

Refund

Fritz Karinthy



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CHARACTERS - 1



Wasserkopf: The protagonist, a 40-year-old former student seeking a refund for his tuition due to perceived inadequate education.



The Principal: The head of the school, shocked by Wasserkopf's request and responsible for convening the staff meeting.



The Mathematics Master: A key figure who devises a plan to prove Wasserkopf's incorrect answers as correct, ultimately outsmarting him.



The Physics Master: Participates in the examination, using creative justifications for Wasserkopf's absurd answers.

CHARACTERS - 2



The History Master: Struggles to validate Wasserkopf's incorrect responses but collaborates with the other teachers.



The Geography Master: Engages Wasserkopf in questioning and helps justify his nonsensical answers.



The Servant: A minor character who assists in the school setting, adding to the atmosphere.



The Staff: Collective group of teachers who work together to handle Wasserkopf's challenge.



Leaderer: A businessman whose conversation with Wasserkopf sparks his decision to seek a tuition refund.



Fritz Karinthy (1887-1938)

- Hungarian writer
- Versatile: novelist, short story writer, poet, essayist, playwright
- Studied natural sciences; initially trained to be a teacher
- Became a journalist for the literary periodical *Nyugat*
- Strong philosophical and humanistic outlook
- Criticized the barbarism and horrors of World War I



Overview

- **Title:** Refund
- **Author:** Fritz Karinthy
- **Year:** 1938
- **Genre:** One-act play
- **Theme:** Absurdity of education, the critique of authority, and humor in human folly.

Plot Summary

- **Main Character:** Wasserkopf, a 40-year-old jobless former student who believes his education was useless.
- **Inciting Incident:** After a conversation with a businessman named Leaderer about foreign exchange, Wasserkopf realizes his lack of understanding and is inspired to demand a refund of his tuition fees from his old school, thinking it will improve his financial situation.

CONFLICT

Wasserkopf's Claim: He asserts that he deserves a refund for his tuition paid eighteen years ago, arguing that he was poorly educated.

Principal's Reaction: Shocked by Wasserkopf's demand, the principal calls an urgent meeting with the teaching staff to devise a plan.

TEACHERS' STRATEGY

OBJECTIVE: THE TEACHERS
DECIDE TO OUTSMART
WASSERKOPF BY VALIDATING
ALL HIS INCORRECT ANSWERS
DURING AN ORAL EXAMINATION,
PROVING HIM TO BE AN
"EXCELLENT" STUDENT.

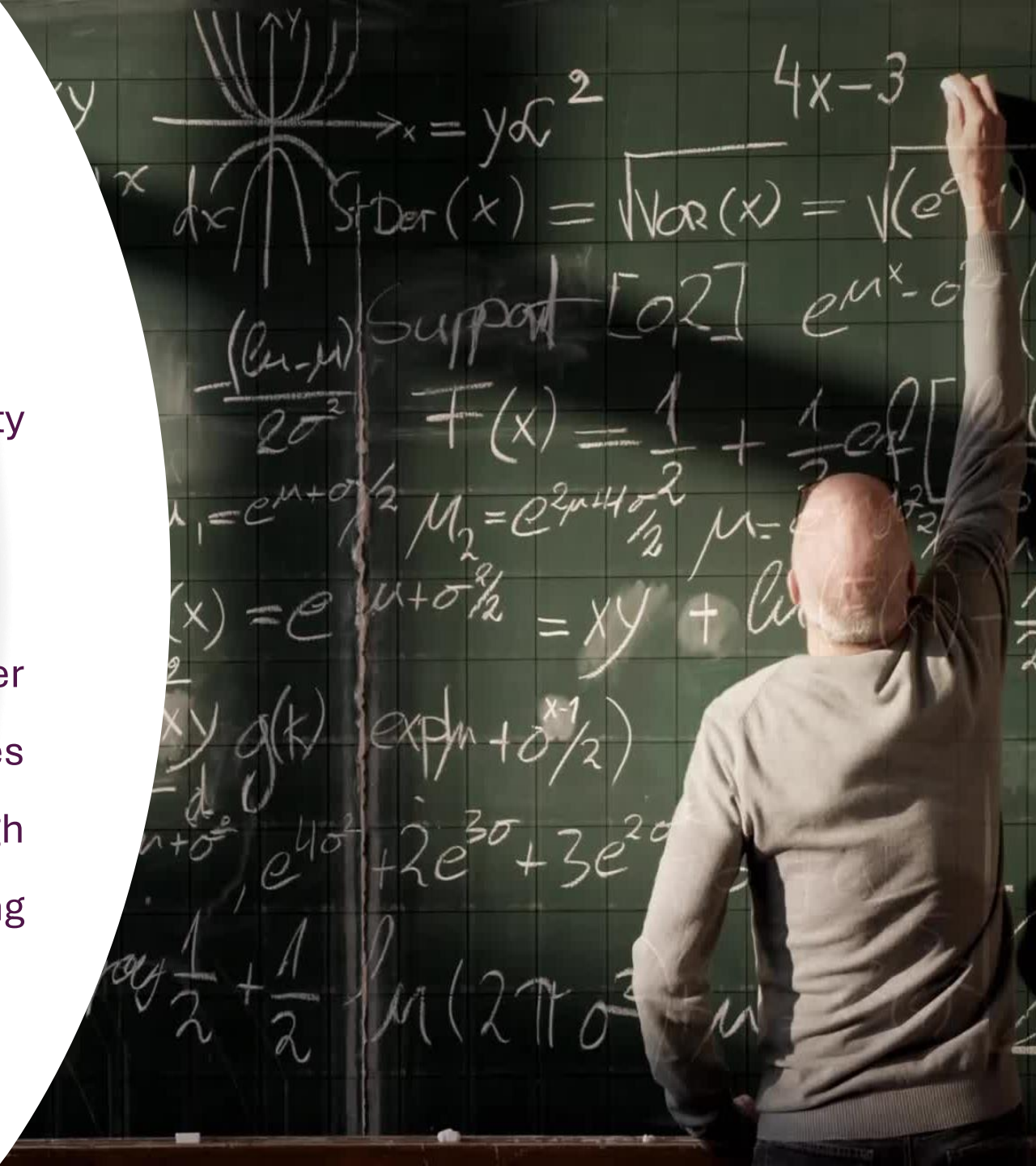


UNITY AMONG TEACHERS: THEY
AGREE TO SUPPORT ONE
ANOTHER IN THIS ENDEAVOR TO
PROTECT THE SCHOOL'S
REPUTATION.

Key Exam Questions and Responses

History Question:

- **Question:** How many years did the Thirty Years' War last?
- **Wasserkopf's Answer:** "Seven metres."
- **Teacher's Justification:** The History Master struggles, but the Mathematics Master argues that years can be converted to metres through Einstein's Theory of Relativity, making Wasserkopf's answer "correct."



Physics Question:

- **Question:** Do church clocks appear smaller as one walks away, or is it an optical illusion?
- **Wasserkopf's Answer:** Insults the Physics Master by calling him an "ass."
- **Teacher's Justification:** The Physics Master claims Wasserkopf's answer is valid since "ass" lacks visual illusions, interpreting it as a metaphorical truth.

Geography Question

- **Question:** Name a city that shares its name with the capital of German Providence of Brunswick.
- **Wasserkopf's Answer:** "Same."
- **Teacher's Justification:** The Geography Master validates this by referencing a legend involving Emperor Barbarossa, making the answer seem plausible.



Climax and Conclusion

Final Questions: The Mathematics Master asks a difficult question followed by an easy one. Wasserkopf answers incorrectly to the easy question, which infuriates the master.

Tuition Refund: When Wasserkopf demands his refund, he gives the exact amount. The Mathematics Master triumphantly declares he has answered the difficult question correctly, thus marking him as "excellent" in all subjects.

Outcome: The teachers outsmart Wasserkopf, ensuring he leaves the school without his refund and preserving their reputation.

THEMES



Absurdity of Education: The play humorously critiques the education system's rigidity and the absurd lengths to which individuals may go to justify their failures.



Humor and Satire: Karinthy uses wit and absurd scenarios to highlight the folly of both students and teachers, showcasing the disconnect between education and practical knowledge.



Authority and Expertise: The teachers' responses reflect a humorous manipulation of authority, demonstrating how knowledge can be twisted to fit absurd arguments.



CONCLUSION

"Refund" is a clever commentary on the nature of education and the absurdity of life, showcasing the lengths to which people will go to escape accountability. Karinthy masterfully intertwines humor with a critical perspective on societal norms, making the play both entertaining and thought-provoking.

A modern meeting room with a long wooden table, leather chairs, and large windows. The room features a light-colored wooden table surrounded by brown leather chairs. In the background, there is a bar area with a vertical garden wall and a circular mirror on the wall. Large windows on the right side offer a view of a city skyline. The ceiling has several woven pendant lights.

Any Questions ?



THANK YOU