

MAKING THE GRADE
By Helen Jameson

Genre: Drama
Time: 4 minutes
Themes: Temptation, discrimination, faithfulness, isolation, societal pressures, conforming to the world, student pressures
Biblical Ref.: Matthew 16:26, Psalm 18:2
Church Season: Any
Synopsis: A student must choose between denying or supporting her faith in a confrontation with a college professor.
Characters:
 Professor
 Student
Props: 1 desk, stack of papers, briefcase, graded paper for student, backpack, 3 chairs
Costumes: Modern dress
Sound: 2 wireless mics
Lighting: General stage.
Setting: College Classroom

Director's Tip: This scene can be played two different ways. The professor can be portrayed harshly and bitter, or he can be slightly gruff but straightforward. With the latter version, the professor must have a persuasive tone to his voice. His intent is to sway the student rather than aggressively force her to change her paper.

The scene ends with the student left in the throes of a difficult decision—change the paper or fail.

The scene opens with the Professor standing behind a desk. The student sits in a chair with backpack at her/his side.

She/He is holding a graded paper. Class is over and the Professor is preparing to leave.

PROFESSOR: *(Standing.)* That ends today's class. You all have your papers. You will have one more opportunity to improve your grade. Return your term paper by next class meeting. I've indicated with red pen the areas that need to be addressed. Make a choice....the grade stays as is or you can hopefully pull yourself up by your bootstraps and save yourself from failing miserably. Class dismissed. *(Immediately he begins to shuffle papers into a briefcase. The following is rapid fire dialogue.)*

STUDENT: *(Raising her hand.)* Professor...sir....

PROFESSOR: *(Tersely.)* Class is dismissed. I have a luncheon appointment. If you have any questions, my office hours are posted on the door.

STUDENT: *(Interrupting.)* I know, sir, but I may not have an opportunity to...

PROFESSOR: *(Totally ignoring her.)* Just check my office hours...okay.

STUDENT: *(Strongly.)* I have.....I work during those times....I'm putting myself through

school... *(Pleading.)* This is the only opportunity I have. I need to talk to you about my paper.

PROFESSOR: *(Sighing/sitting.)* Okay...okay.... *(Checking his watch.)* I'll give you 5 minutes....no more... *(Opening grade book.)*

STUDENT: Thank you, sir....I really appreciate....

PROFESSOR: Start talking.... *(Tapping his watch.)* The clock is ticking.....what about your paper, Miss ?????

STUDENT: Nancy Jones.

PROFESSOR: *(Riffling through a grade book.)* I see here you earned a "D." Slightly above failing. Surely you can squeeze some brain cells and improve your grade.

STUDENT: Yes.... I know I can, but I don't know if I want to.

PROFESSOR: What? Don't want to? *(Slamming the book shut/standing.)* I thought you wanted to "improve" your grade.

STUDENT: I do, but I'm concerned about how I have to do it. *(Handing him the paper.)* These are the areas you indicated that needed correction.

PROFESSOR: *(Glancing at the paper.)* Now, I remember your paper.... You recommended "faith based alternatives" to solve certain societal problems. Big words.....little action.

STUDENT: *(Surprised.)* I outlined in detail the different ways that faith based alternatives could be utilized more effectively than traditional methods. I did my research.

PROFESSOR: Miss... *(Looking at the paper for the name.)* Jones.... I have no doubt that you did your homework. I do doubt the "process" suggested.

STUDENT: *(Confused.)* Process suggested? What does that mean?

PROFESSOR: *(Toying with the words.)* It means that I do not agree with your solutions....and I might add....all of my colleagues would agree.

STUDENT: My solutions? I thought this paper was supposed to be an exercise in "thinking out of the box."

PROFESSOR: You went a little overboard in your creativity. The "process" you suggest is not acceptable.

STUDENT: *(Stunned.)* The process? *(Realizing his inference.)*

PROFESSOR: The process, Miss Jones. Do some more research....change the process. Improve your grade.

STUDENT: This isn't about "the process." I think you are attacking my faith.

PROFESSOR: *(Defensively.)* No, I'm not. I didn't say that. *(Handing back the paper.)* I said that the process....the very basis of your paper....how should I put this....it doesn't fly!

STUDENT: I can't believe this.

PROFESSOR: *(Looking at his watch.)* You better believe it.... *(Tapping his fingers on the desk.)* Listen....I know your major. This is an important class for you to pass, am I right?

STUDENT: Yes.

PROFESSOR: And you need to pass it well....and not with just a piddling "D." *(Milder tone.)* I want to help you, but I can not give you a better grade unless you change your paper. *(Pointing to the paper.)* There isn't a published authority of any academic credibility that would support a "faith-based" solution.

STUDENT: But I cited all the sources....

PROFESSOR: Exactly. Your sources are not what I am looking for either. Do you really believe that you could pass on this "Sunday School stuff" as serious research! There's tons of research on the social systems approach to these issues. My advice...go back to the library, find reliable sources and options.... and bring me a paper without this "faith-based stuff." Don't screw up your future by being stubborn. And...don't try me again with this "garbage"! You've got bigger battles to fight in your college career.... Besides....I will win.

STUDENT: You're sure about that?

PROFESSOR: *(Picking up his briefcase and starting to exit.)* Yes, I am.... That is why I have tenure *(Laughing at his own joke)* ...your five minutes are up. I leave you to stew about it. See you next week. *(Starts to exit.)* Miss Jones, don't let today's decision kill your desired future. *(He exits.)*

STUDENT: *(Sits quietly holding the paper in her hands.)* My decision... *(agonizing)* my decision. *(Freeze for three seconds and then exits.)*

THE END