



 Prestwick House

# Activity Pack

## OUR TOWN

BY THORNTON WILDER



Copyright © 2004 by Prestwick House, Inc., P.O. Box 658, Clayton, DE 19938. 1-800-932-4593. [www.prestwickhouse.com](http://www.prestwickhouse.com) Permission to use this unit for classroom use is extended to purchaser for his or her personal use. This material, in whole or part, may not be copied for resale.

ISBN 978-1-60389-279-7

Item No. 201291

Written by Kelley Stewart McConathy

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Pre-Reading

### Author's Resume

**Objectives:**     Understanding an author's motivation for writing a literary text  
                      Writing a resume  
                      Researching biographical information using electronic and print materials

#### Activity

Many people consider *Our Town* to be the greatest American play ever written. Further, the author, Thornton Wilder, is the first and only writer to have been awarded the Pulitzer Prize for both fiction and drama. Wilder possessed many skills, including translation, writing, teaching, and acting.

Research the life and writings of Thornton Wilder using resources in the library, on the Internet, and on pages 177 – 181 in the text. Make notes on the following information:

- Educational background
- Career
- Skills
- Other writings
- Recognition and awards

Then, compile the information to create a resume for Thornton Wilder. Use the sample resume as a model.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Act I****Map Skills: Latitude & Longitude**

**Objectives:**     Determining the importance of latitude and longitude  
                      Finding locations on an atlas and/or a map using coordinates

**Activity**

Thornton Wilder based Grover's Corners on a real town in America. In Act I, the Stage Manager states: "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." Actually, these coordinates would place the town just off the coast of Massachusetts in the Atlantic Ocean.

In the original version of the play, the coordinates were to be latitude  $71^{\circ} 37'$ , longitude  $42^{\circ} 40'$ . Also incorrect, this would have placed Grover's Corners in the country of Greenland.

What is the name of the real town after which Grover's Corners was modelled? See if your map skills are better than those of Thornton Wilder. On the **Coordinates Chart** on the next page, use an atlas or map to pinpoint each set of coordinates. Record the name of the city and state (or country) in the **Location** column. The first one has been done for you as an example.

When you are finished, place the first letter of each city in the blanks under the chart. This will tell you the location of the real Grover's Corners.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Act I

### Group Assignment

- Objectives:**
- Relating to the play with personal experiences and prior knowledge that help the readers understand the plot
  - Working cooperatively to plan and carry through a group assignment
  - Using technology to create and organize a presentation of information
  - Locating and using library, Internet, or town resources to acquire information
  - Delivering informative presentations based on research

### Activity

Several descriptions of Grover's Corners are offered in Act I of *Our Town*. The Stage Manager offers a basic description of Grover's Corners. Then, others are invited onstage to give their own accounts, which include scientific and anthropological data; a political and social description; and evidence of culture or love of beauty. Your group will be assigned one of the following topics to research and write about your hometown.

- Describe the location and give a basic description of your town. Use the Stage Manager's description of Grover's Corners on pages 4 – 6 as your model. You may use the Stage Manager's line as your beginning: "Well, I'd better show you how our town lies. Up here—" Use the same tone that the Stage Manager uses.
- Explain the history behind your town. Use Professor Willard's description of Grover's Corners on pages 21 – 22 as your model. Describe any historical landmarks, anthropological data, and the current population. Use the same tone that Professor Willard uses.
- Give a political and social report for your town. Use Mr. Webb's comments on pages 24 – 25 as your model. Describe voting practices, class (such as lower, middle, or upper), political parties, religion, and social practices. Use the same tone that Mr. Webb uses.
- Tell about your town's culture or love of beauty. Use Mr. Webb's answer to the Lady's question on page 26 as your model. Describe any love of music, art, or books, for example. Use the same tone that Mr. Webb uses.

Research your information using materials in the library, your town's city hall or chamber of commerce, or on the Internet. Within your own groups, each group member should choose a particular topic to research and write about, such as the population or historical landmarks.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Acts I and II****Literary Devices in *Our Town*****Objective:** Locating, analyzing, and explaining literary devices**Activity**

Use the following **Literary Devices Chart** to find the specified literary device. Then explain each literary device. For each simile or metaphor, for example, indicate the two items that are being compared. For each hyperbole, explain the exaggeration, and so forth. An example has been provided for you.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Act II****Reading Check****Objective:** Understanding the events in a drama.**Activity**

Add information to the following phrases to make sentences. Statements follow the chronological order of Act II. Here are two examples from Act I of the play:

- When Emily asks her mother if she is good looking, Mrs Webb... tells her that she is "pretty enough for all normal purposes." (Pg. 32)
- George asks Emily for help with... his algebra homework.

1. Between Acts I and II, three \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The name of Act I was Daily Life, and the name of Act II is \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Today, Emily and George are \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Dr. Gibbs and Mrs. Gibbs talk about \_\_\_\_\_.
5. After shaving, George goes \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Mr. and Mrs. Webb will not let George \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Mr. Webb gives advice to George that he \_\_\_\_\_.
8. In the flashback, Emily complains that George \_\_\_\_\_.
9. During his conversation with Emily, George decides that \_\_\_\_\_.
10. The hymn that plays in Acts I and II of *Our Town* is \_\_\_\_\_.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Act II

### An Illustrated Summary

**Objectives:**     Illustrating scenes from a play  
                         Interpreting scenes and set design  
                         Analyzing the setting in a drama  
                         Summarizing an act from a play

#### Activity

Working in small groups, write a summary of the events in Act II. Then choose a different scene for each group member to illustrate and assign parts of your summary to each drawing.

Here are some examples from Act I. Important illustrated scenes could include Mrs. Gibbs and Mrs. Webb stringing beans on the porch, Emily and George walking home from school or talking through their bedroom windows, or Simon Stimson directing the choir.

Each group member will turn in a drawing and a portion of the summary.

Be creative! Try to complete your illustrations in different ways, such as paintings, sketches, collages, or even a multimedia presentation with computer graphics. Share your illustrations and summaries with the class.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Act III**

**Reading Check**

- Objectives:**     Understanding events in a drama  
                         Identifying speakers of various quotations  
                         Interpreting importance of specific quotations from a drama

**Activity**

Many important quotations from the drama are listed in this activity. For each of the following quotations, your task is to determine:

- Who is speaking?
- To whom?
- About what?
- What importance does the quotation have in the play? For example, what do you learn about a character, the plot, or a theme?

The first question has been done for you.

1. "I'm always uncomfortable when *they're* around." (Pg. 90)

Simon Stimson, one of the dead, speaks to the other dead. He expresses his dislike of being around the living. This statement shows the distance between the dead and the living. The dead gradually lose touch with the living and get "weaned away from earth." (Pg. 88)

2. "Hung himself in the attic. They tried to hush it up, but of course it got around." (Pg. 91)

---

---

---

---

3. "The road up here must have been awful muddy. What did she die of, Julia?" (Pg. 93)

---

---

---

---



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Act III****Collage**

**Objectives:**     Creating a collage to illustrate a subject of a play  
                      Presenting artwork to a real audience

**Activity**

Choose one of the following subjects that pertains to *Our Town*, and create a collage to illustrate that concept. Use a wide variety of materials to make your collage interesting. Some suggested items are: magazine clippings, drawings, photographs, symbolic items, art supplies, and any other appropriate materials. When you are finished, present your collage to your class, and explain how each item on your collage is related to your subject.

- Community
- Companionship
- Meaning of life
- Stages of Life
- Friendship
- Death
- Music
- Time
- Ordinary things
- Birthdays
- Courtship

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Wrap-Up

### Basic Symbolism

**Objective:** Interpreting symbolism in a play

#### Activity

In literature, authors regularly use items to represent larger ideas. Using the clues, unscramble the following common literary symbols on the **Literary Symbols Worksheet**. Look for colors, seasons, animals, and other common literary symbols. The first has been done for you.