

Monologues for Cold Reading

OUR TOWN – American Classic by Thornton Wilder

Winner! 1938 Pulitzer Prize for Drama

"While all of Wilder's work is intelligent, non-synthetic and often moving, as well as funny, it is *Our Town* that makes the difference. It is probably the finest play ever written by an American."

Described by Edward Albee as "...the greatest American play ever written," the story follows the small town of Grover's Corners through three acts: "Daily Life," "Love and Marriage," and "Death and Eternity." Narrated by a stage manager and performed with minimal props and sets, audiences follow the Webb and Gibbs families as their children fall in love, marry, and eventually—in one of the most famous scenes in American theatre—die. Thornton Wilder's final word on how he wanted his play performed is an invaluable addition to the American stage and to the libraries of theatre lovers internationally.

Stage Manager: Most important character in the play Has no name and little importance in the action of play. BUT he has the longest part. Sort of like an omniscient narrator. Folksy wisdom and embodiment of common sense. He acts as a Greek chorus in that he stops the action, intervenes in story, and moves back and forth in time. Also plays the prim Mrs. Forest, oldfashioned and conservative Mr. Morgan, and the solemn minister.

Louella Soames: Town chatterbox. Always has something to say, even when she's dead. She reveals Simon Stimson's drinking problem and gushes at wedding of George and Emily

Emily Webb: All-American girl. Bright, articulate, and despite the anxiety she shares with her mother, a beautiful creature. She is the focus of the action of the play. In Act 1, she is a naive schoolgirl, Act 2, maturing young woman, Act 3, the mother who has died in childbirth. We track time through Emily. Presents life-affirming ideas.

George Gibbs: The All-American boy, or more appropriately, what some people think of as the typical boy--nice and polite, but not very good at book and school learning; loving, but not very good at expressing those emotions; and perfectly happy to stay on the farm. Loves Emily. He wants to just marry Emily, stay on the farm, have kids and live happily ever after.

Mr. Charles Webb: Male age between 30 and 55 or so. He is highly educated and is the editor and owner of the only local newspaper. Has a strong connection with his daughter.

Mrs. Myrtle Webb: Female age between 30 and 55 or so. Wally Webb – young boy age 11 to 13.

Dr. Frank Gibbs: Male age between 30 and 55 or so. He is a doctor and family man. Romantic and in love with his wife.

Mrs. Julia Gibbs: Female age between 30 and 55 or so. Mother of George & Rebecca. Strong love for her family. A romantic who dreams of visiting Paris. Strong connection with her son.

Simon Stimson: Adult (usually male, open to female casting) unspecified age. Leader of the church choir, but has deep problems and a clear drinking problem. Attitude is acerbic, he/she is possibly depressed. Stimson's drinking is the town's scandalous gossip.

OUR TOWN

Audition for the role of the **Stage Manager**

(The Stage Manager, hat on and pipe in mouth, enters and begins placing a table and three chairs downstage left, and a table and three chairs downstage right.) He also places a low bench at the corner of what will be the Webb house, left.)

(As the house lights go down he has finished setting the stage and, leaning against the right proscenium pillar, watches the late arrivals in the audience. When the auditorium is in complete darkness, he speaks.)

Stage Manager: This play is called "Our Town." It was written by Thornton

Wilder; The name of the town is Grover's Corners, New Hampshire – just across the Massachusetts line: latitude 42 degrees 40 minutes; longitude 70 degrees 37 minutes. The First Act shows a day in our town. The day is May 7, 1901. The time is just before dawn.

(Cock crows offstage)

Well, I'd better show you how our town lies. Up here – *(that is: parallel to the back wall)* – is Main Street. Way back there is the railway station; tracks go that way. Polish Town's across the tracks, and some Canuck families. *(Toward the left.)* Over there is the Congregational Church; across the street's the Presbyterian. Methodist and Unitarian are over there. *(off down right)* Baptist is down in the holla' by the river. Catholic Church is over beyond the tracks. Here's the Town Hall and Post Office combined; jail's in the basement. Bryan once made a speech from these steps here. Along here's *(Main Street, parallel with the back wall)* a row of stores. Hitching posts and horse blocks in front of them. First automobile's going to come along in about five years – belonged to Banker Cartwright, our richest citizen . . . lives in the big white house up on the hill. Here's the grocery store and here's Mr. Morgan's drugstore. *(Pointing right and left behind him)* Most everybody in town manages to look into those two stores once a day. Public School's over yonder. High School's still farther over. Quarter of nine mornings, noontimes, and three o'clock afternoons, the hull town can hear yelling and screaming from those schoolyards. *(He approaches the table and chairs downstage right.)* This is our doctor' house, - Doc Gibbs'. This is the back door. *(Two arched trellises, covered with vines and flowers, are pushed out, one by each proscenium pillar.)* There's some scenery for those who think they have to have scenery. This is Mrs. Gibbs' garden. Corn . . . peas . . . beans . . . hollyhocks . . . heliotrope . . . and a lot of burdock. *(Crosses the stage.)* In those days our newspaper come out twice a week – the *Grover's Corners Sentinel* – and this is Editor Webb's house. And this is Mrs. Webb's garden. Just like Mrs. Gibbs', only it's got a lot of sunflowers, too. *(He looks upward, center stage.)* Right here's . . . a big butternut tree. *(He returns to his place by the right proscenium pillar and looks at the audience for a minute.)* Nice town, y'know what I mean? Nobody very remarkable ever come out of it, s'far as we know. The earliest tombstones in the cemetery up there on the mountain say 1670-

1680 – they're Grovers and Cartwrights and Gibbises and Herseys – same names as are around here now.

Well, as I said: It's about dawn. The only lights on in town are in a cottage over by the tracks where a Polish mother's just had twins. And in the Joe Crowell house, where Joe Junior's getting up so as to deliver the paper. And in the depot, where Shorty Hawkins is getting' ready to flag the 5:45 to Boston.

Naturally, out in the country – all around – there've been lights on for some time, what with milkin's and so on. But town people sleep late. So – another day's begun. There's Doc Gibbs comin' down Main Street now, comin' back from that baby case. And here's his wife comin' downstairs to get breakfast. Doc Gibbs died in 1930. The new hospital's named after him. Mrs. Gibbs died first – long time ago, in fact. She went out to visit her daughter, Rebecca, who married an insurance man in Canton, Ohio, and died there – pneumonia – but her body was brought back here. She's up in the cemetery there now – in with a whole mess of Gibbises and Herseys – she was Julia Hersey 'fore she married Doc Gibbs in the Congregational Church over there. In our town we like to know the facts about everybody.

OUR TOWN - AUDITION MONOLOGUES

STAGE MANAGER – There are a lot of things to be said about a wedding. There are a lot of thoughts that go on during a wedding. We can't get them all into one wedding, naturally, - especially not into a wedding at Grover's Corners, where weddings are mighty short and plain. In this play I take the part of the minister. That gives me the right to say a few things more. Yes, for a while now the play gets pretty serious. Y'see some churches say that marriage is a sacrament. I don't quite know what that means, but I can guess. This is a good wedding. The people here are pretty young, but they come from a good State, and they chose right. The real hero of this scene isn't on stage at all. And you all know who that is. And don't forget the other witnesses at this wedding: the ancestors. Millions of them. Most of them set out to live two-by-two. Millions of them. Well, that's all my sermon. 'Twan't very long anyway.

EMILY WEBB – Oh, Mama, just look at me one minute as though you really saw me. Mama! Fourteen years have gone by! – I'm dead! – You're a grandmother, Mama – I married George Gibbs, Mama! - Wally's dead too. – Mama! His appendix burst on a camping trip to Crawford Notch. We felt just terrible about it, don't you remember? – But, just for a moment now we're all together – Mama, just for a moment let's be happy – Let's look at one another! I can't! I can't go on! It goes so fast. We don't have time to look at one another. I didn't realize. So all that was going on and we never noticed! Take me back – up the hill – to my grave. But first: Wait! One more look! Oh, earth you're too wonderful for anyone to realize you! Do any human beings ever realize life while they live it – every, every minute?

GEORGE GIBBS – I'm celebrating because I've got a friend who tells me all the things that ought to be told me. I'm glad you spoke to me like you did. But you'll see. I'm going to change. And Emily, I want to ask you a favor. Emily, if I go away to State Agricultural College next year, will you write me a letter? The day wouldn't come when I wouldn't want to know everything about our town. Y' know, Emily, whenever I meet a farmer I ask him if he thinks it's important to go to Agricultural School to be a good farmer. And some of them say it's even a waste of time. And like you say, being gone all that time – in other places, and meeting other people. I guess new people probably aren't any better than old ones. Emily – I feel that you're as good a friend as I've got. I don't need to go and meet the people in other towns. Emily, I'm going to make up my mind right now – I won't go. I'll tell Pa about it tonight.

MRS. GIBBS – Myrtle, did one of those second-hand furniture men from Boston come to see you last Friday? Well, he called on me. First I thought he was a patient wantin' to see Doctor Gibbs. 'N he wormed his way into my parlor, and, Myrtle Webb, he offered me three hundred and fifty dollars for Grandmother Wentworth's highboy, as I'm sitting here! He did! That old thing! Why it was so big I didn't know where to put it and I almost gave it to Cousin Hester Wilcox. If I could get the Doctor to take the money and go away some place on a trip I'd sell it like that. Y'know, Myrtle, it's been the dream of

my life to see Paris, France. It seems to me that once in your life before you die, you ought to see a country where they don't talk in English and don't even want to.

MR. WEBB – George, I was remembering the other night the advice my father gave me when I got married. Yes, he said “Charles,” he said “start right off showin’ who’s boss. Best thing to do is to give an order about something, even if it doesn’t make sense, just so she’ll learn to obey,” he said. Then he said, “If anything about her irritates you, her conversation or anything, get right up and leave the house; that’ll make it clear to her.” And oh yes, he said “Never let your wife know about how much money you have, never.” So I took the opposite of his advice and I’ve been happy ever since.

DR. GIBBS – George, while I was in my office today I heard a funny sound – and what do you think it was? It was your mother chopping wood. There you see your mother – getting up early; cooking meals all day long; washing and ironing; - and still she has to go out in the backyard and chop wood. I suppose she just got tired of asking you. She just gave up and decided it was easier to do it herself. And you eat her meals, and put on the clothes she keeps nice for you, and you run off and play baseball, - like she’s some hired girl we keep around the house but that we don’t like very much. Well, I knew all I had to do was call your attention to it.

MRS. WEBB – I don’t know why on earth I should be crying. I suppose there’s nothing to cry about. This morning at breakfast it came over me. There was Emily eating her breakfast as she’s done for seventeen years – and she’s going out of my house. I suppose that’s it – And Emily! She suddenly said, “I can’t eat another mouthful.” And she put her head on the table and she cried. Oh, I’ve got to say it – You know, there is something cruel about sending girls out into marriages like that. It’s – it’s cruel, I know; but I just couldn’t get myself to say anything – I went into it blind as a bat myself. The whole world’s wrong, that’s what’s the matter.

SIMON STIMSON – Yes, now you know. Now you know: that’s what it was to be alive. To move around in a cloud of ignorance; to go up and down trampling on the feelings of those – of those about you. To spend and waste time as though you had a million years. To be always at the mercy of one self-centered passion or another. Now you know – that’s the “happy” existence you wanted to go back to. Ignorance and blindness!

LOUELLA SOAMES – Perfectly lovely wedding! Loveliest wedding I ever saw. Oh, I do love a good wedding, don’t you? Doesn’t she make a lovely bride? Don’t know when I’ve seen such a lovely wedding. But I always cry; don’t know why it is, but I always cry. I just like to see young people happy. Don’t you? Oh I think it’s lovely! Aren’t they a lovely couple? Oh, I’ve never been to such a nice wedding. I’m sure they’ll be happy. I always say; Happiness – that’s the great thing. The important thing is to be happy.

Schoolhouse Rock

Jason D. Martin

Play

Comic

M/F

20+

Contemporary

The "sweet, protective" teacher you never had; the life-preserving lesson no one ever taught you.

All right children, everyone sit down. Today I want to tell you about three things every little boy and girl should know. OK, first: Never ride with a stranger. This is very important so I want you all to repeat this rule with me. You never know, a stranger might offer you candy, then take you and put you in a box full of snakes. Never ride with a stranger. Good.

Now the second thing: Always wear your seatbelt. This is very important so I want you all to say it together with me. If you are in a car accident you might go through the windshield and get run over by an ice cream truck. (*Encouraging children to say it.*) Always wear your seatbelt.

Now this is the last and most important thing to remember. You must listen closely because I'm going to have you repeat it. The governments of the world are involved in a multinational conspiracy with an alien race from the planet Zeon; the ultimate goal of this alliance being the total domination and conversion of every man, woman, and child on this planet into hosts for a future alien race that will use all mankind like cattle for food.

Sarah? What is a multinational conspiracy? Well that's when all the governments of the world get together to keep secrets from the people. The government doesn't want you to know that you are going to be fodder for an alien race. Remember how Miss Graham, your principal, told you that little Johnny White had to move away? What really happened is that the aliens took over Johnny's Mommy and Daddy; they in turn changed into alien monsters with huge teeth and giant claws. When little Johnny went to bed, they were hiding. The Mommy monster alien was under the bed and the Daddy monster was in the closet. Little Johnny didn't even know what hit him. The monsters came out and

started to tear that little boy to shreds. He screamed and screamed ... After they were done, they made a milkshake with his brain.

Oh, don't cry. Mikey? You're going to tell on me? To who? Miss Graham? She's part of the conspiracy. She's an alien dressed up to look like a principal. Go ahead and tell her. She might suck your brain out your ear.

Christopher? I'm scaring you and you're going to tell your Mommy and Daddy? Well Christopher, what if they tie you down to the table and start to do experiments on you? What if they clip your pee-pee off and put it in a bun? What if they make you eat it like a hot dog?

Now come on children, let's try this together! Ready? The governments of the world are involved in a multinational conspiracy with an alien race from the planet Zeon; the ultimate goal of this alliance being the total domination and conversion of every man, woman, and child on this planet into hosts for a future alien race that will use all mankind like cattle for food.

OK, now tomorrow we are going to talk about the letter *A*, how to wash your hands correctly, and how to make a tinfoil hat that that will keep the alien species from reading your mind. Have a good afternoon, children, and don't forget what we talked about today!

GAS LIGHT ¹ (ANGEL STREET)*by*

PATRICK HAMILTON

Completely under the influence of her husband, MRS. MANNINGHAM is being driven mad by him in the slow torturous manner which she describes.

MRS. MANNINGHAM. Jack—I'm to make a last appeal to you. I'm going to make a last appeal. I'm desperate, Jack. Can't you see that I'm desperate? If you can't, you must have a heart of stone. . . . Jack, I may be going mad, like my poor mother—but if I am mad you have got to treat me gently. Jack . . . I never lie to you knowingly. If I have taken down that picture I have not known it. I have not known it. If I took it down on those other occasions I did not know it, either . . . Jack, if I steal your things—your rings—your keys—your pencils and your handkerchiefs, and you find them later at the bottom of my box, as indeed you do, then I do not know that I have done it. . . . Jack—if I commit these fantastic, meaningless mischiefs—so meaningless—why should I take a picture down from its place? If I do all these things, then I am certainly going off my head, and must be treated kindly and gently so that I may get well. You must bear with me, Jack, bear with me—not storm and rage. God knows I'm trying, Jack, I'm trying! . . . Believe that I'm trying, and be kind to me!

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FOR TWO WOMEN