



Teens, Sleep & Drowsy Driving: *Classroom Skit*

Note to Teachers: Discussion questions follow the skit.

Cast:

- Driver
- Passenger
- Police officer
- Sound effects person

Props:

- Two chairs

Scene:

The skit takes place in the front of the room, facing the class. Two chairs are placed side by side, representing the front seats of a car. POLICE OFFICER remains “off-stage” until later in the skit. The SOUND EFFECTS PERSON remains “off-stage” for the entire skit; he or she will be heard but not seen. The skit begins with the DRIVER and PASSENGER walking across the room toward the chairs, talking with great excitement.

Skit:

Driver: I told you that concert would be worth the trip. It was absolutely amazing! Unbelievable! Mind-blowing!

Passenger: I know! And that food we just had at the Waffle Hut blew my stomach away, too! (*Looks at cell phone and mood changes to concern.*) But I think it took too long for us to eat. It’s 3 a.m., and we have a four-hour drive to get home.

Driver: Don’t I always tell you that you worry too much? Come on, get in the car. We’ll be home in no time.

DRIVER and PASSENGER pretend to open the car doors, get in the car and close the doors. SOUND EFFECTS PERSON makes the sound of doors opening and closing.

Driver: Now don't forget to put your seatbelt on – safety always comes first when I'm driving. *(They buckle up.)* And remember – you're my co-pilot. That means it's your job to help me stay awake.

Passenger: You got it. I'm on duty. *(They bump fists or do a "secret handshake.")* Now let's hit the road!

SOUND EFFECTS PERSON makes car noises as the DRIVER pretends to start the car, shift into gear and pull off with a squeal, with hands raised as if gripping a steering wheel.

Driver: *(Looking straight ahead.)* I don't even know which song was my favorite tonight. *(PASSENGER falls asleep.)* They brought out all the hits. And they played some new songs too! Which one was your favorite? *(Silent pause, waiting for an answer. Then DRIVER turns to look at the passenger.)* Are you listening to me? *(Sees that passenger is asleep. Mood changes to disgust.)* Some co-pilot you are.

DRIVER looks straight ahead again, continuing to make steering movements. Gradually, sleepiness increases: yawns, blinks eyes repeatedly, shakes head, jerks head back after it begins to dip toward chest. Finally, DRIVER falls asleep – eyes close, head dips down, body begins to lean toward passenger.

SOUND EFFECTS PERSON makes loud, rapid-fire sound of a car running over the rumble strip. DRIVER and PASSENGER both sit up straight with a jolt, eyes wide open. Noise stops.

Passenger: *(Confused panic.)* We're under attack!

Driver: *(Looking around, stunned.)* What was that?

Passenger: I don't know – you're the one driving! Wait a minute – that was the rumble strip, wasn't it? You were drifting off the road - did you fall asleep? Are you trying to kill us?

Driver: You're the one who fell asleep! I was just resting my eyes for a second. Don't make such a big deal out of it.

Passenger: Whatever. All I know is I'm too young to die. So you need to do whatever it takes to stay awake. You'd better get some caffeine.

Driver: I already did, remember? I had four or five cups of coffee at the Waffle Hut. The caffeine isn't doing anything for me tonight.

Passenger: Well, then turn up the music or something.

Driver: Good idea. *(Taps an imaginary button on the dashboard.)*

SOUND EFFECTS PERSON begins to loudly sing a popular song. PASSENGER goes right back to sleep. DRIVER bobs and sways to the sound of the music, drumming hands on the imaginary steering wheel, humming or singing along. But DRIVER begins to get sleepy again and then falls asleep, slowly leaning toward the passenger.

SOUND EFFECTS PERSON stops singing and makes the loud sound of the rumble strip. DRIVER and PASSENGER are shocked awake again. Noise stops.

Passenger: Did you fall asleep again? Are you doing this on purpose to scare me? Because it's not funny!

Driver: *(Stutters.)* I – I – I don't know what's happening. I think the steering wheel is out of line or something.

Passenger: Look – you better stop messing around. Why don't you let down your window and get some fresh air in here?

Driver: Yeah, that might help. *(Pushes button on imaginary door.)*

SOUND EFFECTS PERSON makes the mechanical sound of a power window beginning to open, then makes the loud, continuous sound of rushing air coming through the window. PASSENGER goes back to sleep. DRIVER leans out the window for a moment to feel the wind, shakes head to try to wake up, slaps face a few times. But sleep returns as the DRIVER's eyes shut and body slowly leans toward the passenger.

SOUND EFFECTS PERSON stops making the wind noise and makes the loud sound of the rumble strip. DRIVER and PASSENGER are shocked awake again. Noise stops.

Passenger: Are you kidding me? You did it again?

Before the driver can respond, the SOUND EFFECTS PERSON makes the sound of a police siren. The sound continues.

Driver: Oh no, what are we going to do?

Passenger: What are we going to do? You are going to pull over – right now!

DRIVER turns imaginary wheel to pull the car over to the side of the road. SOUND EFFECTS PERSON stops the siren, briefly makes the rumble strip sound, and then makes the sound of a car door opening and closing. POLICE OFFICER slowly and cautiously walks across the room toward the car, using an imaginary flashlight to examine the vehicle, and then stops next to the DRIVER.

Driver: *(Stuttering.)* Is – is – is there a problem officer?

Police: Have you been drinking tonight?

Driver: *(Stuttering.)* N – n – n – no, officer. I haven't had a single drink. And that's the truth.

Passenger: Not a single drink, officer. Neither of us.

Police: *(Leans down to eye level with the DRIVER.)* I want you to tell me your full name – very slowly.

As DRIVER slowly says name, POLICE OFFICER sniffs the DRIVER's breath.

Police: Well, it smells like you're telling the truth. So would you like to explain why you almost ran off the road back there?

Driver: Well, uh, it was just a mistake, officer. I, uh, well, I mean it's late, and I guess I'm getting a little sleepy.

Police: A little sleepy?

Driver: Well, maybe more than a little. But it wasn't my fault. We have to get back home, and it's late, and this stretch of road is so boring, and my co-pilot went to sleep on me. I tried everything I could to stay awake.

Police: You tried everything, did you?

Driver: Oh yes, officer. Everything.

Police: So at the rest stop that you passed about two miles back, you pulled off the road at a safe location and took a nap?

Driver: Oh – well – um, I – well...no. I guess I didn't think of that.

Police: You tried turning up the music, didn't you? (*DRIVER nods.*) And you rolled down the window? (*DRIVER nods.*) I bet you even slapped yourself. (*DRIVER nods, embarrassed.*) Don't you know that drowsy driving can be just as dangerous as drunk driving? Do you think a drunk can get sober by sticking his head out the window? (*DRIVER shakes head from side to side.*) Well you don't wake up that way, either. The only thing you can do when you are this tired is to sleep. And you can either choose to sleep, or your body will force you to sleep. It's that simple.

Driver: I'm sorry officer. I never thought about it that way.

Police: Well, you can think about it while you and your *co-pilot* go for a little ride with me. I'm not going to arrest you, but it's too dangerous to let you drive any further. So you can take a nice nap at the station while we wait for one of your parents to come pick you up. Now get out of the car and come with me.

The End

Discussion Questions

1. Why was it a bad idea for them to try to make the drive home? What could they have done differently to avoid being in this situation?
2. What were some of the warning signs that the driver was getting drowsy?
3. How did the driver attempt to stay awake? What would have been a better way to respond to the drowsiness?
4. Why is drowsy driving so dangerous?
5. Why do you think drowsy driving is so common among teens?
6. Have you ever been unable to stay awake no matter how hard you tried? Describe the situation and how you felt.
7. Why is it important to get plenty of sleep every night? Describe how you feel during the day after a good night of sleep.

