be your only homework assignment for all of next week. But with two weekends and five school days, I expect excellent work. Questions? *(Bell rings.)* Dismissed.

(Lights cross fade: down on MISS SHIELDS, up on apron downstage. Fence rolls back into place as HELEN and ESTHER JANE enter DR, walking home from school, moving DL as they talk.)

HELEN. Know what Roxane said?

ESTHER JANE. What?

HELEN. Roxane said Ralph Parker likes you.

ESTHER JANE. Really? Roxane said that? *(HELEN nods. After a pause.)* I think he's cute. Don't you think he's cute?

HELEN. I like older men.

ESTHER JANE. Older?

HELEN. Sixth-graders.

ESTHER JANE *(clearly impressed)*. Oh! *(Pause.)* Have you picked a subject for your theme?

HELEN. No. Something about politics, maybe.

ESTHER JANE. Maybe I will, too.

HELEN. Are you a democrat or republican?

ESTHER JANE *(uncertain, then, with conviction)*. Presbyterian.

(They exit DL, crossing past RALPHIE, FLICK and SCHWARTZ, who enter DL and move DR.)

SCHWARTZ. You see that, Ralph?

RALPHIE. What?

SCHWARTZ. Esther Jane was lookin' at you.

FLICK. I thought she was lookin' at *me*.

SCHWARTZ. Why would a girl look at *you? (He pokes FLICK affectionately as he crosses to RALPHIE.)*