

Table of Contents

Synopsis	2
By the Numbers	2
Overview	2
Characters	3
Profoundly Populist: <i>Our Town</i> History	5
Questions	5
Biography of the Playwright	7
In His Own Words	7
Contemporaries: Stella Adler On Thornton Wilder	8
Writing Exercises	9
Performance Exercises	9
Stage Door Program	10-12

PORTLANDCENTERSTAGE

The Guide

A Theatergoer's Resource

Our Town

By Thornton Wilder

Education & Community Programs Staff

Kelsey Tyler
Education & Community Programs Director

Clara Hillier
Education Programs Coordinator

RJ Hodde
Community Programs Coordinator

Matthew B. Zrebski
Resident Teaching Artist

Resource Guide Contributors

Benjamin Fainstein
Literary Manager

Mary Blair
Production Dramaturg & Literary Associate

Nicholas Kessler
Stage Door Teaching Artist

Mikey Mann
Graphic Designer

PCS's 2015-16 Education & Community Programs are
generously supported by:



OREGON ARTS
COMMISSION



ART WORKS.
arts.gov

PCS's education programs are supported in part by a grant from the
Oregon Arts Commission and the National Endowment for the Arts.

with additional support from

Craig & Y. Lynne Johnston

Holzman Foundation

Mentor Graphics Foundation

Juan Young Trust

Autzen Foundation

and other generous donors.

“The life of a village against the life of the stars.”

- Thornton Wilder describing *Our Town*

Synopsis

A meditation on small-town life, *Our Town* celebrates the marvel of everyday existence through the fictional citizens of one New England community at the beginning of the twentieth century. The play is conducted by its narrator, the Stage Manager of a theater in which the story is performed. It is divided into three distinct acts, covering commonplace and milestone moments in the lives of its characters: daily life, love and marriage, death and dying.

Setting

42 degrees 40 minutes north latitude and
70 degrees 37 minutes west longitude

Time

May 7, 1901 (Act I) • July 7, 1904 (Act II) • Summer 1913 (Act III)

Context

76 m. population of the United States in 1901
23 median age, life expectancy for men was 48 years and 51 years for women
50% percentage of young people lost a parent before the age of 21
4.9 average family size
\$750 average yearly household income
19% percentage of families that owned a home

Overview

by Brooks Atkinson from *The American Stage: Writing on Theater from Washington Irving to Tony Kushner*

In his obituary, Brooks Atkinson (1894-1984) was coined “the theater’s most influential reviewer” of his era. He won a Pulitzer Prize for wartime correspondence at The New York Times before being assigned to the paper’s drama desk, where he worked until retirement after thirty-four years in 1960. That year, Broadway named one of its theaters on West 47th Street his honor, where it operates under his name to this day.

In *Our Town*, it is as though Mr. Wilder were saying: “Now for evidence as to the way Americans were living in the early part of the century, take Grover’s Corners, N.H., as an average town. Mark it ‘Exhibit A’ in American folkways.”

On one side of an imaginary street Dr. Gibbs and his family are attending to their humdrum affairs with relish and probity. On the opposite side Mr. Webb, the local editor, and his family are fulfilling their quiet destiny. Dr. Gibbs’s boy falls in love with Mr. Webb’s girl – neighbors since birth. They marry after graduating from high school; she dies several years later in childbirth and is buried on Cemetery Hill. Nothing happens in the play that is not normal and natural and ordinary.

But by stripping the play of everything that is not essential, Mr. Wilder has given it a profound, strange, unworldly significance. This is less the portrait of a town than the sublimation of the commonplace; and in contrast with the universe that silently swims around it, it is brimming over with compassion. Most of it is a tender idyll in the kindly economy of Mr. Wilder’s literary style; some of it is heartbreaking in the mute simplicity of human tragedy. For in the last act, which is entitled “Death,” Mr. Wilder shows the dead of Grover’s Corners sitting peacefully in their graves and receiving into their quiet company a neighbor’s girl whom they love. So Mr. Wilder’s pathetically humble evidence of human living passes into the wise beyond. Grover’s Corners is a green corner of the universe.

Characters



Stage Manager
the play's narrator, he both directs the action and addresses the audience
(played by Shawn Fagan)



Dr. Frank Gibbs
respected town doctor and Civil War expert
(played by Paul Costentino)



Julie Gibbs
Dr. Gibbs' wife and mother to George and Rebecca; it is the dream of her life to see Paris
(played by Gina Daniels)



George Gibbs
son of Dr. and Mrs. Gibbs; senior class president, future farmer and admirer of Emily Webb
(played by Sathya Sridharan)



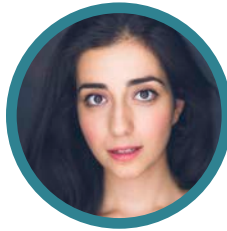
Rebecca Gibbs
George's younger sister; allowance saver and admirer of full moons
(played by Hailey Kilgore)



Charles Webb
editor of the town newspaper and nature lover
(played by John Haggerty)



Myrtle Webb
Mr. Webb's wife and mother to Emily and Wally; runs a tight household
(played by Tina Chilip)



Emily Webb
daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Webb; bright student with eyes for George Gibbs
(played by Nikki Massoud)



Wally Webb
Emily's younger brother; Boy Scout
(played by Henry Martin)



Simon Stimson
choir director and troubled soul
(played by Gary Norman)



Louella Soames
town busybody
(played by Sharonlee McLean)



Howie Newsome
town milkman and unofficial weatherman
(played by Vin Shambry)



Constable Bill Warren
town policeman
(played by Chris Karczmar)



Professor Willard
university professor and anthropological expert
(played by Leif Norby)



Sam Craig
Emily Webb's cousin; visiting from out of town
(played by Ricardy Fabre)



Joe & Si Crowell
brothers and newsboys; Joe is a future MIT graduate
(played by Chris Murray)

"OUR TOWN"
FIRST FULL (Act II missing) play in Three Acts.
SCRIPT (Edwards) (Sullivan) (Zuckor)

(No curtain.
No scenery.
When the house-lights go down, the stage-manager in overalls, has been leaning for some time against the left proscenium pillar, smoking a cigarette, and staring drily at the late arrivals in the audience. At last, in a very Yankee accent, he begins to speak:)

The Stage-Manager

This play is called "Our Town." It was written by Thornton Wilder. It is produced and directed by Jed Harris, and it is acted by Miss X, Miss Y, Miss Z; Mr. A, Mr. B., Mr. C, and many others.

The first act shows a day in our town; the second act shows a ~~family in~~ ~~for~~ century in our first family's home, and the last act shows — well, you'll see.

Between the first act and the second, there will be played an interlude called "The Pleasures and Penalties of Automobiling"; and between the second and third acts, there will be another interlude — a propagandea piece, called "Is the Devil Entitled to a Vote?"

Are you ready?

(He looks at the lady who arrived late. She shakes her head amused, saying "Tz-Tz-Tz", implying what'll they do next!)

This is our town, Grover's Corners, New Hampshire. It's near the Massachusetts line — latitude $71^{\circ} 37'$ longitude, $42^{\circ} 40''$. The date is Friday, May 7, 1907.

(He looks hard at the lady again and repeats "1907.")

It's dawn.

The sky is beginning to show some streaks of light behind our mountain, over in the East there. The morning star is doing that last excitement it always goes into just before dawn.

I'll draw the plan of the town for you.

(Chalk in hand he goes to the back of the stage and draws two parallel lines down the center of the stage toward the footlights.)

Way back here is the railway station and the

Profoundly Populist: *Our Town* History

WORLD PREMIERE: January 22, 1938 at the McCarter Theatre in Princeton, New Jersey under the direction of Ted Harris

TRANSFERRED: January 25, 1938 to the Wilbur Theater in Boston, Massachusetts. The two-week run was shortened due to the Depression-era economy and problematic reviews. The play almost died in Boston but persevered to Broadway on account of media buzz created by influential supporters.

ON BROADWAY: February 4, 1938 at Henry Miller's Theatre in New York City. Top ticket price for opening night was \$5.50, which Wilder called "insane." The father/son team of Frank and John Craven played the Stage Manager and George Gibbs, respectively.

MOVED: February 14, 1938 to Broadway's Morosco Theatre, and closed after 10 months and 336 performances.

LEGACY: On average, 400 productions of *Our Town* are performed each year in the United States, with an added twenty productions staged in foreign countries. Here are some of the other ways in which Wilder's play has made its way into popular culture.

1938 RADIO BROADCAST: Broadcasted on CBS' *The Campbell Playhouse* on May 12, featuring Orson Welles as the Stage Manager.

1940 FILM: United Artists released a film adaptation in which Wilder allowed the character of Emily to live after studio management requested a happy ending for the film. Frank Craven reprised his Broadway role as the Stage Manager.

1955 TELEVISION MUSICAL: Frank Sinatra starred as the Stage Manager in this 90-minute musical adaptation which featured the now-famous song "Love and Marriage" by Sammy Kahn and Jimmy Van Heusen. Paul Newman was featured as George, while the role of Emily was played by Eva-Marie Saint.

1977 TELECAST: NBC recorded a 2-hour performance from Lincoln Center with Hal Holbrook, Glynnis O'Connor, and Robbie Benson.

2002 DOCUMENTARY: Directed by Scott Hamilton Kennedy, *OT: Our Town* follows a cast of students at Manuel Dominguez High School in Compton, California through a no-budget staging of Wilder's play.

Questions

ACT ONE

1. According to the Stage Manager, what is the first act of the play about?
2. Why is Mrs. Gibbs concerned about her son?
3. Why does the Stage Manager bring out the people he does to answer questions about Grover's Corners?
4. Why does the Stage Manager want a copy of this play in the cornerstone of the new bank?
5. How does Dr. Gibbs feel about townspeople locking their doors every night?

ACT TWO

1. How much time has passed since the end of Act One?
2. What does the Stage Manager say Act Two will be about?
3. Why don't Mr. and Mrs. Webb think George should see Emily?

ACT THREE

1. How much time has passed since the end of Act Two?
2. In what ways has Grover's Corners changed?
3. Who is Sam Craig? Why is he in Grover's Corners?

CRITICAL RESPONSE

1. What did Emily's "goodbye speech" in Act three mean to you?
2. Why do you think the playwright chose three acts? Why did he order each act the way he did?
3. What image, line, or moment from the play stands out in your memory?
4. If you could go back in time and relive one day of your life, what day would it be and why?
5. How do you think a production of *Our Town* set in 2015 would change the play?
6. It is said that on any given evening in the year, you can see a production of *Our Town* somewhere in the world. Why do you think this play has endured for so long and appealed to so many people, not just Americans?
7. Contrast Wilder's portrayal of marriage with marriage today. What has changed and what has remained the same?



Thornton Wilder

*“I consider it best to write about things that
lie on the boundaries of the unknown.”*

BORN: April 17, 1897 in Madison Wisconsin

DIED: December 7, 1975

BURIED: December 9 in Mount Carmel, Connecticut

Four days before his death, Wilder had written to friends, “I am now old, really old, and these recent setbacks have taken a lot of energy out of me.” He had not given up, however. Far from it. He wrote, “I think I’m pulling myself together for another piece of work.”

“Democracy has a large task: to find new imagery, new metaphors, and new myth to describe the new dignity into which man has entered.”

(From Wilder’s address on “Culture in Democracy” on October 6, 1957 in Frankfurt, Germany (*Thornton Wilder and His Public* p. 98))

Biography of the Playwright: Thornton Niven Wilder

IN LIFE

by Gilbert A. Harrison from *The Enthusiast*

Thornton Wilder’s life is distinguished from many of his literary compatriots by its rather unadventurous stability and normality. In his youth he was not a hobo, nor a dishwasher, nor a cotton-picker, nor a stevedore. His father owned a publishing company and published a paper, but Wilder was not even a journalist. He had the typical career of an academically trained teacher, and it is often difficult to determine which was his greater passion – teaching or writing.

IN LITERATURE

by Laurence Senelick from *The American Stage: Writing on Theater from Washington Irving to Tony Kushner*

Throughout a literary career rich in honors, Thornton Wilder maintained a reputation for intellectuality without losing a popular audience. Wilder’s early fame was built on his novels, particularly the best-selling *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*. His experimental one-acts of 1931 tend toward the imagistic and metaphoric: *The Long Christmas Dinner* covers the span of several generations of family life; and *The Happy Journey to Trenton and Camden* and *Pullman Car Hiawatha* use a couple of straight chairs to portray an American dynasty and human fate. The latter introduces a Stage Manager, a framing device Wilder would use again in his 1938 triumph *Our Town*. After the first shock of seeing a stage denuded of scenery, spectators took to their hearts this parable of love and death in rural New England. More playgoers have unwittingly made Wilder’s acquaintance through the wildly successful musical comedy *Hello Dolly!* than through any of his original works.

IN DEATH

by Penelope Niven from *Thornton Wilder: A Life*

Wilder’s death was duly noted internationally. This quintessential American writer had lived, worked, and traveled as a citizen of the world, connecting globally with his era. He captured the spirits and the promise of his own country, and his planetary themes and questions touched a global audience as well, transcending time and place.

In His Own Words

SOME THOUGHTS ON PLAYWRITING (1941)

by Thornton Wilder from *The Intent of the Artist*:

Four fundamental conditions of the drama separate it from the other arts. Each of these conditions has its advantages and disadvantages, each requires a particular aptitude from the dramatist, and from each there are a number of instructive consequences to be derived. These conditions are:

I. The theater is an art which reposes upon the work of many collaborators, and the chief of these collaborators are the actors.

A dramatist prepares the characterizations of his personages in such a way that it will take advantage of the actor’s gift. Characterization in a play is like a blank check which the dramatist accords to the actor for him to fill in.

II. The theater is an art addressed to a group-mind.

Painting, sculpture, and the literature of the book are certainly solitary experiences; and it is likely that the audience seated shoulder to shoulder in a concert hall is not an essential element in musical enjoyment. The theater partakes of the nature of a festival. A play presupposes a crowd. During the last rehearsals the phrase is often heard: ‘This play is hungry for an audience.

III. The theater is a world of pretense.

It lives by conventions: a convention is an agreed-upon falsehood, a permitted lie. The stage is a fundamental pretense.

IV. The action on the stage takes place in a perpetual present time.

The novel is a past reported in the present. On the stage it is always now. A play visibly represents pure existing.”

There is something mysterious about the endowment of the storyteller. Some very great writers possess very little of it, and some others, lightly esteemed, possessed it in so large a measure that their books survive down the ages.



Contemporaries: Stella Adler On Thornton Wilder

“Envy me because I knew him.”

Stella Adler (1901-1992) was an acclaimed American performer and acting teacher. In 1949, she founded the Stella Adler Studio of Acting in New York City, where she trained some of America’s finest performers, including Annette Benning, Marlon Brando, and Robert DeNiro.

WILDER THE LITERARY LEGEND

There was a transition in the 1930s. You could taste it. It was a transition that created people like Thornton Wilder. They didn’t bemoan the political dissolution of America, or that the war was going to destroy us. They were not politically dedicated like the Group Theatre playwrights in New York who said we had to change, had to become socialist or communist – people don’t have jobs, the culture is going down.

Wilder came along and said, “If it goes down, it goes down. What can we do? Try to survive by the skin of our teeth and have the time of our life going down.”

Nobody else has Wilder’s style. It is not to be found elsewhere. It is the poetry of life. Thornton Wilder wrote four plays and got Pulitzer prizes for two of them (*Our Town* in 1938 and *The Skin of Our Teeth* in 1942). He wrote a novel and got a Pulitzer for that (*The Bridge of San Luis Rey* in 1927). Do you have any idea what that means in literature? It was unprecedented acclaim.

You must be aware of the difficulties faced by playwrights like Wilder. It is very difficult to make a transition from one period to another – to go from horses to cars, boats to airplanes. It means that something long accepted has lived out its life and must be replaced. Most great American writers were caught in a transition.

A DISTINCTLY AMERICAN AUTHOR

He created the universal man, woman, girl, boy in every play he wrote. He is the most universal writer, but also, in a way, the most American – very attached to American traditions, despite his cosmopolitanism.

He believed Americans were committed to developing a new human being whose chief characteristic was the ability and willingness to regard every individual as equal. He had very much the democratic sense: an American is friendly to all, not out of goodness or condescension but because he realizes that every human should be free to live his own life.

HIS UNIVERSAL TRUTHS

Wilder isn’t anxious for traditions to be broken. The groom isn’t supposed to see the bride before the wedding. [...] That’s tradition. That’s the universality of life. Wilder does that all the time. The son must be taught by the father. The girl is going to put rouge on. The mother is going to slap her.

He knows the truths. Not Harvard truths, not courses in developmental psychology: the truth of people. What Wilder didn’t admire was overintellectualization. He wanted, in his plays, the kind of truth that would go on for generation after generation. There will always be families. They’ll always have a boy and a girl. They will die and be buried in the same cemetery where their parents are buried.



Writing Exercises

THE PLAYWRIGHT'S ROLE

Write a monologue for the Stage Manager to deliver at the beginning of your own play about your own town, real or fictitious. Use one of Thornton Wilder's lines as a beginning: "Well, I'd better show you how our town lives" and/or "So - another day's begun." Follow the example of characters from the play and describe the scientific, political, social, and cultural components of your town.

CHARACTER PORTRAITS

Using clues and evidence given in the text of the play, write character portraits of three characters. Explain why you have chosen these particular characters. Compare one of these characters of an actual character in your town.

TIME CAPSULE

Near the end of Act One, the Stage Manager discusses the items that have been chosen to go in the cornerstone of the new bank in Grover's Corners in 1901. Choose five items to put in a cornerstone for today. Choose items representing the present-day to you, that will help people understand our time a hundred years from now. Explain your choices, sharing your opinions about what they mean to the present, and what they might say to the future. Use Thornton Wilder's line to begin your reflections: "So - people a thousand years from now - this is the way we were."

Performance Exercises

There are no sets or props in *Our Town*. Thornton Wilder explicitly states in the script that there is to be "No curtain. No scenery," and that, upon arrival, the audience should see "an empty stage in half-light." This detail is an important component of what makes *Our Town* an iconic play. Pantomime is the performance technique used by actors in this play as a substitution for materials. Use the following exercises to investigate the ways in which actors use physical expression and gestures to define space or express meaning.

THROWING A ROCK

Imagine yourself on the bank of a river. Bend down and select a rock from at your feet, keeping in mind weight, shape, temperature, and gravity. Throw the rock across the river and watch it travel. How far does it go? How fast does it move? Does the arc of its journey reflect the force of your throw?

WASHING THE DISHES

Imagine yourself at a kitchen counter. To your left are stack of dirty dishes. To your right is a dish rack. Directly in front of you is a sink with two basins: one for washing, the other for rinsing. Wash the dishes, keeping in mind weight, shape, temperature, and gravity. How many dishes are you washing, and which ones will you wash first? How hot is the water? When do you add the dish soap? Do any of the dishes require a scrubbing?

VISITING THE MARKET

Imagine yourself in your favorite aisle at the grocery store. Are you pushing a cart, carrying a basket, or using your arms to grab just a few items? How long does it take you to find what you are looking for? Do you already know the brand of product you want or does it take you longer to make a selection? Are there other people in the aisle with you? When you select an item, keep in mind its weight, shape, temperature, and gravity.

TIPS

- Stillness is the most important part of mime. Begin each activity from stillness before you move.
- Remember that technical mistakes are unavoidable.
- Don't worry about how you *depict* something. Throw *belief* into what you are doing.
- Avoid manufacturing "good ideas." Keep it simple.
- Examine the difference between *looking* and *seeing*. Use your head to look. Use your eye to see. Be aware that your eye also has a gesture of its own: it can be useful for making discoveries (the "Aha!" moment).
- Mime needs a lot of punctuation in order for the audience to understand each gesture: think about how you can add commas, question marks, exclamation points, and periods to your movements when appropriate.



Theater Etiquette

Seeing a play is very different than seeing a movie. During live theatre, the audience is as equally important as the actors on stage. Please share the following points with your students, and encourage them to practice good theater etiquette throughout the workshop.

- **Live response is good!** If you tell a story to a friend and notice they aren't responding, it makes you want to tell the story better. A live audience is as critical a component of the theatergoing experience as the actors on stage. The more the audience listens, laughs and responds, the more the actors want to tell the story.
- **The actors can hear you talking.** Have you ever had a conversation with someone and felt that they'd rather be someplace else? This is the exact feeling actors get when people in the audience are talking. If an audience member is not paying attention, the actors know it.

- **The actors can see you.** Imagine telling something to a group of fellow students who are slouching, pretending to be bored, or sitting with their eyes closed in attempt to seem disinterested or "too cool" for what you had to say. Think about it: Even though the actors are pretending to be other characters, it is as much their job to "check in" with the audience as it is to remember their lines. Since stage actors only get one chance to tell the story to each audience, they want to make sure to communicate clearly each and every performance.
- **Cell phones, beepers, candy wrappers, loud gum smacking.** Please turn off all cell phones and do not eat or chew gum inside the theater. These things disturb the people around you as well as the actors. As much as you might be tempted to text a friend how cool the play is that you're watching, please wait until after it is over.

Many thanks to our colleagues at Montana Shakespeare in the Parks, from whom these excellent etiquette suggestions have been adapted.

Education Programs: Stage Door

Our Education Programs provide young people with opportunities to experience the art of theatre, to directly participate in its process, and to apply its collaborative principles elsewhere in their daily lives. Stage Door is an unforgettable opportunity for students to experience professional theatre in a context that supports their education.

The following activities have been constructed by our Teaching Artist to help students explore themes found in our production of Our Town. We encourage you to adapt these activities for your group as needed.

GOALS:

- Encourage personal connections between students and the major themes of the play.
- Excite students about the story and theatrical elements in the production.
- Engage students using the actors' tools: body, voice, and imagination.

KEY CONCEPTS:

- The Role of the Observer
- Dramatic Structure By Moments
- Slow Down; Look Closer

Performance Warm-Up: Pancakes or Waffles?

This icebreaker invites participants to think critically, using simple comparisons to evaluate life's daily details, and reflect on prior preferences. This exercise is good for all ages.

HOW IT WORKS:

- Establish how the group will vote, e.g. raising hands.
- By choosing one of the two options, students understand that the second option cannot be resurrected later.
- Start with, “Pancakes or Waffles?” Whichever is chosen becomes the point of comparison for the next round, ex. “Waffles or Pizza?”
- The game continues ad infinitum. The game is best when decisions are difficult, and the comparisons are disparate, ex. “Cheese or Hope?”

SAMPLE FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS:

Which were the hardest decisions? What would you miss the most? Would you rather your choices applied to everyone, only to you, or only to others?



Ensemble Exercise: Sound/Motion DJ

In this physical warm-up, students use their voice and gestures to hone observation skills. This is a group physical exercise; it can be very active.

HOW IT WORKS:

- Participants stand in a circle. The first person makes a physical gesture with an accompanying sound.
- That sound/motion is passed around the circle from person to person, like dominoes. The sound/motion will change and grow as each participant attempts to recreate it. New combos can be added as needed, allowing different participants to join it.
- Manipulate the flow of gestures moving around the circle via PAUSE, REWIND, SLO-MO, BACKWARDS, and DOUBLE-TIME.

REFLECTION/DISCUSSION:

Give an example of a time when you felt as though time crawled or leapt forward. Name a moment that you would like to revisit.

Activity #1: Cast of Chairs

Participants use a chair, perhaps the simplest of set elements, to imagine endless possibilities. This exercise explores spatial relationships.

HOW IT WORKS:

- Place one chair, facing any direction, in front of the group and begin questioning its context, e.g. who left this chair, and where did he or she go? Whom is this chair waiting for?
- Add participants and chairs at will, questioning the context of the scene. How does the scene change with each addition or subtraction? Examples: Three chairs facing each other, two chairs back to back, four chairs in a square, one person sitting, two people standing, three people hugging, one person lying across three chairs.
- Strike all the people and chairs as many times as wanted. Allow participants to direct the scene using placement of chairs and bodies. See how much “world” can be wrought from these combinations.

REFLECTION/DISCUSSION:

What is the title of each tableau? What sounds can be heard in the scene? Who is about to walk into the room? Without lines, costumes, lights, or more of a set, which tools were used to build the scene?



Activity #2: Camera Roll

The focus of this activity is cooperation and adapting to changing resources. Participants build scenes together, which are then interpreted from multiple perspectives, thus emphasizing that the experience of the play is unique to each audience member. This exercise can be adapted to any size group.

HOW IT WORKS:

- This is a variation on a slide show exercise: Three or more actors pose together in an improvised tableau, which can be entirely improvised, or made to fit a topic or theme.
- Another participant acts as a presenter, explaining the tableau after it has been created. Allow multiple participants to describe the same tableaux, thus underlining the differences in each person's perspective.
- Once the game is learned, begin adding chairs for the participants to work with, allowing their scenes to become more dynamic.

REFLECTION/DISCUSSION:

What helped convey the clearest relationships in these tableaux? Describe how the chairs affected the realism of each tableau. Discuss the differences between an audience's perceptions of the play individually versus as a group. How much "sharing" happens in the "shared experience" of seeing live theatre?

Activity #3: Timeline

The focus of this activity is to explore story-building, cause-and-effect, and staging. Participants create a story arc, from exposition through rising actions, climax, and resolution. This exercise is great for assemblies and writing projects.

HOW IT WORKS:

- Working in pairs, create one second of one moment in a celebration: a physical pose, an exclamation, a simple gesture or embrace, etcetera.
- Pick one pair to represent the CLIMAX of an unwritten story.
- All remaining pairs then repose to create versions of a second moment in which the above two characters met.
- Pick one pair to be the EXPOSITION of the story. Have them stand chronologically in order with the first two pairs.
- All remaining pairs then repose to create one second in a moment when those two characters met.
- Pick one pair to be the RESOLUTION of the story. Have them stand chronologically in order with the first two pairs.
- Repeat again, filling gaps between pairings, between moments in an arc of a single couple.
- The result will look like a scrapbook of moments, standing in a chronological/consequential line.
- Change preceding moments to affect a new domino of events to be created. Allow for new endings to be added to the end of the line, and for moments to be re-titled if the storyline changes.

REFLECTION/DISCUSSION:

- Name the moment which seemed to fit perfectly in the timeline, and another which seemed to have very little influence on the outcome. What are the similarities and differences in the characters when we compare the beginning to the end?

