kicking in—but they stop in time for a romantic evening.

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<tr>
<td>12-12</td>
<td>&quot;Rudy's Sick&quot;</td>
<td>Matt Williams</td>
<td>December 13, 1984</td>
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Clair could be named partner at her law firm if an interview goes well, but Rudy is sick! Cliff vows to take care of her while Clair works, and engages in some unique doctoring methods. Clair is named partner and Rudy is fine in the end.

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<tr>
<td>13-13</td>
<td>&quot;Father's Day&quot;</td>
<td>John Markus Elliot Shoeman</td>
<td>December 20, 1984</td>
<td>112</td>
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Cliff complains about the poor quality of his annual Father's Day gifts. He challenges the children to find some better presents for a December Father's Day. They give him thoughtful—if not quite attractive—presents.

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<tr>
<td>14-14</td>
<td>&quot;Independence Day&quot;</td>
<td>Matt Robinson</td>
<td>January 10, 1985</td>
<td>114</td>
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Theo gets his ear pierced to impress a girl, but Denise thinks it might be infected. She is correct, and Theo must go to Cliff. Cliff hopes that Grandpa Huxtable will punish Theo, but the old man instead relates the story of how Cliff tried to straighten his hair to impress Clair, but ended up burning it off! Russell brags, and Anna reminds him of the time that he had a tattoo of her name placed on his chest, but ended up with a huge scar on his chest when he tried to remove it when the tattoo artist misspells Anna's name (Adda instead of Anna, which was also the name of the girl who was a rival of Anna's for Russell's affections). First appearance of Clarice Taylor as Anna Huxtable, Cliff's mother.

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<tr>
<td>15-15</td>
<td>&quot;Physician of the Year&quot;</td>
<td>John Markus</td>
<td>January 17, 1985</td>
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Cliff is set to receive an important award, but a woman goes into labor right before the ceremony. Theo delivers his speech for him. Guest appearances by Aleta Mitchell as Mrs. Randall, Elisa de la Roche as Nurse, Sheldon Leonard as Dr. Wexler

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<tr>
<td>16-16</td>
<td>&quot;Jitterbug Break&quot;</td>
<td>Matt Williams</td>
<td>January 31, 1985</td>
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Cliff tries to impress Denise's friends by teaching them how to jitterbug. Some of Clair's friends also show off their dance moves. Soon, the whole house is full of dancers. Guest appearances by Blair Underwood as Denise's boyfriend (uncredited), Judith Jamison as Marie, Donald McKayle as Ralph, Gerard Cooper as Guy, Christine Langner as Girl.

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<tr>
<td>17-17</td>
<td>&quot;Theo and the Joint&quot;</td>
<td>Matt Williams</td>
<td>February 7, 1985</td>
<td>117</td>
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Clair discovers a marijuana joint in one of Theo's school books. She and Cliff confront him about it, and accept his explanation — another boy slipped it in. Theo confronts the boy and brings him home to confess in order to remove any uncertainty from his parents about his telling the truth. Theo and the boy actually start to become friends, but Clair starts to think Theo and his friends are part of a drug scheme. Guest appearances by Stephen Thompson as Anthony Braxton, Iman as Mrs. Montgomery, one of Cliff's patients. (NOTE: Rudy says her full name in this episode, Rudith Lillian Huxtable.)

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<tr>
<td>18-18</td>
<td>&quot;Vanessa's New Class&quot;</td>
<td>Matt Williams</td>
<td>February 14, 1985</td>
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Vanessa is placed in an advanced science class. She creates a model of the solar system, but learns that she will have to work harder than ever hopes to succeed.
First appearance of Pam Potillo as Vanessa's friend Janet Meisner. Guest appearances by William Christian as Mr. Robertson, Kim Hauser as Girl #1, Audrey Wong as Girl #2, Rado Randriamamonjy as Leon Haywood.

19- 19 "Clair's Case"  Jay Sandrich  Winifred Hervey  February 21, 1985  119

A sneaky mechanic tries to swindle Sondra. It's Clair to the rescue as the two battle in court when the first lawyer for the case drops out. Guest appearances by David Langston Smyrl as the man in court, Shawn Elliott as Mr. Wilson, Alan North as Judge.

This is the only episode where Clair Huxtable is seen in a courtroom.

20- 20 "Back to the Track, Jack"  Jay Sandrich  Matt Robinson  February 28, 1985  120

Cliff's college track coach contacts him and asks to run in a charity event between Hillman and its rival, Norton College. Heathcliff "Combustible Huxtable" trains, but soon learns that he is not the runner he was all those years ago. Guest appearances by Al Freeman, Jr. as Coach Ernie Scott, 1956 Olympic medalist Joshua Culbreath as Col. Sanford B. "Tailwind" Turner, Dhamiri Abayomi as Himself.

21- 21 "The Younger Woman"  Jay Sandrich  John Markus  March 14, 1985  121

Cliff and Clair receive a visit from an old friend — and he has a new girlfriend that is half his age. They are initially suspicious, but learn that judging by appearances isn't always right. Guest appearances by Terry Farrell as Nicki Phillips, Robert King as Dr. Mike Newcomb.

22- 22 "Slumber Party"  Jay Sandrich  Carmen Finestra  March 28, 1985  122

Rudy invites all of her friends over for a slumber party. It's Cliff's job to watch over them, and he demonstrates some unique games to wrangle the youngsters. In the end, Russell drops by and demonstrates the perfect way to deal with kids—bribe them! First appearance of Peter Costa as Peter, the Huxtables' neighbor. Guest appearances by Earle Hyman as Russell. With Dana Bryant, Kyle Bryant, Alicia Keys (billed under her given name of Alicia Cook), Naoka Nakagawa, Desiree Scott, Sing Smith-Stewart as Rudy's friends. The show opened with a brief voiceover from Keshia Knight Pulliam explaining that this episode was meant specifically for kids.

23- 23 "Mr. Quiet"  Jay Sandrich  Emily Tracy  May 2, 1985  125

Cliff, Clair, and the Huxtable clan volunteer at a local community center. There, a battered boy tries to find help, and the owner — Tony Castillo — does his best to lend assistance. Guest appearances by David Langston Smyrl as Chester, Alexis Cruz as Enrique Tarron, Tony Orlando as Tony Castillo, Ada Maris as Selena Cruz, Pearl Tama as Sonia Tarron, Emmet O'Sullivan as Old Man, Raymond Rosario as Kid, Angela Bassett as Mrs. Mitchell, Olga Merediz as Mrs. Rodriguez, Lisa Mordente as Expectant Mother #1, Alva Chinn as Expectant Mother #2. This episode was a pilot for a proposed spin-off series featuring Tony Orlando's character and the community center, which never came to fruition. Also the first episode in which Clair is shown to be fluent in Spanish.

24- 24 "Cliff's Birthday"  Jay Sandrich  John Markus Elliot Shoenman  May 9, 1985  124

Cliff is turning 48, and as usual, he is trying to find out what his birthday present is ahead of time. Clair, with the help of the kids, orchestrates a huge trick. Cliff is fooled, and doesn't find out what is birthday surprise is: a visit to Lena Horne's private club. Guest appearances by Lena Horne as herself, Clarence Williams III as Clarence Thornehill.

(Note: In episode 12, Cliff says his birthday is in October, although the episode could be set at any time in the year.)

SEASON 2

25-1 "First Day of School"  Jay Sandrich  John Markus Elliot Shoenman  September 26, 1985  201

Cliff and Clair are overjoyed with the arrival of the new school year, as their children are finally out of the house.
Cliff, who has a penchant for electronic appliances, buys a juicer. Rudy and Peter, bored from Vanessa's inattentive babysitting, decide to use it even though they are not allowed to use appliances.

For Russell and Anna's 49th anniversary, the family commissions a portrait of the couple as newlyweds and offers them a cruise to Europe. Later in the evening, the whole family performs Ray Charles' "Night Time Is the Right Time", with Theo, Rudy and Cliff each lip-synching a solo.

Sondra breaks up with her boyfriend Elvin and is depressed, taking it out on the family. Cliff and Clair aren't exactly unhappy; they find Elvin rather annoying. Later, he appears at the house with flowers and tries to apologize. While there, he offers some of his sexist rhetoric to Clair, who quickly becomes annoyed. First appearance of Geoffrey Owens as Elvin. Joseph C. Phillips appears as Daryl (Phillips joins the cast in Season 6 as Denise's new husband, Navy Lt. Martin Kendall).

When friend Suzanne accompanies Denise to observe the Huxtables' normal behavior, a smitten Theo behaves far from normally. Guest appearances by Robin Givens as Suzanne and Blair Underwood as Mark.

Vanessa has a Halloween party. She has a crush on a boy named Robert Forman, but while daydreaming about her love, she drops an entire tray of glasses and embarrasses herself in front of the guests. First appearance of Dondre Whitfield as Robert. Akili Prince as Scott. (Years later, Prince would originate the role of Terrence Frye on All My Children. Upon leaving that series, he was replaced by Whitfield.)

Rudy plays football and becomes a star, much to the chagrin of Clair, who worries she'll get hurt. But reluctance turns to excitement when Rudy is the star of her first game.

Denise wants to buy a car, so she plans to use her savings to do so, but Cliff and Clair quickly point out flaws in her plan. The answer to everyone's problems comes from friend Mr. Lucas, who has an old car he is willing to sell. Denise proves herself a good driver, and the car is hers. David Langston Smyrl as Mr. Lucas.

Clair's sister Sarah gets engaged. First appearance of Joe Williams as Clair's father Al Hanks. Guest appearance by Mario Van Peebles as Garvin.

While preparing to go out on a proposal anniversary dinner, Clair breaks her toe, but tries not to let it upset her routine. In the end, she develops a unique piece of footwear to hide her cast.

Denise asks Cliff to talk to her friend, who has a medical problem. Cliff diagnoses the girl as having a mild bladder infection, but learns that she was wary of telling her parents without certainty. Cliff and Clair decide to show the kids that they can tell them anything, but the children quickly point out that their
parents will just get angry. Cliff admits that anger is part of problems, but tells the children that no matter what, they will be loved. Guest appearance by Stacey Dash as Michelle, Denise's friend.

**Absent:** Sabrina Le Beauf as Sondra Huxtable

**36-12** "Mrs. Westlake"  
| Jay Sandrich | Elliot Shoenman | January 2, 1986 |

Theo's math teacher comes for dinner, to Theo's extreme consternation. He thinks she plans to tell his parents of a bad grade on a math test. To his surprise, Mrs. Westlake comes to dinner looking young, attractive, and even with a sense of humor; and she has a very good surprise! Mrs. Westlake also gives Theo his test - he actually gets an 89, and he proceeds to embrace her, much to his shock. Guest appearance by Sonia Braga as Mrs. Westlake.

**Absent:** Sabrina Le Beauf as Sondra Huxtable

**37-13** "The Auction"  
| Jay Sandrich | Gary Kott | January 9, 1986 |

Clair bids on a painting by her great-uncle that her grandmother had once owned. Attempting to win her favor, Elvin tries to bake her a cake, but fails miserably; he then gets advice from Cliff on how to pass himself off as a good cook. In real life, the painting used in the episode is *Funeral Procession* by Ellis Wilson.

**38-14** "Vanessa's Bad Grade"  
| Jay Sandrich | Ross Brown | January 16, 1986 |

Vanessa steals a sweater from Denise. The two soon begin to fight. In the end, Rudy's choice of television viewing, the "I Have a Dream" speech, reminds the whole family of what a real problem is. Excerpt from Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech featured at the end of the episode (Originally aired four days before the first observance of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day as a U.S. federal holiday).

**Absent:** Sabrina Le Beauf as Sondra Huxtable

**39-15** "Theo and Cockroach"  
| Jay Sandrich | Thad Mumford | January 30, 1986 |

Theo and his friend Cockroach scheme to pass a test on William Shakespeare's "Macbeth", which neither one has read. First appearance of Carl Anthony Payne II as Cockroach. Phylicia Ayers-Allen changes her professional name to Phylicia Rashād, after marrying NBC sportscaster Ahmad Rashād.

Peter goes to the dentist, but has Rudy come along for moral support so Peter won't be afraid of the dentist anymore. Guest appearance by Danny Kaye (in one of his last appearances) as Dr. Burns, who is also Cliff's dentist.

**Absent:** Sabrina Le Beauf as Sondra Huxtable

**41-17** "Play It Again, Russell"  
| Jay Sandrich | John Markus | February 13, 1986 |

The jazz group that Russell played with years ago reunites for a tribute show. Guest appearances by jazz musicians Tito Puente, Art Blakey, Percy Heath, Jimmy Heath, Tommy Flanagan, Eric Gale, Joe Wilder, Carlos Valdes ("Patato"), Bootzie Barnes, and Jimmy Oliver. Slide Hampton provided the audio track for Russell's trombone solos.

**Absent:** Sabrina Le Beauf as Sondra Huxtable

**42-18** "A Touch of Wonder"  
| Jay Sandrich | Matt Williams | February 20, 1986 |

After his limo collides with Denise's car, Stevie Wonder (appearing as himself) invites the Huxtables to a recording session. Wonder performs "I Just Called to Say I Love You" with Clair and the family.

**Absent:** Sabrina Le Beauf as Sondra Huxtable

**43-19** "Full House"  
| Jay Sandrich | Gary Kott | February 27, 1986 |

After an exhausting late shift at the hospital and a night's sleep, all Cliff wants is to read his paper in peace - but the children have taken over every room in the house.

**Absent:** Sabrina Le Beauf as Sondra Huxtable

**44-20** "Close to Home"  
| Jay Sandrich | Carmen Finestra | March 13, 1986 |

A close friend of Cliff's, played by Samuel E. Wright, is overcome with sadness due to his daughter's recurring drug addiction. His feelings are set off as he observes the close relationship between Cliff, Clair, and Denise, who is his
Theo's math teacher has a baby and Cockroach shows a different side. Carl Anthony Payne II as Cockroach. Sonia Braga as Mrs. Westlake. Cockroach's real name, Walter Bradley, is revealed in this episode.

Absent: Sabrina Le Beauf as Sondra Huxtable

46-22 "Theo's Holiday" Jay Sandrich Carmen Finestra John Markus Matt Williams April 3, 1986 221

After Theo claims that he'll have no problem making it in the "real world", the Huxtables convert their house in the "Real World Apartments" and teach him a lesson about the real world; i.e., needing employment and references to get an apartment, income to get a bank loan, having to pay for his meals, etc.

Absent: Sabrina Le Beauf as Sondra Huxtable

47-23 "The Card Game" Jay Sandrich Matt Robinson April 10, 1986 224

Cliff plays pinochle with his father, a former teacher, and a friend. Theo buys a cheap ring for his girlfriend Tanya. Guest appearance by Roscoe Lee Browne as Dr. Foster.

48-24 "Off to the Races" Jay Sandrich Matt Williams May 8, 1986 225

In a charity run, Cliff races at the Penn Relays with "Tailwind" Turner and - as apparent payback for the race a year prior - ends up having to run the final leg against Olympic gold medalist Valerie Brisco-Hooks. Guest appearance by Josh Culbreath as Col. Sanford "Tailwind" Turner. Cameo appearance by Bill Cosby's real wife, Camille Cosby (uncredited).

Pennsylvania's Franklin Field.

49-25 "Denise's Decision" Jay Sandrich Matt Robinson May 15, 1986 223

After much deliberation, Denise chooses the college that she will attend in the fall.

SEASON 3

50-1 "Bring 'Em Back Alive" Jay Sandrich Matt Williams September 25, 1986 301

The Huxtable house is thrown into chaos after Rudy finds a snake in the basement.

Absent: Sabrina Le Beauf as Sondra Huxtable

51-2 "Food for Thought" Jay Sandrich John Markus October 2, 1986 302

Clair challenges Cliff to not eat any salty or fatty foods for the day. Denise leaves for her freshman year at Hillman College.

52-3 "Golden Anniversary" Jay Sandrich Carmen Finestra October 9, 1986 303

Russell and Anna's 50th wedding anniversary. The family performs James Brown's "I Got the Feelin' " in this sequel to Season 2's "Happy Anniversary". Earle Hyman as Russell. Clarice Taylor as Anna. Guest appearance by Frank Foster and the Count Basie Orchestra.

First mention of Rudy's desire to have a husband named "Bud" when she grows up.

53-4 "Man Talk" Jay Sandrich John Markus October 16, 1986 305

Though he already has a steady girlfriend, Theo wants to start dating someone else.

Absent: Sabrina Le Beauf as Sondra Huxtable
54-5 "Mother, May I?"  Jay Sandrich  Susan Fales  October 23, 1986  304
After Clair specifically forbids Vanessa from wearing make-up till she turns 15, she does it anyway behind her mother's back.

Absent: Sabrina Le Beauf as Sondra Huxtable and Lisa Bonet as Denise Huxtable

55-6 "The March"  Tony Singletary  Gary Kott  October 30, 1986  306
Theo writes a report on the March on Washington, but gets a poor grade and is asked to redo his project. Much to his surprise he learns more about the march from his family than he did from books. Meanwhile Vanessa is worried about asking a boy to the turn-around dance.

This is the first episode in the series not to be directed by Jay Sandrich.

56-7 "Theo's Flight"  Tony Singletary  Gary Kott  November 6, 1986  307
Theo and Cockroach decide they want to learn to fly, but Cliff doesn't want to waste his money on another dream of his son's. First appearance of Deon Richmond as Kenny, a.k.a. "Bud".

Absent: Sabrina Le Beauf as Sondra Huxtable and Lisa Bonet as Denise Huxtable

57-8 "Vanessa's Rich"  Tony Singletary  Margaret Beddow Hatch  November 13, 1986  308
Vanessa gets into a fight with a classmate who calls her a stuck-up rich girl. Guest appearance by Essence Atkins.

Absent: Sabrina Le Beauf as Sondra Huxtable and Lisa Bonet as Denise Huxtable

58-9 "Denise Gets a D"  Jay Sandrich  Matt Geller  November 20, 1986  309
Denise's college career starts with a D, but Denise is too scared to show her parents. Clair needs to rest in bed because of a pinched nerve. Rudy portrays "the wind" in a school play. Guest appearance by Rosalind Cash as Dr. Hughes (The episode is preceded by a 30-second anti-drug public service announcement featuring Bill Cosby).

59-10 "A Girl and Her Dog"  Jay Sandrich  Chris Auer  December 4, 1986  312
Rudy and Peter find a dog and attempt to take care of it without their parents knowing.

Absent: Sabrina Le Beauf as Sondra Huxtable and Lisa Bonet as Denise Huxtable

60-11 "War Stories"  Jay Sandrich  Matt Robinson  December 11, 1986  310
Cliff, Russell, and two of his friends play a game of pinochle and share World War II stories. Vanessa prepares to go to a skating party with date Tyrone Baxter, but soon finds a very cute guy crossing her path.

61-12 "Cliff in Charge"  Jay Sandrich  Matt Williams  December 18, 1986  311
Cliff is in charge when Clair leaves for 10 days.

62-13 "Monster Man Huxtable"  Jay Sandrich  Gary Kott  January 8, 1987  313
Elvin helps Theo with some wrestling moves, although he and Sondra have made plans for the weekend, and reveals that he is thinking of marrying her.

Absent: Lisa Bonet as Denise Huxtable and Phylicia Rashād as Clair Huxtable, although mentioned.

63-14 "Rudy Spends the Night"  Jay Sandrich  Carmen Finesta  January 15, 1987  314
Cliff establishes the Huxtable Men's Club when the women are away to help Theo get over his sadness of a lost date. Vanessa is very excited that big sister Denise is letting her go to the Village with Denise's college friends. Rudy spends the night with Cliff's parents.
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<tr>
<th>Episode</th>
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<th>Directed by</th>
<th>Guest Stars</th>
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<tr>
<td>63-15</td>
<td>&quot;Say Hello to a Good Buy&quot;</td>
<td>January 22, 1987</td>
<td>Carmen Finestra John Markus Matt Williams</td>
<td>Tony Singletary</td>
<td>Cliff buys a new car. Rudy cuts some animal pictures out of Cliff's expensive books for school. Guest appearances by Gilbert Gottfried and Sinbad, who would later portray Walter Oakes on the <em>Cosby Show</em> spinoff, <em>A Different World</em>. Watched by almost 65 million viewers when it originally aired, it is the highest-rated episode of the series.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64-16</td>
<td>&quot;Denise Gets an Opinion&quot;</td>
<td>February 5, 1987</td>
<td>Carmen Finestra John Markus Matt Williams</td>
<td>Tony Singletary Gary Kott</td>
<td>Denise has a blind date, but is really scared. So she asks Theo to grade him for her, but this soon leads to a big hilarious mix-up.</td>
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<tr>
<td>65-17</td>
<td>&quot;Calling Doctor Huxtable&quot;</td>
<td>February 12, 1987</td>
<td>Carmen Finestra John Markus</td>
<td>Jay Sandrich Chris Auer</td>
<td>Cliff is called to the hospital for three deliveries. Guest appearances by Malinda Williams and Patricia Richardson.</td>
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<tr>
<td>66-18</td>
<td>&quot;You Only Hurt the One You Love&quot;</td>
<td>February 19, 1987</td>
<td>Carmen Finestra John Markus</td>
<td>Jay Sandrich</td>
<td>Rudy gets hurt from Theo's rough games. She cries, and Theo gets punished. Clair goes to a doctor and gets the same advice that Cliff gave her. Cliff learns that the woman who cleans up the Doctor's Lounge at the hospital (Rita Moreno) has been fired.</td>
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<tr>
<td>67-19</td>
<td>&quot;The Shower&quot;</td>
<td>February 26, 1987</td>
<td>Carmen Finestra John Markus</td>
<td>Jay Sandrich Matt Williams</td>
<td>Denise holds a bridal shower for her pregnant and bride-to-be friend Veronica (Lela Rochon), but finds out some disturbing information.</td>
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<tr>
<td>68-20</td>
<td>&quot;Cliff's 50th Birthday&quot;</td>
<td>March 12, 1987</td>
<td>Carmen Finestra John Markus Matt Williams</td>
<td>Carl Lauten Regge Life Gary Kott</td>
<td>Cliff's 50th birthday has all kinds of surprises.</td>
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<tr>
<td>69-21</td>
<td>&quot;I Know That You Know&quot;</td>
<td>March 19, 1987</td>
<td>Carmen Finestra John Markus Matt Williams</td>
<td>Jay Sandrich</td>
<td>When Sondra and Elvin announce their engagement, Clair and the children use the news to play a practical joke on Cliff, who launches a counter-offensive of his own.</td>
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<tr>
<td>70-22</td>
<td>&quot;Andalusian Flu&quot;</td>
<td>April 2, 1987</td>
<td>Carmen Finestra John Markus Matt Williams</td>
<td>Jay Sandrich Janet Leahy</td>
<td>While Cliff and Clair have the flu, Theo tries to keep the house going.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71-23</td>
<td>&quot;Bald and Beautiful&quot;</td>
<td>April 9, 1987</td>
<td>Carmen Finestra John Markus Matt Williams</td>
<td>Jay Sandrich</td>
<td>Cliff's Navy friend comes to visit. Cockroach shaves his head to be in a rock video, but is thrown into humiliation when he is not selected, and Theo is glad he didn't shave his own head yet. Robert Culp (Bill Cosby's co-star from the 1960s TV series <em>I Spy</em>) appears as Scott Kelly.</td>
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<tr>
<td>72-24</td>
<td>&quot;Planning Parenthood&quot;</td>
<td>April 30, 1987</td>
<td>Carmen Finestra John Markus Matt Williams</td>
<td>Jay Sandrich Elizabeth Hailey Oliver Hailey</td>
<td>Clair's sister decides she wants to be a mother. Cliff takes Rudy and her friends out to eat at a fancy restaurant—but it is nothing short of disaster, and they end up...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
eating at a fast food restaurant, dressed in formal clothing.

The Huxtable family goes to Hillman College to attend a ceremony in honor of its president's retirement. Guest appearance by Joe Seneca. Filmed at Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia. The episode serves as a backdoor pilot for the spinoff series *A Different World*, which premiered next season.

**SEASON 4**

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<tr>
<th>Episode</th>
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<th>Writer(s)</th>
<th>Director(s)</th>
<th>Original Airdate</th>
<th>Timecode</th>
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<tr>
<td>75-1</td>
<td>&quot;Call of the Wild&quot;</td>
<td>Jay Sandrich</td>
<td>Gary Kott</td>
<td>September 24, 1987</td>
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<td>76-2</td>
<td>&quot;Theogate&quot;</td>
<td>Jay Sandrich</td>
<td>John Markus</td>
<td>October 1, 1987</td>
<td>401</td>
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<td>77-3</td>
<td>&quot;It Ain't Easy Being Green&quot;</td>
<td>Carl Lauten Regge Life</td>
<td>Carmen Finestra John Markus</td>
<td>October 8, 1987</td>
<td>408</td>
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<td>78-4</td>
<td>&quot;Cliff's Mistake&quot;</td>
<td>Carl Lauten Regge Life</td>
<td>Janet Leahy</td>
<td>October 15, 1987</td>
<td>405</td>
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<tr>
<td>79-5</td>
<td>&quot;Shakespeare&quot;</td>
<td>Jay Sandrich</td>
<td>Matt Robinson</td>
<td>October 22, 1987</td>
<td>323</td>
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<td>80-6</td>
<td>&quot;That's Not What I Said&quot;</td>
<td>Jay Sandrich</td>
<td>Carmen Finestra</td>
<td>October 29, 1987</td>
<td>403</td>
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<tr>
<td>81-7</td>
<td>&quot;Autumn Gifts&quot;</td>
<td>Carl Lauten Regge Life</td>
<td>Matt Williams</td>
<td>November 5, 1987</td>
<td>404</td>
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<td>82-8</td>
<td>&quot;Looking Back (Part 1)&quot;</td>
<td>Jay Sandrich</td>
<td>Carmen Finestra Gary Kott</td>
<td>November 12, 1987</td>
<td>413A</td>
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<tr>
<td>83-9</td>
<td>&quot;Looking Back (Part 2)&quot;</td>
<td>Jay Sandrich</td>
<td>Carmen Finestra Gary Kott John Markus</td>
<td>November 12, 1987</td>
<td>413B</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

While setting up the house as a "haunted house" for Halloween, Cliff discovers he's lost a power drill that his neighbor loaned to him. First appearance of Wallace Shawn as Jeffrey Engels.

Christopher Plummer and Roscoe Lee Browne appear. Theo must read *Julius Caesar* for school, but complains that it is boring. Russel and his friends read scenes from the play aloud, and Theo is enthralled. Later, the men read from a different work of literature—a story Rudy wrote. This episode was originally produced for Season 3.

Cliff and Clair have a marital argument after Theo gets detained by police for riding in a car with an unlicensed driver.

Rudy goes to an older widowed lady's house each afternoon to have tea and play cards, but notices that she refuses to take her daily medication for diabetes. She tells Cliff, who devises a plan to try to convince her that she needs the meds to live. Guest appearance by Eileen Heckart.

Keshia Knight Pulliam appears on the episode of *A Different World* which airs later that evening.

Sondra and Elvin have their first marital fight, and Elvin comes to the Huxtable house for comfort and support. Clair shares about the difficulties in their house as flashbacks are shown.

Flashbacks are shown while history is shared with Elvin.
Theo and Vanessa lose track of Rudy in a mall while Clair enters a squash exhibition. Earle Hyman (Russell) appears on the episode of *A Different World* which airs later that evening.

Theo and Cockroach have tickets to appear on television on the dance show "Dance Mania", but are told that only one of them can enter the studio during the filming because of fire laws. Theo miscalculates by offering to let Cockroach go in (thinking he'll refuse) and gets angry when Cockroach takes him up on the offer. First appearances of Troy Winbush as Denny and Adam Sandler as Smitty. Final appearance of Carl Anthony Payne II as Cockroach. Bill Cosby appears on the episode of *A Different World* which airs later that evening.

Theo and his classmates brag about their dates with girls in the locker room, but Theo's mood changes when one of the guys goes out with Vanessa and brags about it the next day.

In *The Visit*, Theo visits a friend in the hospital who has cancer. Guest appearance by Armand Hammer.

Vanessa tries out for the drum major at school. Theo playfully mocks her efforts, but learns from friends that Vanessa is the target of sexism and intervenes on her behalf. Meanwhile, Cliff cooks up a batch of extremely spicy chili as Russell tries to pay off a loan from an old friend. Guest appearance by Dub Taylor.

Clair tries to stop Cliff from fixing a leaky pipe by hiring a team of professionals: friends of Sondra and Elvin from Princeton.

Rudy writes a fairy tale, and the colorful story is acted out in her fantasy. Members of the family play the roles of a village full of happy people and a mean group that ruins their fun. At the end of the episode, Rudy declares that when she becomes "president of the world", she will put a stop to all mean people. Cliff and Clair proceed to watch news reports of weapons' testing and bombings, and urge her to "hurry, because we need you right now".

Rudy has to play the violin in music class at school, but gets jealous because she thinks her classmates' instruments are more fun.
Cliff and a friend play pétanque. First appearance of Sullivan Walker as Dr. James Harmon.


A friend of Clair’s has marital problems; Cliff takes a "mini-vacation" in the house as Theo, Rudy, and Vanessa try to stump each other with riddles.

96-22 "Home for the Weekend" Tony Singletary Carmen Finestra Gary Kott John Markus March 17, 1988 421

Denise comes home from college, but seems to have more time for her friends than for the family.

97-23 "The Prom" Tony Singletary Janet Leahy March 24, 1988 422

Theo, Denny and Smitty go to great lengths to impress their dates for the senior prom but fail disastrously; Cliff and Clair relive their own prom, since Clair never went to hers, since Cliff was in college taking final exams. First appearance of Michelle Thomas as Justine. Phylicia Rashād appears on the episode of A Different World which airs later that evening.

98-24 "Gone Fishin’" Tony Singletary Carmen Finestra Gary Kott John Markus April 28, 1988 419

When the Huxtable men go fishing, Theo catches the dead body of a gangster that the police have been chasing, and soon attracts attention from the news media. This success goes to his head, while Rudy and Kenny find a nest of baby birds, but the mother bird is missing. The two stories eventually cross in a surprising-and rather humiliating-lesson for Theo.

SEASON 5

99-1 "Together Again and Again" Jay Sandrich Carmen Finestra October 6, 1988 501

As Theo begins his freshman year at New York University, Denise announces that she is dropping out of Hillman College. Sondra is revealed to be pregnant. First mention of Cliff’s theory that the children keep returning home because "they want the house."

100-2 "The Physical" Jay Sandrich Carmen Finestra Gary Kott John Markus October 13, 1988 502

Cliff prepares for a physical. Guest appearance by John Amos as Dr. Bradley Herbert, Jr.

101-3 "Rudy's All-Nighter" Tony Singletary Janet Leahy October 20, 1988 505

Rudy's friend sleeps over, but the two soon begin to argue. Theo gets a D on his first college English paper.

102-4 "Move It (a.k.a. The Baby Game)" Tony Singletary Carmen Finestra Gary Kott John Markus October 27, 1988 503

Everyone wants pregnant Sondra and Elvin to find a new house. Elvin's surname, Tibideaux, is revealed.

103-5 "Out of Brooklyn" Tony Singletary Carmen Finestra John Markus November 3, 1988 504

Denise leaves Brooklyn for a job in Africa as a photographer's assistant. (Lisa Bonet's last appearance of Season 5).

104-6 "The Birth (Part 1)" Tony Singletary Carmen Finestra Gary Kott November 10, 1988 506A
Sondra goes into labor, and Elvin is a nervous wreck. Deon Richmond as Kenny. Michelle Thomas as Justine. First appearances of Reno Wilson as Howard and Elizabeth Narvaez as Kara. Guest appearance by Naomi Campbell.

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<th>Episode</th>
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<th>Writer</th>
<th>Director</th>
<th>Main Characters</th>
<th>Guest Stars</th>
<th>Air Date</th>
<th>Series Number</th>
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<tr>
<td>105-7</td>
<td>&quot;The Birth (Part 2)&quot;</td>
<td>Tony Singletary</td>
<td>Carmen Finestra</td>
<td>John Markus</td>
<td>November 10, 1988</td>
<td>506B</td>
<td>105-7</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Sondra gives birth to twins -- a boy and a girl -- who are named after Nelson Mandela and his then-wife Winnie. Elvin decides to return to medical school.

106-8 | "Cyanoise de Bergington" | Carl Lauten | Gary Kott | John Markus | November 17, 1988 | 507 | 106-8 |

Theo wants to date his friend Howard's ex-girlfriend, but he is stunned upon learning who she wants to date.

107-9 | "How Do You Get to Carnegie Hall?" | Tony Singletary | Janet Leahy | December 1, 1988 | 508 | 107-9 |

Vanessa, Janet and Kara want to be professional singers and they sing the Kylie Minogue version of The Loco-Motion; Russell wins a prize in a sweepstakes, which turns out to be a toaster. Guest appearance by Betty Carter.

108-10 | "If the Dress Fits, Wear It" | Jay Sandrich | Carmen Finestra | John Markus | December 8, 1988 | 509 | 108-10 |

Clair secretly goes on a crash diet and exercise program to lose five pounds in a week so she can fit into a dress. Guest appearance by Debbie Allen; voice-over by Ahmad Rashād (Phyllicia Rashād's sister and husband).


Rudy takes care of a friend's hamster for the weekend, but it soon dies of disease and Cliff gets a new one. Rudy's friend explains that many others who have taken care of her hamster have reached the same fate and gone to the same solution, so it is her 6th hamster.

110-12 | "Truth or Consequences" | Tony Singletary | Carmen Finestra | Gary Kott | John Markus | January 5, 1989 | 512 |

Rudy lies to cover for Vanessa, who secretly goes out on a date with her boyfriend, and suffers the consequences when she returns.


While the family attends a Michael Jackson concert, Cliff babysits his grandchildren Nelson and Winnie. First mention of Cliff's younger brother James, who died of rheumatic fever as a child (Bill Cosby's actual brother James died of the same illness at the age of six).

112-14 | "Mrs. Huxtable Goes to Kindergarten" | Carl Lauten | Chuck Vinson | Carmen Finestra | Gary Kott | John Markus | January 26, 1989 | 514 |

Clair appears as a panelist on a local Sunday morning talk show entitled Retrospective, but quits when she is exploited by being asked to talk about the Great Depression from a "black woman's point of view". At home, Clair buys a new couch, and Cliff tries to keep the old one. Clair's law firm is identified as Greentree, Bradley & Dexter. Guest appearance by Austin Pendleton.

With the rest of the family gone for the night, Theo throws a "small" party that gets out of control, eventually climbing to 200 participants and destroying a good fraction of the house. First appearance of Alex Ruiz as Lou. Cameo appearance by Joie Lee. Phylicia Rashād (Clair), Malcolm-Jamal Warner (Theo), Tempestt Bledsoe (Vanessa), and Elizabeth Narvaez (Kara) appear on the episode of A Different World which airs later that evening.

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<tr>
<th>114-16</th>
<th>&quot;No Way, Baby&quot;</th>
<th>Tony Singletary</th>
<th>Carmen Finestra</th>
<th>Gary Kott</th>
<th>John Markus</th>
<th>February 6, 1989</th>
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Cliff tracks down the grandfather of one of his patients: an expectant teenage mother with no other family. Clair deduces that the charming man is illiterate. Guest appearances by Sammy Davis, Jr. and Arnold Stang.

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<th>115-17</th>
<th>&quot;Can I Say Something, Please?&quot;</th>
<th>Tony Singletary</th>
<th>Carmen Finestra</th>
<th>Gary Kott</th>
<th>John Markus</th>
<th>February 9, 1989</th>
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Rudy wants to change some of her rules, so Cliff and Clair experiment by letting her stay up as late as she wants, and Rudy learns the valuable lesson that doing what you want has its drawbacks. Voice-over by Ed McMahon (from The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson).

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<th>116-18</th>
<th>&quot;The Dead End Kids Meet Dr. Lotus&quot;</th>
<th>Tony Singletary</th>
<th>Carmen Finestra</th>
<th>Gary Kott</th>
<th>John Markus</th>
<th>February 16, 1989</th>
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Theo consults a voodoo shopkeeper for advice on winning his girlfriend back, but the attempt fails with the ridiculously high prices. Guest appearances by Moses Gunn and Harold Perrineau.

|--------|---------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------|-----------------|------|

Cliff's old basketball coach comes to visit, and a recent hospital basketball game with doctors vs. attractive young lab workers is recalled on video tape. Guest appearance by U.S. Senator (and former NBA basketball player) Bill Bradley.

| 118-20 | "It Comes and Goes" | Jay Sandrich | Carmen Finestra | Gary Kott | John Markus | March 9, 1989 | 518 |

Sondra bemoans taking care of the twins.


After catching Theo kissing another woman in the lounge of her dormitory, Justine breaks up with him. Desperate to win her back, Theo turns to Cliff for advice. First appearance of Vanessa A. Williams as Jade. Guest appearance by Tichina Arnold as Deores.

| 120-22 | "Birthday Blues" | Jay Sandrich | Carmen Finestra | Gary Kott | March 30, 1989 | 521 |

Clair's 46th birthday arrives. Guest appearance by Placido Domingo.

| 121-23 | "A Room With No View" | Tony Singletary | Carmen Finestra | Gary Kott | John Markus | April 13, 1989 | 522 |

Vanessa and Rudy argue and fight. After the sisters do physical damage to the house, Cliff exiles them to the basement.


Theo's friend Denny finds an expensive watch and gives it to his girlfriend, but it is soon revealed to be stolen merchandise.

| 123-25 | "Day of the Locusts" | Chuck Vinson | Carmen Finestra | May 4, 1989 | 524 |
Sondra comes down with strep throat, prompting her mother Clair and Elvin's mother Francine to "steal" the babies. Sondra then gets highly upset at both her and Elvin's mother.

Theo wants to go to Egypt for an archaeological dig.

SEASON 6


Denise returns from Africa, with a new husband and stepdaughter in tow, something Cliff and Clair had no idea about until she arrived home. Joseph C. Phillips and Raven-Symoné join the cast as Martin and Olivia Kendall. Last appearance of Peter Costa as Peter.


After recreating one of Cliff's adventures in college about washing the kitchen floor in a strange way, Theo and his roommates are kicked out of their apartment. First appearance of Keith Diamond as Danny. Guest appearance by Anthony Quinn.

127-3 "I'm 'In' With the 'In' Crowd" Tony Singletary Carmen Finestra Gary Kott John Markus October 5, 1989 603

Vanessa and her friends get drunk playing a drinking game. Guest appearance by Bill Cosby's real-life daughter Ensa Cosby, upon whom the character Vanessa is loosely based.

128-4 "Denise Kendall: Navy Wife" Tony Singletary Carmen Finestra Gary Kott John Markus October 12, 1989 605

Denise forgets to respond to a letter from the Navy and confirm that she and Martin want housing on the naval base in Rhode Island.

129-5 “Theo's Gift” Jay Sandrich Mark St. Germain October 19, 1989 604

Theo is diagnosed with dyslexia, a learning disability which contributed to the academic problems he has had over the years.

130-6 "Denise Kendall: Babysitter" Tony Singletary Carmen Finestra Gary Kott John Markus October 26, 1989 606

Denise and Olivia babysit Winnie and Nelson (Sondra and Elvin's twins), and suffer street-wide power outages, and worse, the power of infant twins.

131-7 "Shall We Dance?" Jay Sandrich Carmen Finestra Gary Kott John Markus November 2, 1989 607

Rudy and one of her classmates have a crush on each other, but peer pressure could ruin things. Guest appearance by Elaine Stritch. (Phyllicia Rashād, Lisa Bonet, Joseph C. Phillips and Raven-Symoné appear on the episode of A Different World which airs later that evening.)

132-8 "The Day the Spores Landed" Neema Barnette Carmen Finestra Gary Kott John Markus November 9, 1989 608

Cliff dreams that men worldwide have become pregnant caused by an eruption of a volcano in Peru -- Some of these pregnant men including Cliff's son Theo, his sons-in-law Elvin and Martin, and himself. Each of the men give birth to something that they wanted growing up like a sports car, sailboat, or even a sandwich and soda. Voice-over by NBC News correspondent John Palmer.

Absent: Keshia Knight Pulliam as Rudy Huxtable, Tempest Bledsoe as Vanessa Huxtable, and Raven-Symone as Olivia Kendall.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Directors</th>
<th>Writers</th>
<th>Air Date</th>
<th>Page</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>110</td>
<td>Denise invites Martin's ex-wife Paula for Thanksgiving dinner. Clair continues to send Cliff to the store for last-minute groceries, despite the fact that it is stormy Thanksgiving Day. Guest appearance by Victoria Rowell as Paula.</td>
<td>Jay Sandrich Carmen Finestra John Markus</td>
<td>November 16, 1989</td>
<td>610</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>609</td>
<td>Martin's parents (Olivia's grandparents) come for a visit. Actor Moses Gunn and jazz singer Nancy Wilson guest star as Martin's parents</td>
<td>Tony Singletary Gary Kott John Markus</td>
<td>November 30, 1989</td>
<td>609</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>611</td>
<td>Cliff is in charge while Clair and Denise are out of town.</td>
<td>Jay Sandrich Carmen Finestra Gary Kott</td>
<td>December 7, 1989</td>
<td>611</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>612</td>
<td>As Christmas approaches, Cliff and Martin get to know each other better. Denise and Martin recreate their wedding ceremony, which allows Cliff to give his daughter away.</td>
<td>Tony Singletary Carmen Finestra Gary Kott John Markus</td>
<td>December 14, 1989</td>
<td>612</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>613</td>
<td>Elvin takes two female college friends to dinner to reminisce and Sondra becomes very upset.</td>
<td>Jay Sandrich Gary Kott John Markus</td>
<td>January 4, 1990</td>
<td>613</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>526</td>
<td>Guest appearance by The Muppets (Performed by Jerry Nelson, Dave Goelz, Richard Hunt, and Kevin Clash) in a story of what happened when Cliff ate a sausage sandwich at 3AM after coming back from a long hospital shift. Voice-over by Cliff's friend Jeffery Engels (Wallace Shawn). This episode was originally produced for season 5.</td>
<td>Tony Singletary Carmen Finestra Gary Kott John Markus</td>
<td>January 11, 1990</td>
<td>526</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cliff and Clair discover that Theo has moved in with Justine. Last appearance of Michelle Thomas as Justine.

Clair is burned out from work and family pressures and hurries off to a cabin resort Cliff's doctor friend suggested. However, the place is nothing short of a disaster.

Vanessa and her friends sneak out of town to attend a concert in Baltimore, but encounter huge problems along the way. Afterwards, she must face the wrath of Cliff and an infuriated Clair. This episode marks Malcolm-Jamal Warner's Cosby Show directorial debut.

The Huxtables' nerdy-but-friendly next-door-neighbor, author Jeffrey Engalls, reinvents himself after a divorce for a lovely friend of Clair's. Guest appearance by Mercedes Ruehl.

Denise wants to become a teacher... without finishing college. Guest appearances by Max Roach and Suzzanne Douglass.

"Gram Tee", Cliff's 98 year old great aunt, comes to visit the family. Guest appearances by Minnie Gentry and Mavis Staples. Portions filmed at St. James Presbyterian Church in Harlem, New York City.

**SEASON 7**

| Episode | Title            | Writer            | Director | Air Date       | Ratings
<table>
<thead>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>146-22</td>
<td>&quot;What's It All About?&quot;</td>
<td>Jay Sandrich, Carmen Finestra, John Markus</td>
<td>March 22, 1990</td>
<td>621</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>147-23</td>
<td>&quot;Off to See the Wretched&quot;</td>
<td>Carl Lauten, Malcolm-Jamal Warner, Mark St. Germain</td>
<td>April 5, 1990</td>
<td>622</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>149-25</td>
<td>&quot;Live and Learn&quot;</td>
<td>Tony Singletary, Matt Robinson</td>
<td>April 26, 1990</td>
<td>624</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150-26</td>
<td>&quot;The Storyteller&quot;</td>
<td>Carl Lauten, Lore Kimbrough</td>
<td>May 3, 1990</td>
<td>625</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Denise takes classes locally at Medgar Evers College, while Vanessa enrolls at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. Rudy starts sixth grade. Olivia starts preschool.

In a scene prior to the opening credits, Olivia enters Cliff's bedroom wearing a Bart Simpson mask. It is a nod to Fox's decision to move The Simpsons to Thursdays at 8:00 pm Eastern/Pacific, presenting The Cosby Show with its first true ratings challenge. This is the only episode in the series that has a "cold open".

Cliff teaches Olivia jazz with "Pop Goes the Weasel", and tries to win a classic jazz record (including A Night in Tunisia) at an auction while filling in for Denise as volunteer parent at Olivia's preschool.

The Huxtable family erupts in a battle of the sexes after Theo suggests having a stripper at Martin's post-wedding bachelor party.

**Absent:** Tempestt Bledsoe as Vanessa Huxtable

Clair's teenage second cousin moves in with the family. Erika Alexander joins the cast as Pam. First appearances of Karen Malina White as Charmaine, Allen Payne as Lance, and Mushond Lee as Slide, Pam's friends.

After Vanessa gets into a minor car accident and tries to cover it up, Cliff and Clair complain about the various small disasters the children have caused them, and the children fight back by complaining about ways Cliff and Clair have embarrassed them.
Rudy and Kenny do a video project for school on Clair hoping to see some action. However, they soon learn that the legal profession is not always an exciting action-packed career. They later choose to follow Cliff instead, and have an expectant father tape a birth, since hospital rules restrict them from being in the delivery room. Rudy and Kenny win 1st prize, and everyone involved is credited.

Under pressure from her boyfriend to become sexually active, Pam considers using birth control.

Pam and Slide argue over whether they should become sexually active.

Rudy gets her first period. Clair plans "Women's day" where she goes out alone with Rudy and answers any questions she has, but Rudy refuses to talk after hearing old wive's tales about menstruation from her friends.

Seeking privacy, Denise and Martin decide to look for their own apartment, and find a cramped one-room apartment as one of the options.

The husband of one of Cliff's patients worries that he will be a poor father of a son because he has no athletic ability. After Pam breaks up with Slide, she and the class brain are attracted to each other. First appearance of Seth Gilliam as Aaron.

Clair enters menopause. She takes the news fine, but the kids treat her as if she's losing her mind, something Cliff and Clair sense, and plan an act where she is indeed suffering from classic menopause symptoms.

Elvin and Sondra help friends move, just as Elvin wants to watch a very important football game. Voice over by Ahmad Rashād.

Theo will make the dean's list if he gets an A on his final, but a beautiful exchange student planning to leave in 1-day for Barbados distracts him. Vanessa A. Williams appears (now portraying Cheryl). Guest appearances by Rachel True as Nicki and Michael Weatherly as Theo's roommate.

Pam's grades have improved, but she worries that she will not be able to afford college.

Absent: Sabrina Le Beauf as Sondra Huxtable Tibideaux, Geoffrey Owens as Elvin Tibideaux, Joseph C. Phillips as Martin Kendall and Tempestt Bledsoe as Vanessa Huxtable
scenario ... and then labor begins. Guest appearances by John Ritter and his future wife Amy Yasbeck. This is the first episode in which none of the Huxtable children appear.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Episode</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Guest Stars</th>
<th>Air Date</th>
<th>Season</th>
<th>Episode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1671</td>
<td>&quot;Adventures in Babysitting&quot;</td>
<td>Oz Scott, Steve Kline</td>
<td>February 7, 1991</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1672</td>
<td>&quot;27 and Still Cooking&quot;</td>
<td>Neema Barnette, Gordon Gartrelle, Janet Leahy</td>
<td>February 14, 1991</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1673</td>
<td>&quot;The Return of the Clairettes&quot;</td>
<td>Neema Barnette, Lisa Albert</td>
<td>February 21, 1991</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1674</td>
<td>&quot;No More Mr. Nice Guy&quot;</td>
<td>Jay Sandrich, Steve Kline, Brayn Winter</td>
<td>February 11, 1991</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1675</td>
<td>&quot;Home Remedies&quot;</td>
<td>Jay Sandrich, Mark St. Germain</td>
<td>March 7, 1991</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1676</td>
<td>&quot;Nightmare on Stigwood Avenue&quot;</td>
<td>Malcolm-Kimbrough, Steve Kline</td>
<td>April 1, 1991</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22</td>
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</table>

Rudy has a nightmare about Olivia always getting her way.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Episode</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Guest Stars</th>
<th>Air Date</th>
<th>Season</th>
<th>Episode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>173-23</td>
<td>&quot;There's Still No Joy in Mudville&quot;</td>
<td>Carl Lauten, Gordon Gartrelle, Matt Robinson</td>
<td>April 4, 1991</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Cliff goes bowling with his friends. Cricket vs. Baseball ensues when Cliff is forced to buy Chinese food for the others, since he scored the least. Final appearance of Sullivan Walker as Dr. James Harmon. Voice-over by Ahmad Rashād. Guest appearances by former Major League Baseball players Joe Black and Frank Robinson.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Episode</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Guest Stars</th>
<th>Air Date</th>
<th>Season</th>
<th>Episode</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>&quot;Cliff and Jake&quot;</td>
<td>Jay Sandrich, Mark St. Germain</td>
<td>April 11, 1991</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Clair tries to prevent Cliff from buying a new appliance from his friend Jake. Cliff tries to settle a decade-old argument between a friend of Jake's when Jake's daughter and the other man's son become engaged. Guest appearances by Red Buttons and E. G. Marshall. Final appearance of Lisa Bonet as Denise. This episode was originally produced for season 6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Episode</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Guest Stars</th>
<th>Air Date</th>
<th>Season</th>
<th>Episode</th>
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</table>

Theo, who is majoring in pediatric psychology, begins an internship as a junior counselor at the community center; he soon suspects that one of the children there is dyslexic. First appearances of Merlin Santana as Stanley and Eugene Byrd as Eugene. Guest appearance by Lynne Thigpen. This is the first and only two-part episode of The Cosby Show, in which both parts of the episode premiered on separate nights and not back-to-back.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Episode</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Guest Stars</th>
<th>Air Date</th>
<th>Season</th>
<th>Episode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>&quot;Theo and the Kids (Part 2)&quot;</td>
<td>John Bowab, Bernie Kukoff, Ehrich Van Lowe</td>
<td>May 2, 1991</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Theo continues his attempts to help Stanley and the other children at the community center.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Season</th>
<th>Episode</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Writer(s)</th>
<th>Airdate</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>177-1</td>
<td>&quot;With This Ring?&quot;</td>
<td>John Bowab, Adriana Trigiani</td>
<td>September 19, 1991</td>
<td>801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>178-2</td>
<td>&quot;There's No Place Like This Home&quot;</td>
<td>John Bowab, Gordon Gartrelle, Janet Leathy</td>
<td>September 26, 1991</td>
<td>802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>179-3</td>
<td>&quot;Particles in Motion&quot;</td>
<td>John Bowab, Adriana Trigiani, Story by Adriana Trigiani &amp; Linda M. Yearwood</td>
<td>October 3, 1991</td>
<td>804</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>180-4</td>
<td>&quot;Pam Applies to College&quot;</td>
<td>John Bowab, Walter Allen Bennett Jr.</td>
<td>October 10, 1991</td>
<td>803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>182-6</td>
<td>&quot;It's Apparent to Everyone&quot;</td>
<td>Neema Barnett, Hugh O'Neill</td>
<td>October 24, 1991</td>
<td>805</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>183-7</td>
<td>&quot;The Iceman Bricketh&quot;</td>
<td>Carl Lauten, Courtney Flavin, Hugh O'Neill, Adriana Trigiani</td>
<td>October 31, 1991</td>
<td>807</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>184-8</td>
<td>&quot;Olivia's Field Trip&quot;</td>
<td>John Bowab, Courtney Flavin</td>
<td>November 7, 1991</td>
<td>806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>186-</td>
<td>&quot;Olivia Comes Out of&quot;</td>
<td>John Bowab, Kathleen</td>
<td>November</td>
<td>812</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An 18 year old Vanessa reveals that she is engaged to a 29 year old head maintenance man of her University... and has been for six months. First appearance of William Thomas, Jr. as Dabnis Brickey.

Cliff announces plans to add a new room to the house for Clair... and only Clair. Sondra and Elvin are on the verge of purchasing their first house.

During his first parent-counselor meeting, Theo and a single mother discover mutual attraction. Rudy meets Stanley and the two are immediately smitten with each other, much to the chagrin of a jealous Kenny. Guest appearance by Saundra Quarterman.

First mention of Cliff's season-long project: fixing the front doorbell.

Pam begins to realize that, because of her below average grades earlier in high school, she will not be able to attend the same college as her best friend. Guest appearance by Richard Lawson as Mr. Bostic.

Vanessa's grandparents Russell Huxtable and Carrie Hanks demand to meet her fiancé Dabnis, who bonds with Cliff over a plumbing job.

Cliff chaperones Olivia's field trip to the museum; Theo falls victim to a scammer while ordering T-shirts for the community center. Wallace Shawn as Jeffrey Engels.

Cliff teaches a class "for men only" at the community center.

Anxious to see a famous rapper, Rudy and her friends lie to their parents in order to get into a club for 16 year olds and up. Cliff and Clair secretly send Pam, Lance and Charmaine to keep an eye on them. Guest appearances by rapper Special Ed and actor/rapper Daryl "Chill" Mitchell.

Absent: Raven-Symoné as Olivia Kendall, Tempest Bledsoe as Vanessa Huxtable, Malcolm-Jamal Warner as Theo Huxtable, Sabrina Le Beauf as Sondra Huxtable Tibideaux and Geoffrey Owens as Elvin Tibideaux.

Absent: Tempest Bledsoe as Vanessa Huxtable, Malcolm Jamal Warner as Theo Huxtable, Keshia Knight Pulliam as Rudy Huxtable, and Erika Alexander as Pam.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Episode</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Directors</th>
<th>Writers</th>
<th>aired</th>
<th>plot summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>187-11</td>
<td>&quot;Two Is a Crowd&quot;</td>
<td>Jay Sandrich</td>
<td>Gordon Gartrell, Janet Leahy</td>
<td>December 5, 1991</td>
<td>Vanessa and Dabnis have relationship problems, as do Rudy and Stanley.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>188-12</td>
<td>&quot;Clair's Place&quot;</td>
<td>John Bowab</td>
<td>Adriana Trigiani</td>
<td>December 19, 1991</td>
<td>As Christmas approaches, Clair gets a wonderful present: the completion of her special room.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>189-13</td>
<td>&quot;Theo's Future&quot;</td>
<td>Jay Sandrich</td>
<td>Gordon Gartrell, Janet Leahy &amp; Hugh O'Neill</td>
<td>January 2, 1992</td>
<td>Theo is accepted to graduate school at NYU, but faces a tough decision when he is unexpectedly offered a chance to interview for a corporate job in San Francisco.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>191-15</td>
<td>&quot;Bring Me the Lip Gloss of Deirdre Arpelle&quot;</td>
<td>John Bowab</td>
<td>Courtney Flavin</td>
<td>January 16, 1992</td>
<td>Kenny pretends that he is dating another girl, in order to make Rudy jealous and force Stanley out of the picture. First appearance of Gabrielle Carmouche as Deirdre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>192-16</td>
<td>&quot;Eat, Drink and Be&quot;</td>
<td>Carl Lauten</td>
<td>Jill Condon</td>
<td>January 30, 1992</td>
<td>Cliffs and Clair see Rudy changing. While preparing their wills, Sondra and Elvin try to determine who should be the twins' legal guardian if the couple should both die. Charmaine and Lance prepare to visit Hillman College. Karen Malina White and Allen Payne appear on the episode of A Different World which airs later that evening. In the fall of 1992, White becomes a regular cast member of that series.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>194-18</td>
<td>&quot;Cliff Gets Jilted&quot;</td>
<td>John Bowab</td>
<td>Stuart Silverman</td>
<td>February 6, 1992</td>
<td>Vanessa and Dabnis announce that they have broken their engagement... and would-be father-in-law Cliff is devastated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>195-19</td>
<td>&quot;Cliff and Theo Come Clean&quot;</td>
<td>John Bowab</td>
<td>Adriana Trigiani</td>
<td>February 13, 1992</td>
<td>Theo decides to turn down the corporate job in San Francisco and attend graduate school in New York. One of the students at the community center finds $600. Last appearance of Eugene Byrd as Eugene.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>196-20</td>
<td>&quot;Clair's Reunion&quot;</td>
<td>Carl Lauten</td>
<td>Marcia L. Wallace</td>
<td>February 20, 1992</td>
<td>Clair and her college friends plan a retirement party for one of their former professors from Hillman. Vanessa brings home a Senegalese exchange student. Guest appearances by Margaret Avery, CCH Pounder, and Daphne Maxwell Reid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>197-21</td>
<td>&quot;Rudy's Retreat&quot;</td>
<td>Carl Lauten</td>
<td>Lisa S. Benjamin</td>
<td>Nia Combs</td>
<td>February 27, 1992</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cliff and Clair go to a local radio station for a live salsa performance. Kenny babysits Olivia. Graciela, Willie Colón, and Mario Bauza and His Afro-Cuban Jazz Orchestra appear as themselves.

Kenny turns to Rudy and Cliff for help after lying to his girlfriend about plans for her birthday party. Cliff and Clair work on their income tax return. Last appearances of Merl in Santana as Stanley and Gabrielle Carmouche as Deirdre. The Uptown String Quartet performs James Brown's "I Feel Good".

Theo prepares to graduate from New York University. An elated Cliff continues to invite additional people to the ceremony, despite the fact that Theo only has a limited number of tickets.

The two-part series finale aired on the evening of Day 2 of the 1992 Los Angeles Riots. Bill Cosby appeared on KNBC in an attempt to end hostilities, asking viewers to stop what they were doing and instead watch the series finale of show.

As Theo graduates from NYU, Cliff remembers how a 14 year old Theo received D's in 9th grade and had no desire to attend college at all (features flashbacks to scenes from the very first episode in 1984). Denise telephones and reveals that she is pregnant. Olivia leaves to join Denise and Martin in Singapore.

In the final scene, Bill Cosby (Cliff) gets the front doorbell to work properly at last; he and Phylicia Rashâd (Clair) share a dance and then break the fourth wall, walking off the set to the applause of the studio audience. The scene is immediately followed by a 3-minute "thank you" tribute from NBC.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Episode</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Money</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-1 Pilot</td>
<td>08.23-12.17 16.30-18.52</td>
<td>Cliff illustrates the cost of living to Theo using Monopoly money. Theo is financially educated. &gt; the cost of living.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 Goodbye Mr. Fish</td>
<td>2.40-2.56 9.00</td>
<td>Cliff bought Rudy a fish, Lamont, because she ate her peas, but now the fish is dead. Vanessa tells Cliff about Lamont. Cliff asks: “is this about buying you something?” To cheer Rudy up, Vanessa suggests buying a new pet. Getting something as a reward. Buying something to make someone feel better.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-6 Breaking with tradition</td>
<td>1.30-2.20</td>
<td>Cliff asks back the money Theo borrowed from him. Theo has to do a chore because he can’t pay Cliff back yet. Money related to chore.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-7 One more time</td>
<td>3.20-4.00</td>
<td>Cliff explains to Clair the nuisance of having a baby: he says they are false advertising. Interesting: at 20.15 min., Clair says her life is already perfect because of her good job and loving family. She names her job before her family.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-9 Play it again, Vanessa</td>
<td>3.35 4.54 8.00-8.06</td>
<td>Clair and Cliff talk about the cost of their children’s hobbies. Clair is reluctant to tell how much Vanessa’s clarinet cost. Theo: “let’s go, time is money.” Cliff: “you don’t even have a job.” Cliff asks Vanessa: “Do you know how much we paid for that (clarinet)? You know what you could buy with 245 dollars?” &gt; the cost of children A job means money.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-10 How ugly is he?</td>
<td>15.54</td>
<td>Denise brings home her new boyfriend. Boyfriend asks: “How much does it cost for a family to have a baby?”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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<tr>
<td>17.00</td>
<td>He says Clair defends guilty people to get rich.</td>
<td>Boyfriend to Clair: “Your husband makes a lot of money, shouldn’t you stay at home with the kids?”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>17.40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.20</td>
<td>Father’s day</td>
<td>Cliff wants better presents for Father’s Day: “I want something for me.” “I’d like to get you better things, but I just don’t have the money.” Clair gave Vanessa $20 to buy a present. Vanessa admits she bought a present for Cliff for only $4 and spent the remaining $16 herself. Rudy: “I’m giving him tennis balls and I don’t care what they cost.”</td>
<td>Money as excuse.</td>
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<td>11.30</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.35</td>
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<tr>
<td>20.18</td>
<td>Rudy’s sick</td>
<td>Clair is named partner at her law firm and Cliff wants to take her out. Clair: “No, the partner is taking you out.” Cliff: “Alright, miss money.”</td>
<td>Money as status symbol.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>Independence day</td>
<td>Theo has his ear pierced by his friend’s sister, she did it for only 99 cents.</td>
<td>To save money.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.40</td>
<td></td>
<td>Grandparents come “to spoil the children”.</td>
<td>Blackmailing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.57</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cliff mocks his father who pulls out a hand full of money for his grandchildren: “let’s see if granddad has any money for these wonderful children”</td>
<td>&gt; children’s dependence/independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>Theo wants to tell Clair a secret about Cliff (he burnt off his hair while trying to straighten it to impress Clair). Cliff warns Theo: “One of these days, you’re going to need some money…”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>Jitterbug break</td>
<td>Denise wants to borrow $15 from Theo to go to a concert. Theo says no: “I work hard for my money.” Denise replies: “You don’t work, you get an allowance.” Theo: “Getting an allowance from dad is hard work.” Theo agrees to babysit and asks “how much does it pay?” Cliff gives a detailed explanation of how he feels when his children ask him how much they get paid when they have to do something.</td>
<td>Borrowing between children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Money as reward for chore.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>Vanessa’s new class</td>
<td>Clair tries to hide that the dishwasher broke, but Cliff finds out that she wants to call a repairman to fix it. Cliff: “I can fix it and it’s cheaper.” Cliff explains what it will cost to let mechanic fix it. Theo to Cliff: “When you fix it, we end up paying the repairman anyway.” Cliff: “We? Since when did you become we for paying bills?” Vanessa asks to borrow 20 dollars to finish her science project.</td>
<td>Save money.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cliff makes clear who’s in control of the money.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.30</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Money for education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>Slumber party</td>
<td>Theo has to sell 10 tickets for a banquet and asks Cliff to buy the remaining 8 to sell to his colleagues. Cliff and his father Russell make a bet about Russell’s ability to get</td>
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<tr>
<td>18.15</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Rudy and her friends to be quiet. Cliff: “You’re telling me that you can control these children better than I can?” Russell: “Yes, and I’m willing to put my much needed retirement money on the line for it. I will bet you that if you leave me alone with these children for one minute, they’ll be sitting here as quiet as little angels.” They bet 20 dollars. Russell buys the remaining tickets from Theo. Rudy tells Cliff what Russell had said to her and her friends: if they were all quiet and smiled, Cliff would give them all a dollar in the morning. Bribing children to be quiet.

2-2 The Juicer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>Cliff defends his new purchase, a juicer: “It’s a present for me.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>The children ask how much the juicer cost. Cliff won’t answer the question: “All I can say is that it is state of the art.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.20</td>
<td>Clair shows Cliff that it is just another appliance that will never be used, by pointing out the “appliance graveyard” under the counter.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

> the cost of living. Status, materialism.

2-7 Denise drives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>Denise tells Theo she wants to buy a car, now that she has her license.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>Denise tells Cliff and Clair she wants to buy a car: “Since I’ve been so good at saving money, I think I should be able to buy it.” Clair laughs: “The only reason you have that money is because we wouldn’t let you spend it. You’ve been trying to get to it ever since we opened that account for you.” Clair gives examples.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>Clair to Denise: “You’re not getting the money to buy the car if your father doesn’t approve.” Denise gets angry: “It’s my money, my bank account, my name. You’re acting like I’m asking you for money and I’m not. It’s my money and I can do what I want with it. Are we still in America or what?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.25</td>
<td>Clair to Denise: “At this point in your life you can do pretty much as you please because you know in the back of your mind we’re always there to bail you out, we’re your safety net. (…) We accept that responsibility because we’re your parents. If you ever show us this attitude again, you can go take that money from your bank account and go discover America.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>Cliff asks how much money Denise has in the bank (precisely enough to buy the car), and then Cliff and Clair explain how much more money she’ll need for insurance and gas. Cliff stresses that Denise would have Denise consider the car a reward.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 11.00 | Parental control. > children’s dependence/independence. Conflict. > the cost of living.
### 12.10
Denise asks her parents to loan her the money for a car. Cliff: “You already owe us 472,000 dollars.”

### 19.28
Cliff explains to Denise how he will negotiate with their friend who wants to sell his car: “We want it for a price you can afford.”

### 20.40
The deal is made. Denise is happy but does not even ask how the negotiation went. Cliff asks her: “Aren’t you interested in what you paid for it?”

### 22.50
Cliff asks Denise a multiple choice question: “Your car is in need of a repair. Do you, A: come to us for the money, B: find a way to get the money yourself, C: find a way to get the money yourself, or D: find a way to get the money yourself?” Denise answers B, C and D.

### 2-14 The Auction
6.20
Clair tells Cliff a family painting will be sold at an auction. The estimated price is 7000 to 9000 dollars, but Clair insists that she really wants it. Clair does not want Cliff contribute financially, she wants to buy it herself.

8.05
Elvin assumes that Cliff will buy the painting for Clair, but Clair explains to Elvin that she herself is buying the painting and that that is ok because she also works for her money.

20.45
Clair stops Cliff from bidding too high on a painting for his office. Cliff: “Yours is going for 40 million!” Clair: “I don’t care, I want it!” Cliff: “Doesn’t make any difference to me, I hope it looks good in prison.”

### 2-21 Theo’s Holiday
Entire epis.
Theo says he does not worry about his future finances, and to illustrate how the real world will treat him, Cliff and Clair turn the house into the real world. They remove all the things from Theo’s room, give him $2000 in play money to start out with, and all family members dress up to play a landlord, bank manager, modelling agent and saleswoman. Theo can use the $2000 to pay the landlord a deposit and to make pictures for his modelling portfolio, but he soon finds out that he needs more money if he wants to eat and have a bed to sleep in. Theo realises that life is expensive and that he needs to handle his money responsibly if he wants to make it in the real world.

### 2-24 The card game
5.50
Theo bought a ring for his girlfriend

**Theo asks Denise: “How much do you think you have to pay for a ring**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Scene</th>
<th>Action/Dialogue</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.25</td>
<td>Theo to Denise</td>
<td>“There’s no way Tanya’s going to think these [the diamond] are real. But it’s the thought that counts.”</td>
<td>Suggestion that friendship cost money or could be bought.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.55</td>
<td>After Theo shows Cliff the ring, Cliff responds</td>
<td>“You want my reaction? 19.95.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.15</td>
<td>Theo explains that the ring is for friendship. Cliff: “You don’t want her for a friend very long, do you?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>2-25 Off to the races</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>Clair tells Cliff that Rudy had asked for an expensive doll (&quot;You should see what they cost&quot;), but Clair just bought Rudy a doll.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>11.30</td>
<td>Rudy really wants the doll: “If you give me this you’ll never have to give me anything again.”</td>
<td>&gt; children’s dependence/independence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12.00</td>
<td>Rudy suggest she’ll pay for it herself: “I’ll get a job. I’ll clean my room!”</td>
<td>Money as a reward. Negotiation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12.15</td>
<td>Clair to Cliff: “Suppose Rudy does extra work around the house, we could pay her for that. You can start by helping me clean out the cupboards.” Rudy tries to negotiate: “Ok, I’ll do it for 9 dollars.” Clair: “No, it pays 50 cents.” Rudy helps Clair do chores around the house.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>13.20</td>
<td>Rudy to Theo: “Theo, you owe me a dollar, I cleaned out your closet.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>3-7 Theo’s flight</td>
<td>2-4</td>
<td>Theo and his friend want to take flying lessons and Theo tries to convince Cliff and Clair to let him.</td>
<td>&gt; the cost of children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9.20</td>
<td>Clair to Cliff: “We made an agreement; if our kids show sincere interest in something, we would encourage them. One way to test how serious he is, is to let him take a flying lesson.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11.50</td>
<td>Theo finds out he’ll need 50 hours of flight training. Cliff: “How much does that cost?” It’s 50 dollars an hour. Cliff laughs.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>12.05</td>
<td>Cliff tries to talk some sense into Theo: “Since it’s going to cost that much, there’s something I want to tell you.” Cliff gives examples of Theo’s previous ‘dreams,’ which he all abandoned after one or two weeks.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>14.00</td>
<td>Cliff gives important information on the cost of flying: $459,000 for a plane, $350 per hour to rent a plane. License: $7000 (allowance $8 a week).</td>
<td>&gt; the cost of living. &gt; children’s dependence/independence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
week). Theo is determined: “I’ll work 2 jobs if I have to.”

| 15.33 | Cliff: “If you’re serious then I’ll pay for half of your lessons.”

| 16.10 | Vanessa thinks it’s unfair that Theo can fly and she can’t wear make-up; one costs a lot of money and one doesn’t. “I could wear make-up for 5 dollars a week.” Clair is not susceptible to Vanessa’s argument.

| 20.50 | Theo calculates how much he has to pay for his flying lessons: after his parents help him out, he still has to pay $3500. He realises: “It’s not going to be easy making that kind of money working part-time.”

| 22.15 | Theo and his friend decide: “We don’t need to fly. To appreciate this great country of ours you need to look at it from ground level.” Theo thanks his parents for being so supportive.

| 3-8 Vanessa’s rich | Vanessa’s friends are impressed by the painting Clair bought at the auction (ep. 2-14), saying “It must have been expensive.” Vanessa tells it was $11,000.

| 5.10 | Cliff wants to buy brand new remote. Clair warns him not to go to the appliance store, because he is “an electronic gadget junkie.” Cliff goes anyway.

| 8.00 | Clair calls the owner of the appliance store, Jake, to tell him not to sell anything to Cliff.

| 9.00 | Cliff says “you have to have an inner strength to resist buying.” Jake calls Clair to say that Cliff was begging him to sell him anything, and that Cliff was willing to pay regular prices for items on sale.

| 11.35 | Vanessa tells Theo she was called a ‘rich girl’ at school. Theo says he would love for someone to call him rich.

| 14.20 | Vanessa wants to tell her parents what happened at school. Theo is surprised: “You’re going to tell mom and dad?” Vanessa: “Sure, it’s their fault, they’re the ones who made us rich.”

| 14.50 | Vanessa tells Cliff and Clair about what happened. Her friends told others “about all the nice things we have,” and said that “anyone who’d pay $11,000 for a painting is a show off.” Clair is surprised that Vanessa’s friends knew the price of the painting.

| 15.50 | Vanessa: “None of this would’ve happened if we weren’t so rich.” Cliff: “Your mother and I are rich. You have nothing. You can tell your friends and your enemies that.”

| 17.00 | Vanessa’s friends are impressed by the painting Clair bought at the auction (ep. 2-14), saying “It must have been expensive.” Vanessa tells it was $11,000.

Materialism. > the cost of living. Conflict. > family relations; who’s in charge

Parental support. Money as mode of comparison. Children’s dependence/independence.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17.40</td>
<td>Clair to Vanessa: “Your father and I are not rich. Rich is when your money works for you, not when you work for the money. And we work hard for the money. But we’re proud of what we have and we’re happy to share it with our children.” Vanessa: “I think I’d be much better off if we didn’t have so much money.” Cliff: “If you don’t want any money you just tell us that and we won’t give you any, and then all you got do is pay us back the $100,000 you owe us and then we’re even.” Clair explains: “Vanessa you are rich, not because of things but because you have a family who loves you.” Vanessa: “When I grow up I’m not going to have so much money. That way my kids won’t have any problems.” Cliff: “Please don’t send your poor children to this house begging.”</td>
<td>Education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.05</td>
<td></td>
<td>Humorous way to stress parental control and children’s dependence. &gt; the cost of children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-15</td>
<td>Say hello to a good buy</td>
<td>&gt; the cost of living</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.15</td>
<td>Cliff and Theo go to buy a new car. Cliff: “When you go in to negotiate the price of a car, you can’t go in looking like you have a lot of money”. Theo: “But the price is already on the sticker.” Cliff: “That’s the suggested retail price. I’m going to go in and negotiate with the salesman on what will be the actual price.” Cliff explains to Theo: “When they find out I’m a doctor, the man will lose all flexibility in determining the price.” The salesman and Cliff talk about cost of a family. Cliff: “I don’t have any clothes because I spend everything dressing him [Theo] up.” The salesman and Cliff start negotiating, but the deal breaks on $100. When Cliff and Theo get up to leave, the salesman suggests to meet each other half way and the deal is closed.</td>
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<td>10.05</td>
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<tr>
<td>16.55</td>
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<tr>
<td>4-1</td>
<td>Call of the wild</td>
<td>Parental support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>Cliff gives Elvin a stethoscope because he will go to medical school: “I know it’s expensive but it’s an investment in the future.” Sondra tells that Elvin isn’t interested in making a lot of money, and that instead of going to medical school he will open up a wilderness store.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Elements</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.40</td>
<td>Cliff is disappointed: “he’s going to pay me back for this.” Clair tries to calm him down: “I’m sure they’ll have all the money they need while Sondra goes to law school.” But Sondra says she won’t go to law school, she will help Elvin open up the wilderness store.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>Clair: “After all the money we spent sending you to Princeton? Sondra you owe us $79,648 and 22 cents and I want my money, now! […] I’ll take whatever she’s got, empty her pockets.” Clair later says to Cliff that Sondra will have to divorce Elvin. Cliff to Elvin: “I’d like to help out with some money. Take it as a loan.” Elvin won’t accept Cliff’s money. Theo tells his parents he doesn’t want to go to college, he wants to open up his own business after high school. Clair: “Where are you going to get the money?” Theo explains: “All you have to do is give me the money you were going to spend on my college education, now.” Clair: “How much are we talking?” Theo already figured out the cost: tuition of the most expensive school, plus room and board = $17,999. Multiply by 4 years, add inflation, $7000 for books and lab fees, costs of coming home every weekend ($8000), $3000 for incidentals = $112,500. But, Theo says he’s willing to deal. Clair: “If I were you, I would get out of this room while I was ahead and alive.” Theo: “Can I at least borrow 3 dollars for some pizza?” Clair: “Parents control. Conflict. Parental support. &gt; the cost of children. &gt; children’s dependence/independence.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>21.20</td>
<td>Sondra and Elvin offer Denise a job at their wilderness store. After asking how much the job pays ($168 a week), Denise says she won’t take anything that isn’t associated with music/fashion. Cliff is horrified that Denise turned down the job. Theo found “golden investment opportunity,” namely a condo for $485,000.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.50</td>
<td>Theo found “golden investment opportunity,” namely a condo for $485,000.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-18 Waterworks</td>
<td>9.00</td>
<td>Cliff wants to do the plumbing in the bathroom himself, but Clair already called a plumber. Cliff: “You’re gonna have to pay them a lot of money.” Clair: “Yes.” Cliff: “I’m doing it for free.” Clair: “And that’s exactly what I’m afraid it’s going to look like.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-1 Together again and again</td>
<td>8.20</td>
<td>Denise says she’ll drop out of college. Cliff’s reply: “Wanna bet?” 10.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cliff’s got it all figured out: it’s all about the house. He is convinced the children want the house. Denise eventually gets a job, making $25 a week.

Cliff and Clair want Sondra and Elvin to move to a better apartment because Sondra’s pregnant. Cliff offers to help out: “If it’s a problem of money…” Sondra says they insist on supporting themselves. Cliff’s parents tells that things were the same when Cliff was in medical school and Clair was pregnant. They offered to help him out but he was too stubborn.

Denise tells Sondra and Elvin they are crazy not to accept Cliff and Clair’s offer and move out.

Sondra and Elvin are convinced: “We may need to borrow a little money, not a lot, just a little so that we can get a larger place and one that is in better shape […] And we will give you the conditions under which we will borrow the money: 1- you have to charge us interest. 2- if we don’t pay you back within 1 year, you charge us 5% penalty. 3- we offer you, as collateral, all of our furniture.”

Russell reminds Elvin that he needs one more term: “At no time during the loan can Cliff hold it over your head that you owe him money.”

Cliff says that now that he is a grandfather he has to have money in his pocket. Russell will give 50 cents every time he’ll see his great-grandchild, so Cliff will have to beat him by giving one dollar.

Rudy has a “business proposition” for Cliff because she wants to buy Clair a birthday present: “I have some of the money, and I need you to help me with the rest.” Cliff: “How much does it cost?” Rudy: “$32.80.” Cliff: “How much do you have?” Rudy: “$1.75.” Cliff: “But $31.05 is a lot of money.” Rudy: “I’ll work for it, I’ll do chores around the house, whatever you want me to do.”

Clair is very surprised at Rudy’s work: “How many children would be industrious enough to do something like this on their own?”

Rudy has to clean up her room. Rudy: “That’s a lot for 31 dollars.” Cliff: “You’re a fraud.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19.30</td>
<td>Cliff’s got it all figured out: it’s all about the house. He is convinced the children want the house. Denise eventually gets a job, making $25 a week.</td>
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<td>22.00</td>
<td>&gt; children’s independence</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Cliff and Clair want Sondra and Elvin to move to a better apartment because Sondra’s pregnant. Cliff offers to help out: “If it’s a problem of money…” Sondra says they insist on supporting themselves.</td>
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<td>&gt; children’s dependence/independence.</td>
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<td>Cliff’s parents tells that things were the same when Cliff was in medical school and Clair was pregnant. They offered to help him out but he was too stubborn.</td>
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<td>16.10</td>
<td>Denise tells Sondra and Elvin they are crazy not to accept Cliff and Clair’s offer and move out.</td>
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<tr>
<td>17.25</td>
<td>Sondra and Elvin are convinced: “We may need to borrow a little money, not a lot, just a little so that we can get a larger place and one that is in better shape […] And we will give you the conditions under which we will borrow the money: 1- you have to charge us interest. 2- if we don’t pay you back within 1 year, you charge us 5% penalty. 3- we offer you, as collateral, all of our furniture.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.08</td>
<td>Toast to “the baby’s wonderful grandparents, whose generosity has made this move possible”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>Sondra and Elvin take responsibility and show they do not take the loan lightly.</td>
</tr>
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<td>-</td>
<td>Denise is the wise one.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.20</td>
<td>Rudy has to clean up her room.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.58</td>
<td>Family relations, who’s in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.10</td>
<td>Family relations, who’s in</td>
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<td>Text</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.55</td>
<td>“You should be paying me $31 a minute to live here.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clair to Rudy: “You deserve a reward, so I’m going to give you $2.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rudy hands over the money to Cliff when Clair’s gone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.00</td>
<td>Cliff to Rudy: “You’ve done a wonderful job, I’m proud of you. You’ve earned all of the money.” Cliff gives Rudy the $2 back she got from Clair. Rudy: “I’m going to use this to buy your birthday present.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>Cliff and Clair go out for the weekend. They leave Theo with some money for food and money for emergency, of which Cliff wants to see the receipt.</td>
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<tr>
<td>18.25</td>
<td>Theo throws a party that gets out of hand. He makes a list of all the things that broke during the party and that he and his friends couldn’t repair.</td>
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<tr>
<td>19.00</td>
<td>Clair to Cliff: “We can’t sue the boy because he has nothing.” Theo has to work in a homeless shelter to make up for the damage he has done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>Theo needs $1500 for a school trip to Egypt and thinks his parents won’t give him the money. His friend asks: “Don’t you have any savings?” Theo: “I spent all the money I had. $500 to repair costs of the party, $325 on parking tickets.” Friend: “You have got the wrong parents, they’re rolling in it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>Theo to Cliff and Clair: “I need 1500 dollars.” Clair: “You want us to give you $1500?” Cliff: “You know, $1500 is a lot of money to give to somebody only making C’s.” This is exactly what Theo predicted they would say.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.10</td>
<td>Theo: “I cannot help it if we just happen to be so rich that I can’t get a grant.” Cliff: “We went to college and graduated. WE are rich. YOU have nothing.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.25</td>
<td>Theo’s friends try to persuade Cliff and Clair, saying Theo will be better for this. Cliff: “If he goes and he comes back the same as he was, you owe us $1500.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.55</td>
<td>Cliff tells Theo their decision: they buy him a membership to the Museum of National History. Cliff gives Theo $45. (This is of course a joke, Theo can go to Egypt)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.45</td>
<td>Cliff: “Now give me the $45 dollars back, that was a joke.” Theo: “You know dad, it was a good joke and you got your money’s worth.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**6-1 Denise: the saga continues**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15.35</td>
<td>Cliff wants to fix the banister and Clair suggests to call a carpenter. Cliff and Clair disapprove of Denise’s chosen future: they tell her that she was supposed to go to college, get a degree, start a career and then get married and start a family. Cliff to Olivia (Denise’s four-year-old stepdaughter): “Do you have a job?” Olivia: “No.” Cliff: “Then I guess I can’t get any money out of you.” Olivia: “I have money.” Cliff: “You do? How much?” Olivia: “I have a lot of it, you can have some if you want.” Cliff: “I know this is not one of my children.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**6-2 Surf’s up**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>Cliff bought Theo a refrigerator for his college dorm. Theo, however, has never invited Cliff to his apartment because he thinks Cliff will tell embarrassing stories to his roommates. Cliff: “Since I’m helping to pay for that space he’s living in, I’m going to take this refrigerator over to his apartment.” Cliff will tell a story if he wants to, “because I’m paying for the space, that’s why.” When Theo and his roommates face being evicted from their apartment, Cliff offers the landlord to pay an extra 20/30/40 dollars a month. Martin (Denise’s husband) wants to pay rent if they are going to stay with Cliff and Clair. Cliff: “No, I don’t want your money.” Martin: “Please, I insist on paying rent.” Cliff: “No, I can’t take your money.” Martin: “I’ll pay you 600 a month.” Cliff: “Well, 600, yesss.” Clair: “No, no, no, we are not going to take his money.”</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**6-18 Rudy’s walk on the wild side**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>Vanessa comes in cleaning Cliff’s office. Cliff immediately asks: “How much?” Vanessa: “Only $15.” Cliff won’t give it. Vanessa: “It’s only $15.” Cliff: “Only $15? If you clean the garage I’ll give you $15.” They negotiate about how much Vanessa will get for dusting C’s office. Rudy’s friend bought a sweater that Rudy also wants to buy. Rudy: “I can’t buy it now, I don’t get my allowance until tomorrow.” Rudy’s $2.30 short.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>Rudy: “I’m going ask my parents for it.” Kenny (Rudy’s friend): “Good choice, they’re loaded.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.40</td>
<td>Vanessa gives Clair a “declaration of financial independence” that doesn’t require her to get a job. Vanessa argues: “The average allowance is 1/10 of 1% of the family income. You and dad make more than the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Abbreviations:**
- Parental support.
- > the cost of children.
- Cliff expects something in return for his support.
- > children’s dependence/independence.
- Money as a reward.
average salary. So, if my allowance were raised to 1/10 of 1% of that, I could be financially independent.” Clair: “So the assumption is that as our child, you are entitled to a percentage of our income.” Vanessa: “Yes!” Clair: “NO!” Vanessa: “But mom, it’s your responsibility to clothe and feed me, I didn’t ask to be born.” Clair: “Your allowance will stay the same, until you get married, and then it’ll drop.” Vanessa: “I need a bigger allowance, I’m a Huxtable, my friends expect me to have money when we go out.” Clair: “You would have more money if you were more responsible. I would strongly suggest that you get a job or learn how to budget your allowance because I’m tired of giving out extra money every single week.”

Rudy took the $2.30 she needed from Clair. Kenny: “I still can’t believe you stole that money, you come from such a good family.”

12.00

Cliff talks to Rudy, after Theo came with money for Rudy. Rudy explains what she did. Cliff: “Why didn’t you come to me for the money?”

Parental support is questioned. Conflict.

12.00

Cliff wants to buy a new kitchen appliance via a television commercial, > the cost of children.

12.10

> children’s dependence/independence

13.00

Cliff: “If you continue, we’re cutting off your living expenses.” Theo: “That bank account, I opened to show you guys that I’m not spending my money stupidly.”

16.30

6-21 Theo’s dirty laundry

Theo secretly moved in with his girlfriend Justine, but Cliff and Clair find out. Cliff: “Each month, I give you a cheque to pay the rent on your apartment. Are you using that cheque now to pay the rent at Justine’s?” Theo: “Not all of it. Justine’s rent is much lower.” Cliff: “So what are you doing with the leftover money?” Theo: “I opened up a bank account.” Clair: “What about the bed and the refrigerator that we bought you?” Theo: “I’m renting those to Anthony.” Cliff: “And you’re taking all that money and putting it in your bank account?” Theo: “Yes!” Cliff: “So you’re really saving a lot of money?” Theo: “Yes!” Clair: “We sent you to college to get an education, not to move in with your girlfriend. And the money that we give you is for rent for an apartment that you’re supposed to be living in.”

Clair: “Just because you guys give me money doesn’t mean you can control my life.”

> the cost of children.
but Clair doesn’t agree. Cliff: “I have to do it because it’s the new rack that’s coming out”. Clair: “You already have that rack, it’s in the basement in a box.” Theo gets kicked out of the house. Clair: “We’re your safety net” But it can’t always be like that.

Theo gets kicked out of the house. Clair: “We’re your safety net” But it can’t always be like that.

Cliff explains to Theo how they spent money on him when he wanted to play in Little League. Cliff also says that one of the biggest lies children tell is “I’ll pay you back later.” Cliff to his children: “We’re not being paid to look after you all. And there’s not a cheque big enough to take care of you.”


Olivia has her future all planned out. She’ll stay with the Huxtables and work together with Dr Huxtable: “We’ll make mucho dinero.” Cliff: “Well, you know my rule, anybody in this house that brings a pay cheque can stay.”

Rudy gives Cliff a lease for her bedroom. Cliff: “Do you have money to pay rent?”

Pam (Clair’s distant cousin) is thinking of going to college. Her friend says: “You’re living in the Huxtable house but you don’t have Huxtable money.” When her mom will return she’ll have to move out of the “Huxtable castle.” Pam says she can’t afford to rent a video if she wants to go to college. She wonders why she gets good grades for college if she can’t afford it anyway.

Pam says she can’t afford to rent a video if she wants to go to college. She wonders why she gets good grades for college if she can’t afford it anyway.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>7-24 Cliff and Jake</th>
<th>Materialism. &gt; the cost of living</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10.30</td>
<td>Cliff wants to buy an electric sander. Clair calls Jake (owner of the appliance store) because Cliff “has a bit of a problem controlling himself in [his] store.” She asks Jake not to sell Cliff an electric sander. In the store, Cliff’s willing to pay more than the 50% off. He would take it for 25% off. He would even pay the full price. If he could buy the sander he would also be willing to buy the tool belt Jake tried to sell him for the full price. Clair thought she fixed the toaster but it’s broken. Cliff says he’ll need to go to Jake’s to buy a new one. Clair says no, because she thinks Cliff’s weak. Clair found a new electric sander in the basement, hidden in a sleeping bag.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15.40</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>8-2 There’s no place like this home</th>
<th>Conflict.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>Rudy needs money for clothes and Vanessa needs a phone card, and they both go to Cliff for money.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>Cliff and Clair co-sign a home loan for Sondra and Elvin.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.20</td>
<td>Rudy asks Clair for money. Clair: “I gave you money for clothes in July and you bought them then.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.30</td>
<td>Cliff emphasizes to Elvin that owning a house is a lot of responsibility (“the big R”).</td>
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<tr>
<td>14.20</td>
<td>Elvin panics, saying “It’s just a little buyer’s remorse.” Cliff: “What’s your problem? Responsibility? Commitment?” Elvin: “No dad, it’s the money! All that money, every month!” Elvin is worried that if he misses one payment “they” will take it all away.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15.20</td>
<td>Elvin assumes that Cliff and Clair would help out if Sondra and Elvin would miss a payment: “then you would have to pay for it and I don’t think I can live with that”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>16.10</td>
<td>Cliff: “You’re a doctor, your wife’s a lawyer, you got in-laws that are protecting you and backing you up. Who else would you want to trade places with?”</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>8-8 Olivia’s field trip</th>
<th>Parental support. &gt; children’s dependence/independence.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>Theo found a cheap way to buy t-shirts for the community centre.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>Cliff tells Theo his all-time favourite slogan: “I paid my parents back all the money that I borrowed and I feel good about myself.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>20.40</td>
<td>Clair helps Theo out after he finds out that the cheap t-shirts don’t have holes for the head. Clair calls the vendor of the t-shirts to set things straight, and then says to Theo: “You owe me $150 for that phone call,”</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

> the cost of living.
and as your attorney, I’d advice you not to go to your mother for the funds…”

| 8-13 Theo’s future | 5.20 | Theo tells Cliff and Clair that a lot of his friends have trouble finding a job. “But thanks to you guys, I don’t have to worry about that for a while. [...] You’re still paying for my grad school, right?” | > the cost of children. |
| | 5.45 | Cliff to Clair: “You want to pick up his tab for grad school?” Clair: “I wouldn’t have it any other way.” | Parental support. |
| | 15.25 | Theo: “Can’t a son decide that it’s time to stop taking from his parents and start giving back?” | > children’s dependence/independence. |
| | 15.55 | Theo tells Cliff and Clair that he got offered a job interview. His starting salary would be $30,000 a year. “That means I can stop sponging off of you guys, that means independence, that means I can be the first Huxtable to leave this house and stay gone.” Cliff applauds. | |
| | 17.15 | Cliff: “You never heard us use the word sponge.” Clair: “Paying for your education, well that’s our privilege and an investment.” Cliff: “And our decision. Your future is your decision.” Later, when Theo’s gone, Cliff says to Clair: “30,000 a year. . . he’s going to here a different song when the tax man cometh.” | |
| | 20.00 | Theo explains to Eugene (a student at the community centre) that life isn’t all about getting things. | |
| | 21.10 | Theo says that he taught Eugene to look at all the possibilities before focusing on something. | |
| | 21.40 | Theo to Eugene: “You’re getting an education, which is the best way to give yourself options.” | |
| 8-23 Some gifts aren’t deductible | 6.50 | Cliff wants to write off Sondra and Elvin and their twins as a charitable expense (because they sleep/eat/borrow and don’t pay back) and as a medical expense (because they took a year of his life). Cliff also wants to put Olivia up as a dependant. | > the cost of children. |
### Appendix C

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The cost of children</th>
<th>The cost of living</th>
<th>Children’s dependence and independence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>3-7: Theo’s flight</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>1-1: Pilot Presentation</strong></td>
<td><strong>4-1: Call of the wild</strong>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cliff and Clair agreed to encourage their children if they show sincere interest in something.</td>
<td>Cliff explains the costs of living to Theo, using Monopoly money.</td>
<td>Tension between dependence and independence. Sondra’s independent choice not to go to law school stands in the way of her responsibilities towards her parents because of their financial investment in her Princeton education. Clair is furious because her expectations are not met.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4-1: Call of the Wild</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>2-21: Theo’s Holiday</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>5-4: Move it</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clair wants $79,648 back from Sondra: parents expect something in return for their investment. Theo presents a plan to get money Cliff and Clair would otherwise spend on his education.</td>
<td>Theo gets a financial life lesson when the house is turned into the real world.</td>
<td>Cliff and Clair want to help Sondra and Elvin financially so that they can move. Sondra and Elvin show responsibility in accepting the loan: they give a few conditions under which they will borrow the money.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5-25: 57 varieties</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>3-8: Vanessa’s rich</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>5-7: Cyranoise de Bergington</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cliff and Clair are willing to pay for Theo’s trip to Egypt, it is an investment into Theo’s knowledge and experience. They do not take it lightly: they expect Theo to understand their reasons to either give him the money or not.</td>
<td>Clair calls Cliff an electronic junkie. Status is connected with what you own: Vanessa is called a rich girl because of all the nice things the family has, and comes to resent the family’s wealth.</td>
<td>Rudy makes a deal with Cliff to earn money for a present for Clair by doing chores. Clair is amazed at Rudy’s efforts and rewards her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8-13: Theo’s future</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>6-21: Theo’s dirty laundry</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>6-21: Theo’s dirty laundry</strong>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clair says it is their privilege and investment to pay for Theo’s education.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tension between dependence and independence. Theo makes independent decisions that get him into trouble with his parents: he violates their trust and this is unacceptable.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Episodes with an * are categorised under more than one theme. Episodes in boldface are the most representative episodes.