

GOODSPEED MUSICALS

TEACHER'S INSTRUCTIONAL GUIDE



A Wonderful Life

The Musical

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A Wonderful Life
The Musical

A WONDERFUL LIFE
Goodspeed Opera House
Sept 18 - Nov 29, 2015

Adapted from the Frank Capra
film "It's A Wonderful Life"

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Directed by
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Executive Director
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HOW TO USE THE GUIDES

THE TEACHER'S INSTRUCTIONAL GUIDE (TIG) is intended for use by teachers who will bring their school groups to attend performances at Goodspeed Musicals. The TIG provides background information, teaching ideas, and prompts to facilitate students' knowledge and appreciation of the show's themes and characters. The TIG activities are influenced by state and national standards associated with the arts, language arts, social studies, and science.

THE STUDENT GUIDE TO THE THEATRE serves as a companion to the Teacher's Instructional Guide (TIG). It includes a plot and character summary, accessible historical and thematic background information to support the lessons in the TIG, and a behind-the-scenes look at the production. It also includes fun facts, theatre terms, and activities.

Each lesson in the TIG corresponds to a specific section in the Student Guide. Reading the Student Guide before attending a Goodspeed production will increase the likelihood that students will take active, critical roles as audience members, which will then lead to valuable classroom discussions.

The chart below maps the connection between the TIG's lessons and supporting material with the corresponding pages in the Student Guide.

LEVEL/SUBJECT	LEARNING PHASE	LESSON TOPIC	TIG	STUDENT GUIDE
Elementary Language Arts	Before the Show	Adapting a Story	Lesson: p. 6 Support Material: p. 4-5, 9-16	Student Material: p. 3-5
Elementary Social Studies	Understanding	Community Connections	Lesson: p. 22 Support Material: p. 4-5, 20-21	Student Material: p. 3-5, 9-10
Elementary Visual Art	After the Show	Propaganda	Lesson: p. 42 Support Material: p. 4-5, 34-35, 43	Student Material: p. 3-5, 11-12
Elementary Visual & Performing Arts	Before the Show	The Heroes and Villains of <i>A Wonderful Life</i>	Lesson: p. 25 Support Material: p. 4-5, 20-21	Student Material: p. 3-5, 9-10
Elementary Civics	Understanding	What are Ethics in a Business?	Lesson: p. 36 Support Material: p. 4-5, 34-35, 37	Student Material: p. 3-5, 11-12
Elementary Language Arts	After the Show	The Genre of <i>A Wonderful Life</i> ?	Lesson: p. 53 Support Material: p. 4-5, 52	Student Material: p. 3-5, 13
Middle School Language Arts	Before the Show	Adapting a Story	Lesson: p. 7 Support Material: p. 4-5, 9-16	Student Material: p. 3-5
Middle School Social Studies	Understanding	Community Connections	Lesson: p. 23 Support Material: p. 4-5, 20-21	Student Material: p. 3-5, 9-10
Middle School Visual Arts	After the Show	Propaganda	Lesson: p. 44 Support Material: p. 4-5, 34-35, 43	Student Material: p. 3-5, 11-12
Middle School Visual & Performing Arts	Before the Show	The Heroes and Villains of <i>A Wonderful Life</i>	Lesson: p. 26 Support Material: p. 4-5, 20-21	Student Material: p. 3-5, 9-10
Middle School Civics	Understanding	What are Ethics in a Business?	Lesson: p. 38 Support Material: p. 4-5, 34-35, 39-40	Student Material: p. 3-5, 11-12
Middle School Language Arts	After the Show	The Genre of <i>A Wonderful Life</i> ?	Lesson: p. 54 Support Material: p. 4-5, 52	Student Material: p. 3-5, 13
High School English	Before the Show	Adapting a Story	Lesson: p. 8 Support Material: p. 4-5, 9-16	Student Material: p. 3-5
High School History	Understanding	Community Connections	Lesson: p. 24 Support Material: p. 4-5, 20-21	Student Material: p. 3-5, 9-10
High School Visual Arts	After the Show	Propaganda	Lesson: p. 45 Support Material: p. 4-5, 34-35, 46-51	Student Material: p. 3-5, 11-12
High School Visual & Performing Arts	Before the Show	The Heroes and Villains of <i>A Wonderful Life</i>	Lesson: p. 27 Support Material: p. 4-5, 20-21, 28-33	Student Material: p. 3-5, 9-10
High School Civics	Understanding	What is An Ethical Business?	Lesson: p. 41 Support Material: p. 4-5, 34-35	Student Material: p. 3-5, 11-12
High School English	After the Show	The Genre of <i>A Wonderful Life</i> ?	Lesson: p. 55 Support Material: p. 4-5, 52	Student Material: p. 3-5, 13

SHOW SYNOPSIS

A Wonderful Life
The Musical

unsuccessfully tries to quell negative feelings, his Uncle Billy happily brags about Harry while making a deposit at the local bank. Uncle Billy is so proud of Harry that he becomes careless with the \$8,000 deposit he is carrying; Mr. Potter notices the deposit sitting on the counter and pockets the money. Uncle Billy is frantic when he cannot find the money because the loss would spell disaster for the family business since the Building and Loan is being audited. Unable to account for the missing money and desperate to save himself, George begs Mr. Potter for a loan.

The chance to deny George's request pleases Mr. Potter and he taunts him by stating that George is worth more dead than alive. Potter goes so far as to call the police and have them issue an arrest warrant for George on various charges. Disheartened and angry, George returns home and takes his emotions out on Mary and their children. Distraught and helpless, George considers ending his life. He is about to step in front of a train when he sees a strange man (Clarence) jump onto

the railroad tracks. Unable to stand by and watch a man die, George gives up his plan of suicide and saves the stranger.

Clarence thanks George for his act of heroism and reveals his identity as an angel. George scoffs at this declaration and in the course of their conversation makes a wish that he had never been born. Clarence grants his wish and George sees what would happen to his family, friends and hometown if he had never existed. Deeply shaken by what he witnesses, George begs Clarence to reverse his wish.

Again, Clarence grants his wish and George joyously greets the family and friends he took for granted. He also finds out that the people of Bedford Falls have taken up a collection to raise the \$8,000 needed to save George and the Building and Loan Association. The police and the auditor are so touched by the townspeople's gesture that they tear up the arrest warrant. Harry Bailey arrives amidst the celebration and toasts his brother, declaring him "the richest man in town."



Mary (Kirsten Scott), Tommy (Ben Stone-Zelman), Beth (Riley Briggs), Zuzu (Ella Briggs) and George (Duke Lafoon) in Goodspeed's production of *A Wonderful Life*. ©Diane Sobolewski.

LESSON

ELEMENTARY LANGUAGE ARTS BEFORE THE SHOW: Adapting a Story

English Language Arts Grades K-12
Exploring and Responding to Literature Standard 2.3; Students listen to, read and respond to texts about and from many cultures and times.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.5
Explain major differences between poems, drama, and prose, and refer to the structural elements of poems (e.g., verse, rhythm, meter) and drama (e.g., casts of characters, settings, descriptions, dialogue, stage directions) when writing or speaking about a text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.7
Analyze how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text.

**Educators can teach this lesson during the course of one class period or they can extend it over multiple periods.*

OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- Identify the main differences between a short story, a film and a staged performance.
- Understand how a story can be adapted to different mediums.

Students should be familiar with the following supporting materials in this guide to prepare for this lesson: “Character Summary” and “Show Synopsis” in the *Student Guide to the Theatre*.

ACTIVITY/PROCEDURE

1. Write the titles of various well known adaptations on the board. e.g. *Cinderella*, *The Hunger Games*, and the *Harry Potter* series.
2. Ask the students to identify what each title on the board has in common.
3. Explain that each title listed is an adaptation.
4. Ask the students if they are familiar with the film *It's a Wonderful Life*.
5. Explain that the musical *A Wonderful Life* is an adaptation of the film.
6. Share that both the musical version and the film were adaptations of a short story called *The Greatest Gift*.
7. Invite the students to share any other stories they know that are adaptations.
8. Once the students have named some of their favorite adaptations, explain that they will be creating their own adaptation of *The Greatest Gift*.
9. Distribute one copy of *The Greatest Gift* to each student.
10. Read *The Greatest Gift* out loud and have the students follow along in their handout.
11. Explain that students will break into pairs to create their own adaptation of *The Greatest Gift*.
12. Allow students to use their imaginations and put their own spin on the story. For example, the characters could be animals instead of people. Ask the students to keep in mind: The main idea of *The Greatest Gift*, the main conflicts in the story and the setting.
13. Their adaptation may take the form of:
 - A song
 - A poem
 - A comic book
 - A puppet show
 - A drawing
14. Before presenting their work, explain that each student sharing their adaptation with the class must communicate:
 - The art form they chose to work in.
 - Who their characters are.
 - Where their adaptation is set.
 - What they changed in their adaptation of *The Greatest Gift*.
 - Why they made the changes they did.
15. Students may begin creating adaptations.
16. Once students have finished creating their adaptation, ask each group to share their work with the class.
 - To increase motivation, consider sponsoring an event where students may present their work for another class or their parents.

FOLLOW-UP

Students should:

- Assess how the changes made within the adaptations highlighted or distracted from the overall story.
- Analyze the similarities and differences between the adaptation presented and *The Greatest Gift*.
- Determine the potential similarities and differences between *The Greatest Gift* and *A Wonderful Life*.
- How is learning about adaptations relevant to life and experiences?

LESSON

MIDDLE SCHOOL LANGUAGE ARTS BEFORE THE SHOW: Adapting a Story

English Language Arts Grades K-12
Exploring and Responding to Literature Standard 2.3; Students listen to, read and respond to texts about and from many cultures and times.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.6-8.2.b
Develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.6-8.2.c
Use appropriate and varied transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.

**Educators can teach this lesson during the course of one class period or they can extend it over multiple periods.*

OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- Identify the main differences between a short story, a film and a staged performance.
- Understand how a story can be adapted to different mediums.

Students should be familiar with the following supporting materials in this guide to prepare for this lesson: "Character Summary" and "Show Synopsis" in the *Student Guide to the Theatre*.

ACTIVITY/PROCEDURE

1. Write the titles of various well known adaptations on the board. e.g. *Cinderella*, *The Hunger Games*, and the *Harry Potter* series.
2. Ask the students to identify what each title on the board has in common.
3. Explain that each title listed is an adaptation.
4. Ask the students if they are familiar with the film *It's a Wonderful Life*.
5. Explain that the musical *A Wonderful Life* is an adaptation of the film.
6. Share that both the musical version and the film were adaptations of a short story called *The Greatest Gift*.
7. Invite the students to share any other stories they know that are adaptations.
8. Once the students have named some of their favorite adaptations, explain that they will be creating their own adaptation of *The Greatest Gift*.
9. Distribute one copy of *The Greatest Gift* to each student.
10. Read *The Greatest Gift* out loud and have the students follow along in their handout.
11. Explain that students will break into pairs to create their own adaptation of *The Greatest Gift*.
12. Allow students to use their imaginations and put their own spin on the story. For example, the characters could be animals instead of people. Ask the students to keep in mind: The main idea of *The Greatest Gift*, the main conflicts in the story and the setting.
13. Their adaptation may take the form of: A song, poem, comic book, short illustrated storybook, fairy tale, scene, monologue, or play.
14. Before presenting their work, explain that each student sharing their adaptation with the class must communicate:
 - The art form they chose to work in.
 - Who their characters are.
 - Where their adaptation is set.
 - What they changed in their adaptation of *The Greatest Gift*.
 - Why they made the changes they did.
15. Explain that students creating an adaptation that require the participation of more than two people may use the instructor or another class member.
16. Students may begin creating adaptations.
17. Once students have finished creating their adaptation, ask each group to share their work with the class.
 - To increase motivation, consider sponsoring an event where students may present their work for another class or their parents.

FOLLOW-UP

Students should:

- Assess how the changes made within the adaptations highlighted or distracted from the overall story.
- Analyze the similarities and differences between the adaptation presented and *The Greatest Gift*.
- Determine the potential similarities and differences between *The Greatest Gift* and *A Wonderful Life*.

LESSON

HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH BEFORE THE SHOW: Adapting a Story

English Language Arts Grades K-12
Exploring and Responding to Literature Standard 2.3; Students listen to, read and respond to texts about and from many cultures and times.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.3
Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.9
Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

**Educators can teach this lesson during the course of one class period or they can extend it over multiple periods.*

OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- Understand the differences between different forms of performance.
- Identify how a story can be adapted to different mediums.
- Create a cohesive dramatic work that demonstrates a strong connection to and understanding of *A Wonderful Life*.

Students should be familiar with the following supporting materials in this guide to prepare for this lesson: “Character Summary” and “Show Synopsis” in the *Student Guide to the Theatre*.

ACTIVITY/PROCEDURE

1. Write the titles of various well known adaptations on the board. e.g. *Cinderella*, *The Hunger Games*, and the *Harry Potter* series.
2. Ask the students to identify what each title on the board has in common.
3. Explain that each title listed is an adaptation.
4. Invite the students to share any other stories they know that are adaptations.
5. Once the students have named some of their favorite adaptations, share that both the musical *A Wonderful Life* and the film *It's a Wonderful Life* are adaptations of a short story called *The Greatest Gift*.
6. Explain that they will be creating their own adaptation of *The Greatest Gift*.
7. Distribute one copy of *The Greatest Gift* to each student.
8. Read *The Greatest Gift* out loud and have the students follow along in their handout.
9. Explain that each student will create their own adaptation of *The Greatest Gift*.
10. Their adaptation may take the form of: A song, poem, comic book, illustrated book, interpretive dance, silent film, horror movie, action movie, radio play, scene, monologue, or play.
11. Before presenting their work, explain that each student sharing their adaptation with the class must communicate:
 - The art form they chose to work in.
 - Who their characters are.
 - Where their adaptation is set.
 - What they changed in their adaptation of *The Greatest Gift*.
 - Why they made the changes they did.
12. Allow students to use their imaginations and put their own spin on the story. For example, the characters could be animals instead of people. Ask the students to keep in mind:
 - The events of *The Greatest Gift*
 - The main conflicts of the story
 - The setting
13. Explain that students creating an adaptation that require the participation of more than one person may use the instructor or another class member as a partner.
14. Students may begin creating adaptations.
15. Once students have finished creating their adaptation, ask each person to present their work to the class.
 - To increase motivation, consider sponsoring an event where students may present their work for another class or their parents.

FOLLOW-UP

Students should:

- Assess how the changes made within the adaptations highlighted or distracted from the overall story.
- Analyze the similarities and differences between the adaptation presented and *The Greatest Gift*.
- Determine the potential similarities and differences between *The Greatest Gift* and *A Wonderful Life*.

The Greatest Gift
by Philip Van Doren Stern

Unable to find a publisher for "The Greatest Gift," Philip Van Doren Stern printed two hundred copies of the story and used them as Christmas cards in 1943. From this humble beginning, a classic was born. Van Doren Stern's story captivated Frank Capra, who said he "had been looking for [it] all [his] life." Capra's beloved adaptation, *It's a Wonderful Life*, starring James Stewart, Donna Reed, and Lionel Barrymore, was released in 1946, and while the film, which received Academy Award nominations for Best Picture, Best Actor, and Best Director, didn't take home an Oscar, it has secured its place in the American holiday tradition.

The Greatest Gift

The little town straggling up the hill was bright with colored Christmas lights. But George Pratt did not see them. He was leaning over the railing of the iron bridge, staring down moodily at the black water. The current eddied and swirled like liquid glass, and occasionally a bit of ice, detached from the shore, would go gliding downstream to be swallowed up in the shadows under the bridge.

The water looked paralyzingly cold. George wondered how long a man could stay alive in it. The glassy blackness had a strange, hypnotic effect on him. He leaned still farther over the railing...

"I wouldn't do that if I were you," a quiet voice beside him said.

George turned resentfully to a little man he had never seen before. He was stout, well past middle age, and his round

cheeks were pink in the winter air as though they had just been shaved.

"Wouldn't do what?" George asked sullenly.

"What you were thinking of doing."

"How do you know what I was thinking?"

"Oh, we make it our business to know a lot of things," the stranger said easily.

George wondered what the man's business was. He was a most unremarkable little person, the sort you would pass in a crowd and never notice. Unless you saw his bright blue eyes, that is. You couldn't forget them, for they were the kindest, sharpest eyes you ever saw. Nothing else about him was noteworthy. He wore a moth-eaten old fur cap and a shabby overcoat that was stretched tightly across his paunchy belly. He was carrying a small black satchel. It wasn't a doctor's bag—it was too large for that and not the right shape. It was a salesman's sample kit, George decided distastefully. The fellow was probably some sort of peddler, the kind who would go around poking his sharp little nose into other people's affairs.

"Looks like snow, doesn't it?" the stranger said, glancing up appraisingly at the overcast sky. "It'll be nice to have a white Christmas. They're getting scarce these days—but so are a lot of things." He turned to face George squarely. "You all right now?"

"Of course I'm all right. What made you think I wasn't? I —"

George fell silent before the stranger's quiet gaze.

The little man shook his head. "You know you shouldn't think of such things—and on Christmas Eve of all times! You've got to consider Mary—and your mother too."

George opened his mouth to ask how this stranger could know his wife's name, but the fellow anticipated him. "Don't ask me how I know such things. It's my business to know 'em. That's why I came along this way tonight. Lucky I did too." He glanced down at the dark water and shuddered.

"Well, if you know so much about me," George said, "give me just one good reason why I should be alive."

The little man made a queer chuckling sound. "Come, come, it can't be that bad. You've got your job at the bank. And Mary and the kids. You're healthy, young, and—"

"And sick of everything!" George cried. "I'm stuck here in this mudhole for life, doing the same dull work day after day. Other men are leading exciting lives, but I—well, I'm just a small-town bank clerk that even the army didn't want. I never did anything really useful or interesting, and it looks as if I never will. I might just as well be dead. I might better be dead. Sometimes I wish I were. In fact, I wish I'd never been born!"

The little man stood looking at him in the growing darkness. "What was that you said?" he asked softly.

"I said I wish I'd never been born," George repeated firmly. "And I mean it too."

The stranger's pink cheeks glowed with excitement. "Why that's wonderful! You've solved everything. I was afraid you were going to give me some trouble. But now you've got the solution yourself. You wish you'd never been born. All right! OK! You haven't!"

"What do you mean?" George growled.

"You haven't been born. Just that. You haven't been born. No one here knows you. You have no responsibilities—no job—no wife—no children. Why, you haven't even a mother. You couldn't have, of course. All your troubles are over. Your wish,

I am happy to say, has been granted—officially."

"Nuts!" George snorted and turned away.

The stranger ran after him and caught him by the arm.

"You'd better take this with you," he said, holding out his satchel. "It'll open a lot of doors that might otherwise be slammed in your face."

"What doors in whose face?" George scoffed. "I know everybody in this town. And besides, I'd like to see anybody slam a door in my face."

"Yes, I know," the little man said patiently. "But take this anyway. It can't do any harm and it may help." He opened the satchel and displayed a number of brushes. "You'd be surprised how useful these brushes can be as introduction—especially the free ones. These, I mean." He hauled out a plain little hairbrush. "I'll show you how to use it." He thrust the satchel into George's reluctant hands and began: "When the lady of the house comes to the door you give her this and then talk fast. You say: 'Good evening, Madam. I'm from the World Cleaning Company, and I want to present you with this handsome and useful brush absolutely free—no obligation to purchase anything at all.' After that, of course, it's a cinch. Now you try it." He forced the brush into George's hand.

George promptly dropped the brush into the satchel and fumbled with the catch, finally closing it with an angry snap. "Here," he said, and then stopped abruptly, for there was no one in sight.

The little stranger must have slipped away into the bushes growing along the river bank, George thought. He certainly wasn't going to play hide-and-seek with him. It was nearly dark

and getting colder every minute. He shivered and turned up his coat collar.

The street lights had been turned on, and Christmas candles in the windows glowed softly. The little town looked remarkably cheerful. After all, the place you grew up in was the one spot on earth where you could really feel at home. George felt a sudden burst of affection even for crotchety old Hank Biddle, whose house he was passing. He remembered the quarrel he had had when his car had scraped a piece of bark out of Hank's big maple tree. George looked up at the vast spread of leafless branches towering over him in the darkness. The tree must have been growing there since Indian times. He felt a sudden twinge of guilt for the damage he had done. He had never stopped to inspect the wound, for he was ordinarily afraid to have Hank catch him even looking at the tree. Now he stepped out boldly into the roadway to examine the huge trunk.

Hank must have repaired the scar or painted it over, for there was no sign of it. George struck a match and bent down to look more closely. He straightened up with an odd, sinking feeling in his stomach. There wasn't any scar. The bark was smooth and undamaged.

He remembered what the little man at the bridge had said. It was all nonsense, of course, but the nonexistent scar bothered him.

When he reached the bank, he saw that something was wrong. The building was dark, and he knew he had turned the vault light on. He noticed, too, that someone had left the window shades up. He ran around to the front. There was a battered old sign fastened on the door. George could just make out the words:

FOR RENT OR SALE

Apply JAMES SILVA

Real Estate

Perhaps it was some boys' trick, he thought wildly. Then he saw a pile of ancient leaves and tattered newspapers in the bank's ordinarily immaculate doorway. And the windows looked as though they hadn't been washed in years. A light was still burning across the street in Jim Silva's office. George dashed over and tore the door open.

Jim looked up from his ledgerbook in surprise. "What can I do for you, young man?" he said in the polite voice he reserved for potential customers.

"The bank," George said breathlessly. "What's the matter with it?"

"The old bank building?" Jim Silva turned around and looked out of the window. "Nothing that I can see. Wouldn't like to rent or buy it, would you?"

"You mean—it's out of business?"

"For a good ten years. Went bust. Stranger 'round these parts, ain't you?"

George sagged against the wall. "I was here some time ago," he said weakly. "The bank was all right then. I even knew some of the people who worked there."

"Didn't you know a feller named Marty Jenkins, did you?"

"Marty Jenkins! Why, he—" George was about to say that Marty had never worked at the bank—couldn't have, in fact, for when they had both left school they had applied for a job there and George had gotten it. But now, of course, things were different. He would have to be careful. "No, I didn't know him," he said slowly. "Not really, that is. I'd heard of him."

“Then maybe you heard how he skipped out with fifty thousand dollars. That’s why the bank went broke. Pretty near ruined everybody around here.” Silva was looking at him sharply. “I was hoping for a minute maybe you’d know where he is. I lost plenty in that crash myself. We’d like to get our hands on Marty Jenkins.”

“Didn’t he have a brother? Seems to me he had a brother named Arthur.”

“Art? Oh, sure. But he’s all right. He don’t know where his brother went. It’s had a terrible effect on him, too. Took to drink, he did. It’s too bad—and hard on his wife. He married a nice girl.”

George felt the sinking feeling in his stomach again. “Who did he marry?” he demanded hoarsely. Both he and Art had courted Mary.

“Girl named Mary Thatcher,” Silva said cheerfully. “She lives up on the hill just this side of the church— Hey! Where are you going?”

But George had bolted out of the office. He ran past the empty bank building and turned up the hill. For a moment he thought of going straight to Mary. The house next to the church had been given them by her father as a wedding present. Naturally Art Jenkins would have gotten it if he had married Mary. George wondered whether they had any children. Then he knew he couldn’t face Mary—not yet anyway. He decided to visit his parents and find out more about her.

There were candles burning in the windows of the little weather-beaten house on the side street, and a Christmas wreath was hanging on the glass panel of the front door. George raised the gate latch with a loud click. A dark shape on the porch jumped up and began to growl. Then it hurled itself down the

steps, barking ferociously.

“Brownie!” George shouted. “Brownie, you old fool, stop that! Don’t you know me?” But the dog advanced menacingly and drove him back behind the gate. The porch light snapped on, and George’s father stepped outside to call the dog off. The barking subsided to a low, angry growl.

His father held the dog by the collar while George cautiously walked past. He could see that his father did not know him.

“Is the lady of the house in?” he asked.

His father waved toward the door. “Go on in,” he said cordially. “I’ll chain this dog up. She can be mean with strangers.”

His mother, who was waiting in the hallway, obviously did not recognize him. George opened his sample kit and grabbed the first brush that came to hand. “Good evening, ma’am,” he said politely. “I’m from the World Cleaning Company. We’re giving out a free sample brush. I thought you might like to have one. No obligation. No obligation at all...” His voice faltered.

His mother smiled at his awkwardness. “I suppose you’ll want to sell me something. I’m not really sure I need any brushes.”

“No’m. I’m not selling anything,” he assured her. “The regular salesman will be around in a few days. This is just—well, just a Christmas present from the company.”

“How nice,” she said. “You people never gave away such good brushes before.”

“This is a special offer,” he said. His father entered the hall and closed the door.

“Won’t you come in for a while and sit down?” his mother said. “You must be tired walking so much.”

“Thank you, ma’am. I don’t mind if I do.” He entered the little parlor and put his bag down on the floor. The room looked different somehow, although he could not figure out why.

“I used to know this town pretty well,” he said to make conversation. “Knew some of the townspeople. I remember a girl named Mary Thatcher. She married Art Jenkins, I heard. You must know them.”

“Of course,” his mother said. “We know Mary well.”

“Any children?” he asked casually.

“Two—a boy and a girl.”

George sighed audibly.

“My, you must be tired,” his mother said. “Perhaps I can get you a cup of tea.”

“No’m, don’t bother,” he said. “I’ll be having supper soon.” He looked around the little parlor, trying to find out why it looked different. Over the mantelpiece hung a framed photograph which had been taken on his kid brother Harry’s sixteenth birthday. He remembered how they had gone to Potter’s studio to be photographed together. There was something queer about the picture. It showed only one figure—Harry’s.

“That your son?” he asked.

His mother’s face clouded. She nodded but said nothing.

“I think I met him, too,” George said hesitantly. “His name’s Harry, isn’t it?”

His mother turned away, making a strange choking noise in her throat. Her husband put his arm clumsily around her shoulder. His voice, which was always mild and gentle, suddenly became harsh. “You couldn’t have met him,” he said.

“He’s been dead a long while. He was drowned the day that picture was taken.”

George’s mind flew back to the long-ago August afternoon when he and Harry had visited Potter’s studio. On their way home they had gone swimming. Harry had been seized with a cramp, he remembered. He had pulled him out of the water and had thought nothing of it. But suppose he hadn’t been there!

“I’m sorry,” he said miserably. “I guess I’d better go. I hope you like the brush. And I wish you both a very Merry Christmas.” There, he had put his foot in it again, wishing them a Merry Christmas when they were thinking about their dead son.

Brownie tugged fiercely at her chain as George went down the porch steps and accompanied his departure with a hostile, rolling growl.

He wanted desperately now to see Mary. He wasn’t sure he could stand not being recognized by her, but he had to see her.

The lights were on in the church, and the choir was making last-minute preparations for Christmas vespers. The organ had been practicing “Holy Night” evening after evening until George had become thoroughly sick of it. But now the music almost tore his heart out.

He stumbled blindly up the path to his own house. The lawn was untidy, and the flower bushes he had kept carefully trimmed were neglected and badly sprouted. Art Jenkins could hardly be expected to care for such things.

When he knocked at the door there was a long silence, followed by the shout of a child. Then Mary came to the door.

At the sight of her, George’s voice almost failed him. “Merry Christmas, ma’am,” he managed to say at last. His hand shook as he tried to open the satchel.

When George entered the living room, unhappy as he was, he could not help noticing with a secret grin that the too-high-priced blue sofa they often had quarreled over was there. Evidently Mary had gone through the same thing with Art Jenkins and had won the argument with him too.

George got his satchel open. One of the brushes had a bright blue handle and varicolored bristles. It was obviously a brush not intended to be given away, but George didn't care. He handed it to Mary. "This would be fine for your sofa," he said.

"My, that's a pretty brush," she exclaimed. "You're giving it away free?"

He nodded solemnly. "Special introductory offer. It's one way for the company to keep excess profits down—share them with its friends."

She stroked the sofa gently with the brush, smoothing out the velvety nap. "It is a nice brush. Thank you. I—" There was a sudden scream from the kitchen, and two small children rushed in. A little, homely-faced girl flung herself into her mother's arms, sobbing loudly as a boy of seven came running after her, snapping a toy pistol at her head. "Mommy, she won't die," he yelled. "I shot her a hunert times, but she won't die."

He looks just like Art Jenkins, George thought. Acts like him too.

The boy suddenly turned his attention to him. "Who're you?" he demanded belligerently. He pointed his pistol at George and pulled the trigger. "You're dead!" he cried. "You're dead. Why don't you fall down and die?"

There was a heavy step on the porch. The boy looked frightened and backed away. George saw Mary glance apprehensively at the door.

Art Jenkins came in. He stood for a moment in the doorway, clinging to the knob for support. His eyes were glazed, and his face was very red. "Who's this?" he demanded thickly.

"He's a brush salesman," Mary tried to explain. "He gave me this brush."

"Brush salesman!" Art sneered. "Well, tell him to get outa here. We don't want no brushes." Art hiccupped violently and lurched across the room to the sofa, where he sat down suddenly. "An' we don't want no brush salesmen neither."

George looked despairingly at Mary. Her eyes were begging him to go. Art had lifted his feet up on the sofa and was sprawling out on it, muttering unkind things about brush salesmen. George went to the door, followed by Art's son, who kept snapping the pistol at him and saying: "You're dead—dead—dead!"

Perhaps the boy was right, George thought when he reached the porch. Maybe he was dead, or maybe this was all a bad dream from which he might eventually awake. He wanted to find the little man on the bridge again and try to persuade him to cancel the whole deal.

He hurried down the hill and broke into a run when he neared the river. George was relieved to see the little stranger standing on the bridge. "I've had enough," he gasped. "Get me out of this—you got me into it."

The stranger raised his eyebrows. "I got you into it! I like that! You were granted your wish. You got everything you asked for. You're the freest man on earth now. You have no ties. You can go anywhere—do anything. What more can you possibly want?"

"Change me back," George pleaded. "Change me back—please. Not just for my sake but for others too. You don't know

what a mess this town is in. You don't understand. I've got to get back. They need me here."

"I understand right enough," the stranger said slowly. "I just wanted to make sure you did. You had the greatest gift of all conferred upon you—the gift of life, of being a part of this world and taking a part in it. Yet you denied that gift."

As the stranger spoke, the church bell high up on the hill sounded, calling the townspeople to Christmas vespers. Then the downtown church bell started ringing.

"I've got to get back," George said desperately. "You can't cut me off like this. Why, it's murder!"

"Suicide rather, wouldn't you say?" the stranger murmured. "You brought it on yourself. However, since it's Christmas Eve—well, anyway, close your eyes and keep listening to the bells." His voice sank lower. "Keep listening to the bells..."

George did as he was told. He felt a cold, wet snowdrop touch his cheek—and then another and another. When he opened his eyes, the snow was falling fast, so fast that it obscured everything around him. The little stranger could not be seen, but then neither could anything else. The snow was so thick that George had to grope for the bridge railing.

As he started toward the village, he thought he heard someone saying "Merry Christmas," but the bells were drowning out all rival sounds, so he could not be sure.

When he reached Hank Biddle's house he stopped and walked out into the roadway, peering down anxiously at the base of the big maple tree. The scar was there, thank heaven! He touched the tree affectionately. He'd have to do something about the wound—get a tree surgeon or something. Anyway, he'd evidently been changed back. He was himself again. Maybe it was all a dream, or perhaps he had been hypnotized

by the smooth-flowing black water. He had heard of such things.

At the corner of Main and Bridge Streets he almost collided with a hurrying figure. It was Jim Silva, the real estate agent. "Hello, George," Jim said cheerfully. "Late tonight, ain't you? I should think you'd want to be home early on Christmas Eve."

George drew a long breath. "I just wanted to see if the bank is all right. I've got to make sure the vault light is on."

"Sure it's on. I saw it as I went past."

"Let's look, huh?" George said, pulling at Silva's sleeve. He wanted the assurance of a witness. He dragged the surprised real estate dealer around to the front of the bank where the light was gleaming through the falling snow. "I told you it was on," Silva said with some irritation.

"I had to make sure," George mumbled. "Thanks—and Merry Christmas!" Then he was off like a streak, running up the hill.

He was in a hurry to get home, but not in such a hurry that he couldn't stop for a moment at his parents' house, where he wrestled with Brownie until the friendly old bulldog waggled all over with delight. He grasped his startled brother's hand and wrung it frantically, wishing him an almost hysterical Merry Christmas. Then he dashed across the parlor to examine a certain photograph. He kissed his mother, joked with his father, and was out of the house a few seconds later, stumbling and slipping on the newly fallen snow as he ran on up the hill.

The church was bright with light, and the choir and the organ were going full tilt. George flung the door to his home open and called out at the top of his voice: "Mary! Where are you? Mary! Kids!"

His wife came toward him, dressed for going to church, and making gestures to silence him. "I've just put the children to bed," she protested. "Now they'll—" But not another word could she get out of her mouth, for he smothered it with kisses, and then dragged her up to the children's room, where he violated every tenet of parental behavior by madly embracing his son and his daughter and waking them up thoroughly.

It was not until Mary got him downstairs that he began to be coherent. "I thought I'd lost you. Oh, Mary, I thought I'd lost you!"

"What's the matter, darling?" she asked in bewilderment.

He pulled her down on the sofa and kissed her again. And then, just as he was about to tell her about his queer dream, his fingers came in contact with something lying on the seat of the sofa. His voice froze.

He did not even have to pick the thing up, for he knew what it was. And he knew that it would have a blue handle and varicolored bristles.



JOE RAPOSO (*Music*) was born in Falls River Massachusetts in 1937 to Joseph Raposo and Maria (Mary) Ascencao. Joe Raposo Senior was an accomplished violinist, pianist and classical guitarist who passed his love of music on to his son. Raposo graduated from B.M.C Durfee High School in Falls River and continued his education in the undergraduate division of Harvard University. He studied music in school and was well known for writing scores to several Hasty Pudding shows. In 1965 he followed the advice of a friend and moved to New York City to pursue a career as a songwriter.

Raposo worked as a musical supervisor, arranger and composer on various projects around New York City including the original off-Broadway production of *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*. He became famous in 1969 for his work with Jim Henson and the creation of the iconic children's television show, *Sesame Street*. He wrote the "Sesame Street Theme" as well as many of its most popular songs, such as "Being Green," "C is for Cookie," "Sing," and "ABC-DEF-GHI". He also served as the Musical Director for *The Electric Company*, a television series designed for children that had outgrown *Sesame Street* from 1971 to 1974, composed the music for the HBO animated adaptation *Madeline* and the Canadian cartoon series *The Smoggies*.

Though he is primarily known for his work in television, Raposo contributed music to several stage musicals including an adaptation of the text and poems of *A Man's a Man* by Bertolt Brecht and a stage musical about *Raggedy Ann*, which was performed in the Soviet Union and had a brief Broadway run in 1986. He also collaborated with Sheldon Harnick on a musical adaptation of the film *It's a Wonderful Life* entitled *A Wonderful Life*.

Raposo contributed theme songs, incidental music and scores to various projects on stage and screen including *The Great Muppet Caper*, *Curious George*, *Shining Time Station*, *Three's Company*, *House of Flowers*, *Play it Again, Sam*, *Half a Sixpence* and *The Mad Show*. His song "The First Time It Happens," from *The Great Muppet Caper*, was nominated for an Academy Award in 1981 but lost to "Arthur's Theme" from the film *Arthur*.

Raposo passed away in 1989 of Non-Hodgkins Lymphoma at the age of 51. Despite his relatively short career, friends, family and children all over the world remember him fondly.



Joe Raposo and Big Bird on the set of Sesame Street.



CLICK HERE
to listen to Joe Raposo sing "It's Not Easy Being Green."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rRZ-lxZ46ng>



CLICK HERE
to watch a Sesame Street montage of "Sing"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wH4HZuz_Vjs

BEHIND THE SCENES COSTUMES BY JENNIFER CAPRIO

George Bailey



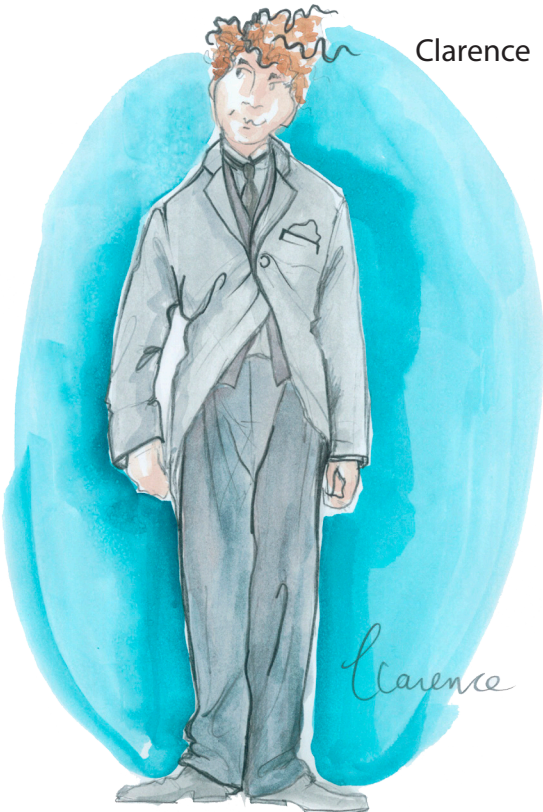
Mr. Potter



Mary



Clarence



Violet

Matthew



C.D. 4706
COSTUME DESIGNER

SIGNATURE 



This 1937 photo by Margaret Bourke-White's shows a line of African Americans waiting for bread after the Louisville floods. They are ironically framed by a poster in the background depicting a white, middle-class American family, who are enjoying the fruits of the American Dream.

according to urban policy expert Matt Lassiter, outlined the expectation "if you worked hard and played by the rules, you deserved certain things. You deserved security and decent shelter and to not have to worry that you might lose your house to bankruptcy." To, once again reference Tom Bailey, Americans simply wanted to be one of the lucky ones, one of the favored few, who were able to earn their way.

The events of *A Wonderful Life* traverse this economic journey from the 1920s to the late 1940s and depict the inner struggle that the pursuit of the American dream has on the citizens of Bedford Falls, specifically George Bailey. The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines the American dream as "an American social ideal that stresses egalitarianism and especially material prosperity." Material wealth is often viewed as the hallmark of a successful life and the pinnacle of the American dream. This perception of the American dream can make people without great financial wealth feel as though they have failed. George spends the entirety of *A Wonderful Life* desperately in search of the best opportunity, the most exotic trip or whatever else he thinks will satisfy his pursuit of happiness. He negotiates his way through the ever-changing time periods yet stays focused on the idea of monetary

wealth as the ultimate characterization of success. Meanwhile, the new American dream is focusing on the desire for home ownership and George does not realize the importance of his role in making this a reality for members of the community.

Though the details of the American dream may have changed throughout history, finding a place to belong has always been at its heart. *A Wonderful Life* is a reminder that the American dream is not something that can be measured by monetary means but rather refers to the choices individuals must make for their own lives. By using *A Wonderful Life* as a lens to examine what the American dream means, it becomes clear that the answer is extraordinarily simple. For many, the American dream is a place to belong. George embodies the best parts of this interpretation of the American dream both for his eventual realization of how much he values his family and community and by providing countless individuals a way to find their own place to belong. *A Wonderful Life* blends American optimism and family values with the spirit of Christmas to create a powerful, sentimental portrayal of life and the American dream.

LESSON

ELEMENTARY SOCIAL STUDIES UNDERSTANDING THE SHOW: Community Connections

The Arts: Theatre Grades K-12

Content Standard 6: Students will make connections between theatre, other disciplines and daily life.

CCSS.ELA.RL.3.3

Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.

CCSS.ELA.RL.2.6

Acknowledge differences in the points of view of characters, including by speaking in a different voice for each character when reading dialogue aloud.

**Educators can teach this lesson during the course of one class period or they can extend it over multiple periods.*

OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- Understand the definition of community.
- Demonstrate an awareness of individual responsibility.
- Analyze the necessity of diversity in a community.

Students should be familiar with the following supporting materials in this guide to be prepared for this lesson: "Character Summary," "Home, Family and Changes to the American Dream" and "Show Synopsis" in the *Student Guide to the Theatre*.

ACTIVITY/PROCEDURE

1. List the words team, classroom, hometown, and family on the board.
2. Ask the students to identify how these words connect to one other. What do they represent?
3. Explain that *A Wonderful Life* takes place in the community of Bedford Falls.
4. Ask the students to provide various examples of what a community is.
5. Invite students to compose a definition of a community that includes aspects around diversity.
6. Ask students for examples of how they are part of the community in their town, on a team or in classroom.
7. Ask the students to brainstorm jobs that a community needs to function.
 - Some examples could be policemen, doctors, garbage collectors or teachers.
8. Once the class has generated a fairly comprehensive list of jobs on the board, ask the students to take out a notebook or a piece of paper.
9. Instruct the students to select one of the jobs on the board and write a short story detailing what would happen to their community if that job didn't exist, or, create a job that does not exist in the community and explain how it would contribute to the positive functioning of the community at large.
10. Students should be given 10-15 minutes to create their story.
11. Once each student has finished writing they will create a drawing to accompany their story.
12. Ask the students to break into groups of two and share their story with their partner. Students listening to the story should consider:
 - What happened to the community?
 - How is the community in the story different from their community in reality?

FOLLOW-UP

Students should:

- Analyze how individuals impact a community.
- Examine why each individual in a community has a specific job.
- Determine if one person could change the shape or functionality of a community.

LESSON

MIDDLE SCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES UNDERSTANDING THE SHOW: Community Connections

The Arts: Theatre Grades K-12

Content Standard 6: Students will make connections between theatre, other disciplines and daily life.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.7

Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

**Educators can teach this lesson during the course of one class period or they can extend it over multiple periods.*

OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- Understand the definition of community.
- Demonstrate an awareness of individual responsibility.
- Analyze the necessity of diversity in a community.

Students should be familiar with the following supporting materials in this guide to be prepared for this lesson: "Character Summary," "Home, Family and Changes to the American Dream" and "Show Synopsis" in the *Student Guide to the Theatre*.

ACTIVITY/PROCEDURE

1. List the words team, classroom, hometown, and family on the board.
2. Ask the students to identify how these words connect to one other. What do they represent?
3. Explain that *A Wonderful Life* takes place in the community of Bedford Falls.
4. Ask the students to provide various examples of what a community is.
5. Invite students to compose a definition of a community that includes aspects around diversity.
6. Tell the students that they are part of the community in their town.
7. Ask the students if they are part of any teams or classes that could be considered a community.
8. Articulate that a community needs a diverse group of individuals to function properly.
9. Divide the students into groups of three.
10. Ask the students to review the "Character Summary" in the *Student Guide to the Theatre*.
11. Instruct the students to select a character other than George Bailey from the "Character Summary." Students will then write a very brief paragraph that describes how the town of Bedford Falls would be different if their chosen character had never been born.
12. Using their paragraph, each group will then create a short scene between their chosen character and his or her guardian angel detailing what happens to the community of Bedford Falls without this individual and why.
13. Students should be given 15-20 minutes to create their scene.
14. Each group will present their scene to the class.
15. Students watching the scene should consider:
 - What are the differences and similarities between Bedford Falls in *A Wonderful Life* and in the scenes?
 - Why is the community of Bedford Falls altered by this person's absence?

FOLLOW-UP

Students should:

- Analyze how individuals impact a community.
- Examine why each individual in a community has a specific job.
- Determine if one person could change the shape or functionality of a community.

LESSON

HIGH SCHOOL HISTORY

UNDERSTANDING THE SHOW: Community Connections

The Arts: Theatre Grades K-12

Content Standard 6: Students will make connections between theatre, other disciplines and daily life.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.3

Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.3

Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

**Educators can teach this lesson during the course of one class period or they can extend it over multiple periods.*

OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- Understand the definition of community.
- Demonstrate an awareness of individual responsibility.
- Analyze the necessity of diversity in a community.
- Create an original piece of theatre that demonstrates their understanding of an individual's role in a community.

Students should be familiar with the following supporting materials in this guide to be prepared for this lesson: "Character Summary," "Home, Family and Changes to the American Dream" and "Show Synopsis" in the *Student Guide to the Theatre*.

ACTIVITY/PROCEDURE

1. Explain that *A Wonderful Life* takes place in the community of Bedford Falls.
2. Ask the students to provide various examples of what a community is.
3. Invite students to compose a definition of a community that includes aspects around diversity.
4. Ask the students if they are part of any teams or classes that could be considered a community.
5. Articulate that a community needs a diverse group of individuals to function properly.
6. Divide the students into groups of three.
7. Ask the students to review the "Character Summary" in the *Student Guide to the Theatre*.
8. Instruct the students to select a character other than George Bailey from the "Character Summary."
9. Students will then write a very brief paragraph that describes how the town of Bedford Falls would be different if their chosen character had never been born.
10. Using their paragraph, each group will then create a short monologue detailing what happens to the community of Bedford Falls without this individual and why.
11. Share that each group should create their monologue collaboratively and from the perspective of their selected character's guardian angel.
12. Each monologue should reference how Bedford Falls has been changed by the absence of their chosen character and how the lives of at least 3 townspeople have been altered. One group member will play the role of the angel and read the monologue and the other group members will portray the townspeople referred to in the monologue. Students acting as townspeople will have no lines but should portray changes in their character through acting choices and body language.
13. Students should be given 15-20 minutes to create their monologue.
14. Each group will present their work to the class.
15. Students listening to the story should consider:
 - What are the differences and similarities between Bedford Falls in *A Wonderful Life* and in the short stories?
 - Why is the community of Bedford Falls altered by this person's absence?

FOLLOW-UP

Students should:

- Analyze how individuals impact a community.
- Examine why each individual in a community has a specific job.
- Determine if one person could change the shape or functionality of a community.

LESSON

ELEMENTARY VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS

BEFORE THE SHOW: The Heroes and Villains of *A Wonderful Life*

The Arts: Theatre Grades K-12

Content Standard 2: Students will act by developing, communicating and sustaining characters.

Content Standard 6: Students will make connections between theatre, other disciplines and daily life.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.3

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.9

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

**Educators can teach this lesson during the course of one class period or they can extend it over multiple periods.*

OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- Define the terms: heroes and villains.
- Differentiate between real world heroes and fictional heroes.
- Demonstrate an awareness of the archetypes that are used in the world of TV, Film and Theatre to depict heroes and villains.
- Connect their understanding of heroes and villains in the world to *A Wonderful Life*.

Students should be familiar with the following supporting materials in this guide to be prepared for this lesson: "Character Summary," "Home, Family and Changes in the American Dream" and "Show Synopsis" in the *Student Guide to the Theatre*.

MATERIALS

Easel and pad of paper, newspaper articles, tape, markers, pencils or highlighters

ACTIVITY/PROCEDURE

1. Present students with various images, either through the use of animation or actual photographs projected on the board, of various characters or people who are considered heroes or villains.
2. Ask the students to categorize the individuals into two groups and identify what each set of individuals has in common. Students should then name each grouping and discuss the characteristics of each group. This should lead to a discussion of heroes and villains.
3. List the names of real life villains found in your community, nation and around the globe.
4. Using the newspaper clippings and markers, circle their names and list the qualities and actions that made them villains.
5. Identify what qualities these individuals have in common.
6. Repeat this process with heroes.
7. As a class, ask the students to identify George Bailey and Henry Potter as either the hero or the villain of *A Wonderful Life*.
8. What similarities/differences do George and Mr. Potter have in common with the people circled in the newspaper article?
9. How would George be different if he had some qualities of a villain? How would Mr. Potter be different if he had some of the qualities of a hero?
10. What qualities would be enhanced if George Bailey and Henry Potter were turned into a super hero and a super villain?
11. Ask students to name several super heroes and super villains from TV, Film, or Theatre.
 - What do they look like?
 - Are they good-looking?
 - How do they dress?
 - How do they act?
 - How old are they?
 - Are they male or female?
 - How strong do they appear?
 - What do they eat?
 - List their positive characteristics.
 - List their negative characteristics.
12. Discuss of the difference between Super heroes and Super villains
13. Go around the room. If you could make George and Mr. Potter into super characters, what one imaginary power would they have? How would they use it?
14. Have the students break into pairs.
15. Each pair should take 5-10 minutes to discuss what super powers George and Mr. Potter might have and why.
16. When the discussion time is up, have each group draw a picture of George as a super hero and Potter as a super villain. Each group should list what powers each one has and create a short explanation as to how each man became super.
17. Students will then present their drawings and explanations to the class.

FOLLOW-UP

Students should:

- Assess the similarities and differences between the student's super heroes/super villains and the characters in *A Wonderful Life*.
- Analyze what it means to be a hero.
- Analyze what it means to be a villain.
- Investigate what makes George Bailey a hero.
- Determine how the students can be everyday heroes in their communities.

LESSON

MIDDLE SCHOOL VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS BEFORE THE SHOW: The Heroes and Villains of *A Wonderful Life*

The Arts: Theatre Grades K-12

Content Standard 1: Students will create theatre through improvising, writing and refining scripts.

Content Standard 2: Students will act by developing, communicating and sustaining characters.

Content Standard 6: Students will make connections between theatre, other disciplines and daily life.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.3-8.3

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

**Educators can teach this lesson during the course of one class period or they can extend it over multiple periods.*

OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- Define the terms: heroes and villains.
- Differentiate between real world heroes and fictional heroes.
- Demonstrate an awareness of the archetypes that are used in the world of TV, Film and Theatre to depict heroes and villains.
- Connect their understanding of heroes and villains in the world to *A Wonderful Life*.

Students should be familiar with the following supporting materials in this guide to be prepared for this lesson: "Character Summary," "Home, Family and Changes in the American Dream" and "Show Synopsis" in the *Student Guide to the Theatre*.

MATERIALS

Easel and pad of paper, newspaper articles, tape, markers, pencils, highlighters

ACTIVITY/PROCEDURE

1. Present students with various images, either through the use of animation or actual photographs projected on the board, of various characters or people who are considered heroes or villains.
2. Ask the students to categorize the individuals into two groups and identify what each set of individuals has in common. Students should then name each grouping and discuss the characteristics of each group. This should lead to a discussion of heroes and villains.
3. List the names of real life villains found in your community, nation and around the globe.
4. Using the newspaper clippings and markers, circle their names and list the qualities and actions that made them villains.
5. Identify what qualities these individuals have in common.
6. Repeat this process with heroes.
7. As a class, ask the students to identify George Bailey and Henry Potter as either the hero or the villain of *A Wonderful Life*.
8. What similarities/differences do George and Mr. Potter have in common with the people circled in the newspaper article?
9. Ask students to name several super heroes and super villains from TV, Film, or Theatre.
 - What do they look like?
 - How do they dress?
 - How do they act?
 - How old are they?
 - List their positive characteristics.
 - List their negative characteristics.
10. Discuss the difference between Super heroes and Super villains.
11. How would George be different if he had some qualities of a villain? How would Mr. Potter be different if he had some of the qualities of a hero?
12. What qualities would be enhanced if George Bailey and Henry Potter were turned into a super hero and a super villain?
13. Go around the room. If you could make George and Mr. Potter into super characters, what one imaginary power would they have? How would they use it?
14. Have the students break into groups of 4.
15. Each group should take 5-10 minutes to discuss what super powers George and Mr. Potter might have and why.
16. Once the discussion time is up, have the students write a short scene between George and Mr. Potter as super hero and super villain. The group should create the scenes collaboratively. Once the scene is written, two students should volunteer to be the actors, one student should be the costume designer and one student should be the director.
17. Have each group present their scene to the class.

FOLLOW-UP

Students should:

- Assess the similarities and differences between the student's super heroes/super villains and the characters in *A Wonderful Life*.
- Analyze what it means to be a hero.
- Analyze what it means to be a villain.
- Investigate what makes George Bailey a hero.
- Determine how the students can be everyday heroes in their communities.

LESSON

HIGH SCHOOL VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS

BEFORE THE SHOW: The Heroes and Villains of *A Wonderful Life*

The Arts: Theatre Grades K-12

Content Standard 1: Students will create theatre through improvising, writing and refining scripts.

Content Standard 2: Students will act by developing, communicating and sustaining characters.

Content Standard 6: Students will make connections between theatre, other disciplines and daily life.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-12.3

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

**Educators can teach this lesson during the course of one class period or they can extend it over multiple periods.*

OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- Define the terms: protagonist and antagonist.
- Differentiate between real world heroes and fictional heroes.
- Recognize the fundamental purpose of a protagonist and antagonist in storytelling.

Students should be familiar with the following supporting materials in this guide to be prepared for this lesson: "Character Summary," "Home, Family and Changes in the American Dream" and "Show Synopsis" in the *Student Guide to the Theatre*.

MATERIALS

A Wonderful Life scenes (attached after this lesson)

ACTIVITY/PROCEDURE

1. Write the following character names on the board: Tybalt, Romeo, Macbeth, Macduff, Jane Eyre, Bertha Mason, Harry Potter, Voldemort, Sauron and Frodo.
2. Ask the students to categorize the individuals into two groups and identify what they have in common. Inquire what role these characters play in their respective stories.
3. This should lead to a discussion of protagonists and antagonists.
4. Ask the students to assign the roles of protagonist (heroes) and antagonist (villains) to George Bailey and Henry Potter in *A Wonderful Life*.
5. Ask students to consider why this relationship is important to the story as a whole.
6. To ensure understanding, ask students to think of other protagonists/antagonists in literature, TV, film and theatre.
7. Correlate to the novel they are currently reading or have read in English class (e.g. To Kill a Mockingbird, The Great Gatsby, The Catcher and the Rye, Harry Potter)
8. Break students into groups of three. Have each group select one of the scenes provided with George and Mr. Potter. (Scenes attached after this lesson.)
9. Explain that two members of the group will be actors and one member of the group will be the director.
10. Groups will be given 10 minutes to rehearse their scenes.
11. After rehearsing the scene, each group should discuss why George and Mr. Potter are the protagonist and antagonist respectively.
12. Next, ask the groups to rewrite their scene with the roles reversed making George the antagonist (villain) and Mr. Potter as the protagonist (hero). The third person will once direct the scene.
13. Once the groups have written their scenes, they will be given 10 minutes to rehearse.
14. Students will then perform both scenes for the class.
15. While watching the scenes students should consider:
 - How does George change when placed in the role of antagonist?
 - How does Mr. Potter change when placed in the role of protagonist?
 - What would change in *A Wonderful Life* if the entire show was written from the perspective of Henry Potter?
 - Why is the relationship between George and Mr. Potter important?
16. After each group has performed their scene ask the students to explain how George and Mr. Potter share specific similarities/differences with people in the real world.

FOLLOW-UP

Students should:

- Assess the similarities between real life heroes/villains and the characters in *A Wonderful Life*.
- Determine how the characters in *A Wonderful Life* relate to current events/politics/pop culture.
- Analyze how the story of *A Wonderful Life* would be different if the protagonist/antagonist roles were reversed.
- Identify ways students can be everyday heroes in their communities.

GEORGE

I know I should jump at this but — uh —

POTTER

You needn't give me your answer now. Talk it over with your wife.

GEORGE

Just one thing —

POTTER

Yes?

GEORGE

What about the Building and Loan?

POTTER

The Building and Loan is — petty cash. Forget it. George, you're not afraid of success are you? Some men can't handle it — Is it a deal?

GEORGE

Okay.

(GEORGE shakes POTTER'S hand but as HE does so, HE recalls everything Potter has represented through the years. HE withdraws his hand.)

GEORGE

No, no, no... No. I know what you're buying for that fifteen-thousand. It's the Building and Loan, isn't it? You've been trying to kill us off for years but my father stopped you. Then I stopped you.

POTTER

Do you want the job or not? Fifteen-thou — no.

(Takes a pen and alters the contract.)

Make that twenty-thousand a year — and a three year contract.

GEORGE

Oh, you are a tempter! You spin your shiny webs and all of us hungry flies walk right into them —

POTTER

(It's a lost cause.)

All right, George...

GEORGE

— which entitles you to believe that the whole world revolves around your money.

POTTER

That's enough.

GEORGE

But you know, for all your money, people like you are nothing but calculating little spiders —

POTTER

(Quietly.)

Get out.

GEORGE

— astute, shrewd, perceptive — but still spiders.

POTTER

I said get out!

GEORGE

I will, Mr. Potter. I'm not stepping into your parlor.

POTTER

I wouldn't hire you now if you were the only man in town who could count! Now get the hell out of this office!

GEORGE

I'm going. But if you still want to send me a box of these cigars, send 'em over to the Building and Loan. I'll be there.

(GEORGE crumples up the contract, throws it on the floor and strides out)

POTTER

Harriet!

(HARRIET enters, carrying her steno pad.)

HARRIET

Yes, Mr. Potter.

POTTER

Take a note. First thing every morning, I want you to say to me: "George Bailey." That's all, "George Bailey."

(HARRIET carefully notes this down as she and POTTER exit.)

#15: I COULDN'T BE WITH ANYONE BUT YOU

ACT TWO
Scene 11

Henry Potter's Parlor

(GEORGE walks into Potter's study and waits humbly for POTTER to acknowledge him.)

POTTER

Yes?

GEORGE

Some time ago you were kind enough to offer me a job.

POTTER

That position was filled years ago.

GEORGE

Mr. Potter, I need help. I'm in trouble.

POTTER

I suppose that's why the man from the District Attorney's Office is looking for you.

GEORGE

District Attorney's Office?

POTTER

What's going on, George?

GEORGE

Through an accident — we're short in our accounts. I need to raise eight thousand dollars immediately. If you loan me the money, I'll gladly pay you a bonus. Any interest.

POTTER

You're sure it's not a discrepancy in the books.

GEORGE

No, sir. Nothing wrong with the books.

POTTER

What have you been up to, George? A little something on the side? Violet Bick, perhaps?

GEORGE

No, no.

POTTER

Why come to me? Why not ask that rich friend of yours, Sam Wainwright?

GEORGE

He's in Europe, somewhere. I have no idea when he's due back.

POTTER

What about your other friends?

GEORGE

They don't have that kind of money.

POTTER

I see. Suddenly I'm not such a — what was it? — a calculating little spider anymore, am I?

GEORGE

I apologize for that, sir. It was rude and stupid —

POTTER

What sort of collateral would I have? Any stocks? Bonds?

GEORGE

I have some insurance — a fifteen-thousand dollar policy.

POTTER

How much is your equity is in it?

GEORGE

About five hundred dollars.

POTTER

George Bailey — you used to be so cocky. You were going to conquer the world! Look at you now — a miserable failure, begging for help.

POTTER (CONTINUED)

No stocks, no bonds, nothing but a puny five hundred dollar equity in a life insurance policy. You know something? You're worth more dead than alive.

(GEORGE stares at POTTER, struck by his comment.)

You know something else? You're going to jail. And I'm not going to lift a finger to prevent it. Good night, George.

(Lights fade on POTTER and isolate GEORGE.)

IT'S A WONDERFUL PHILOSOPHY CONTINUED

As the ultimate capitalist, Potter is continuously chasing financial rewards and does so at the cost of the people of Bedford Falls. Unlike George, he doesn't care if individuals are unsafe or live in rickety apartment buildings with no heat. When there is a run on the town bank, his concern is for the institution rather than the individuals affected; he also sees this as a business opportunity and bails the bank out of financial ruin in order to increase his own wealth. Harper's Magazine published a quote in 2005 that succinctly sums up this money oriented view of the world, "Capitalism is at once far too rational, trusting in nothing that it cannot weigh and measure, and far too little as well, accumulating wealth as an end in itself."

How these philosophies play out in the musical

Capitalism and utilitarianism are not polar opposites; they simply approach things from contradictory angles much like Potter and George. George Bailey and Henry Potter lock themselves in a battle that neither can win. Though George is the philanthropic hero of *A Wonderful Life*, his good-hearted gestures would do Bedford Falls little good without the economic stability that Potter provides. Yet, at the same time, allowing Bedford Falls to

become Pottersville and focusing solely on the economic aspect would not be healthy for the community either. George and Potter are two sides of the same coin and though they detest each other, they are necessary for the others survival.

The idea of George Bailey and Henry Potter representing different philosophic or even governmental points of view is not new. In 1946, one year after RKO released the film version of *It's a Wonderful Life*, the FBI issued a memo stating that the film could be communist propaganda. A segment of the document alleged "to the picture 'It's a Wonderful Life,' [redacted] stated in substance that the film represented rather obvious attempts to discredit bankers by casting Lionel Barrymore as a 'scrooge-type' so that he would be the most hated man in the picture. This, according to these sources, is a common trick used by Communists. [In] addition, [redacted] stated that, in his opinion, this picture deliberately maligned the upper class, attempting to show the people who had money were mean and despicable characters." Frank Capra, the director of the film, denied any Communist agenda and said that the theme of the film was truly about "the individual's belief in himself."

With regard to the picture, "It's A Wonderful Life", [redacted] stated in substance that the film represented a rather obvious attempt to discredit bankers by casting Lionel Barrymore as a "scrooge-type" so that he would be the most hated man in the picture. This, according to these sources, is a common trick used by Communists.

In addition, [redacted] stated that, in his opinion, this picture deliberately maligned the upper class, attempting to show the people who had money were mean and despicable characters. [redacted] related that if he had made this picture portraying the banker, he would have shown this individual to have been following the rules as laid down by the State Bank Examiners in connection with making loans. Further, [redacted] stated that the scene wouldn't have "suffered at all" in portraying the banker as a man who was protecting funds put in his care by private individuals and adhering to the rules governing the loan of that money rather than portraying the part as it was shown. In summary, [redacted] stated that it was not necessary to make the banker such a mean character and "I would never have done it that way".

An excerpt from the 1946 FBI memo stating that *It's A Wonderful Life* was communist propoganda.

LESSON

Economics Standard 10

Students will understand that: Institutions evolve and are created to help individuals and groups accomplish their goals. Banks, labor unions, markets, corporations, legal systems, and not-for-profit organizations are examples of important institutions. A different kind of institution, clearly defined and enforced property rights, is essential to a market economy.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.1 -5.1

Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

ELEMENTARY CIVICS

UNDERSTANDING THROUGH EXPLORATION: What are Ethics in a Business?

**Educators can teach this lesson during the course of one class period or they can extend it over multiple periods.*

OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- Identify the relationship between conducting business and ethical societal obligations.
- Cite examples of the use of ethics in *A Wonderful Life*.

Students should be familiar with the following supporting materials in this guide to be prepared for this lesson: “Character Summary,” “It’s a Wonderful Philosophy” and “Show Synopsis” in the *Student Guide to the Theatre*.

ACTIVITY/PROCEDURE

1. Write the following scenarios on the board:
 - Martin works at the movie theater. He allows his friends to sneak in without paying for tickets. What’s the big deal?
 - A customer drops a \$10 bill as she pays Cindy for her groceries and doesn’t realize it. What should Cindy do (it’s the 21st of the month, Cindy is a single mom—and has no money to buy groceries)?
 - You are with a group of employees in the stockroom. A package of CDs is open. You watch as a couple of the employees take copies of the CDs for themselves. They ask you not to tell the manager. What do you do?

2. Ask the students to identify what each of these scenarios have in common.
3. Create a list of words that describe the actions of the individuals involved each scenario. (e.g. Selfish, desperate, good, etc)
4. Explain that a person’s perception of right and wrong is called ethics.
5. State that each person has their own morals (the idea of what’s right and wrong) and their own set of ethics (rules of how to determine what’s right or wrong).
6. Explain that if someone were to steal something from another person they might be called unethical.
7. Ask the students if they can identify someone in *A Wonderful Life* who acted in an ethical way.
 - Ask for a volunteer to explain why this person’s actions in *A Wonderful Life* should be considered ethical.
8. Ask for student opinions about what kind of responsibility a business may have to an individual. Ask for examples.
9. Break the students into groups of three.
10. Explain that each group will be creating a code of ethics or conduct for the Bailey Building and Loan Association as well as Mr. Potter’s rental business. Students may use the “Code of Conduct” example provided on the following page, “Character Summary” and “Plot Synopsis” in the *Student Guide to the Theatre* to assist them.
11. Each group should prepare to present, explain the “codes” they create and act out one example where their codes are in use.
 - e.g. Act out a situation where George demonstrates his business ethics by assisting a customer.
12. Groups will present both of their codes of ethics by reading them aloud, explaining how they decided each “rule” was appropriate and acting out a short scene/interaction for both George and Potter’s code of ethics.

FOLLOW-UP

Students should:

- Determine which characters have acted in an ethical or unethical way in *A Wonderful Life*.
- Examine how ethics apply to businesses.
- Analyze why ethics are needed in a business.

CLASSROOM CODE OF CONDUCT!

- 1. We will be polite at all times.**
- 2. We will work quietly and not disturb others.**
- 3. We will listen courteously when others are talking.**
- 4. We will be friendly to fellow classmates.**
- 5. We will be truthful and honest**
- 6. We will respect our teacher and other adults.**
- 7. We will be prepared for class every day.**
- 8. We will arrive at class on time.**
- 9. We will cooperate with others.**
- 10. We will always do our best.**



LESSON

MIDDLE SCHOOL CIVICS

UNDERSTANDING THROUGH EXPLORATION: What are Ethics in a Business?

**Educators can teach this lesson during the course of one class period or they can extend it over multiple periods.*

OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- Identify the ethical obligations of a business.
- Understand the ethics in *A Wonderful Life*.
- Work collaboratively.

Students should be familiar with the following supporting materials in this guide to be prepared for this lesson: “Character Summary,” “It’s a Wonderful Philosophy” and “Show Synopsis” in the *Student Guide to the Theatre*.

ACTIVITY/PROCEDURE

1. Write the following scenarios on the board:
 - Martin works at the movie theater. He allows his friends to sneak in without paying for tickets. What’s the big deal?
 - A customer drops a \$10 bill as she pays Cindy for her groceries and doesn’t realize it. What should Cindy do (it’s the 21st of the month, Cindy is a single mom—and has no money to buy groceries)?
 - You are with a group of employees in the stockroom. A package of CDs is open. You watch as a couple of the employees take copies of the CDs for themselves. They ask you not to tell the manager. What do you do?

2. Ask the students to identify what each of these scenarios have in common.
3. Create a list of words that describe the actions of the individuals involved each scenario. (e.g. Selfish, desperate, good, etc)
4. Explain that a person’s perception of right and wrong is called ethics.
5. State that each person has their own morals (the idea of what’s right and wrong) and their own set of ethics (rules of how to determine what’s right or wrong).
6. Explain that if someone were to steal something from another person they might be called *unethical*.
7. Ask the students if they can identify someone in *A Wonderful Life* who acted in an ethical way.
 - Ask for a volunteer to explain why this person’s actions in *A Wonderful Life* should be considered ethical.
8. Explain that a business has the same responsibility as an individual to act in an ethical way.
9. Distribute the “Business Plan” handout attached to this lesson to each student.
10. Read the directions at the top of the handout out loud to the class then break the students into groups of four.
11. Explain that each group will be coming up with an idea for a business and filling out the Business Plan.
12. Each group should prepare an explanation of what they consider ethical “rules” for their business and a short scene or interaction where they demonstrate those rules.
13. Once each group has completed the handout, have them present their business ideas and their Code of Business Ethics to the class.

FOLLOW-UP

Students should:

- Determine which characters have acted in an ethical or unethical way in *A Wonderful Life*.
- Examine how ethics apply to businesses.
- Analyze why ethics are needed in a business.

LESSON

HIGH SCHOOL CIVICS

UNDERSTANDING THROUGH EXPLORATION: What Is An Ethical Business?

Economics Standard 10

Students will understand that: Institutions evolve and are created to help individuals and groups accomplish their goals. Banks, labor unions, markets, corporations, legal systems, and not-for-profit organizations are examples of important institutions. A different kind of institution, clearly defined and enforced property rights, is essential to a market economy.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-12.1

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

**Educators can teach this lesson during the course of one class period or they can extend it over multiple periods.*

OBJECTIVE Students will:

- Understand the moral and ethical dilemmas facing the characters in *A Wonderful Life*.
- Analyze the actions and choices of George Bailey and Henry Potter.
- Participate in a classroom debate regarding the business choices of George Bailey and Henry Potter.

Students should be familiar with the following supporting materials in this guide to be prepared for this lesson: “Character Summary,” “It’s a Wonderful Philosophy” and “Show Synopsis” in the *Student Guide to the Theatre*.

ACTIVITY/PROCEDURE

1. Write the following scenarios on the board:
 - Martin works at the movie theater. He allows his friends to sneak in without paying for tickets. What’s the big deal?
 - A customer drops a \$10 bill as she pays Cindy for her groceries and doesn’t realize it. What should Cindy do (it’s the 21st of the month, Cindy is a single mom—and has no money to buy groceries)?

- You are with a group of employees in the stockroom. A package of CDs is open. You watch as a couple of the employees take copies of the CDs for themselves. They ask you not to tell the manager. What do you do?
 - Sharon is a cashier at a boutique and notices that her manager is entering false deposits into the computer system in order to make the business appear more profitable. Sharon confronts her manager and discovers that if the false deposits were reported the shop would go out of business and the 35 employees would immediately lose their jobs. Should Sharon report the false deposits or allow the false deposits to continue? Why?
2. Ask the students to identify what each of these scenarios has in common.
 3. Create a list of words that describe the actions of the individuals involved each scenario. (e.g. Selfish, desperate, good, etc).
 4. If a student felt that the monetary components of each scenario were a deciding factor in their answer than they are modeling a capitalist philosophy. If a student felt that the interpersonal components were a deciding factor in their answer then they are modeling a utilitarian philosophy.
 5. Explain that a person’s perception of right and wrong is called ethics.
 6. State that each person has their own morals (the idea of what’s right and wrong) and their own set of ethics (rules of how to determine what’s right or wrong).
 7. Explain that if someone were to steal something from another person they might be called unethical.
 8. Ask the students if they can identify someone in *A Wonderful Life* that acted in an ethical way.
 - Ask for a volunteer to explain why this person’s actions in *A Wonderful Life* should be considered ethical.
 9. Ask the students if they can identify someone in *A Wonderful Life* that acted in an unethical way.
 - Ask for a volunteer to explain why this person’s actions in *A Wonderful Life* should be considered unethical.
 10. Explain that a business has the same responsibility as an individual to act in an ethical way.
 11. Divide the class into four groups.
 12. Explain that the class will be participating in a debate about the ethical implications in *A Wonderful Life*. Each group will pick or be assigned one of the following topics:
 - George Bailey displayed unethical business practices by providing loans for individuals unable to make their payments.
 - Henry Potter displayed ethical business practices by providing loans only for financially qualified individuals.
 - George Bailey displayed ethical business practices and the tenets of utilitarianism by providing loans for a large amount of individuals.
 - Henry Potter displayed unethical business practices and the tenets of capitalism by providing loans only for a small group of individuals.
 13. Each group must use examples from the script of *A Wonderful Life* in their debate arguments and may use the “Character Summary,” “It’s a Wonderful Philosophy” and “Show Synopsis” in the *Student Guide to the Theatre* to assist them. Students may also use school libraries and computers to find information to support their argument.
 14. Students will elect a spokesperson to present their arguments supporting their assigned topic.
 15. Each spokesperson will then present their groups argument supporting their assigned topic and will participate in a brief debate with the other groups.

FOLLOW-UP Students should:

- Determine how ethics are displayed in *A Wonderful Life*.
- Explore how capitalism and utilitarianism could be applied to the actions of George Bailey and Henry Potter.
- Assess how ethics work in a business environment.
- Examine why the actions of George Bailey and Henry Potter could be considered both ethical and unethical.

Name _____ Date _____

Business Plan Form

Business plan for

Submitted by

1. What product or service will you provide?
2. How do you intend to produce this product or service?
3. Why are you thinking of starting this company?
4. Where would you locate your company?
5. When would you expect to open?
6. Who are your potential customers?

Write a general description of your proposed business and how it would work.

Code of Business Ethics

1. Our employees will never _____
2. Stealing is _____
3. Lying to our customers is something we

4. Our customers can count on us
to _____
5. Our products are _____ and never
_____.
6. In our business _____ comes first.
7. The most important thing to us is
_____.
8. We believe in _____.
- 9.
- 10.

LESSON

ELEMENTARY VISUAL ART AFTER THE SHOW: Propoganda

The Arts: Grades K-12

Content Standard 1: create (imagine, experiment, plan, make, evaluate, refine and present/exhibit) artworks that express concepts, ideas and feelings in each art form

Content Standard 6: identify representative works and recognize the characteristics of art, music, theatre and dance from different historical periods and cultures.

**Educators can teach this lesson during the course of one class period or they can extend it over multiple periods.*

OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- Define characteristics of art based propoganda.
- Compare the messages propoganda sends to the masses through analysis of media.
- Differentiate between the propoganda used during World War II and an in modern society.
- Examine how films and other forms of media could be used to present propoganda.

Students should be familiar with the following supporting materials in this guide to be prepared for this lesson: "Character Summary," "It's a Wonderful Philosophy" and "Show Synopsis" in the *Student Guide to the Theatre*.

ACTIVITY/PROCEDURE

1. Ask the students if they have ever seen a poster or commercial urging them to buy a certain product or think a certain way.
2. As a class, create a list of examples.
3. What do these examples have in common?
4. Explain that these commercials or posters could be considered a simple form of propoganda.
5. Define the word propoganda for students.
 - Propaganda: information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote or publicize a particular cause or point of view.
6. Explain to the class that during times of war or conflict propoganda can be used to deliver messages to the public that are untrue or not accurate. This is usually done to appeal to people's emotions in order to gain support for a cause or movement.
7. Divide the students into groups of four.
8. Pass out the "Propaganda Artwork" handout attached to this lesson.
9. Ask each group to examine the artwork on their handouts and try to interpret what each image wants them to feel or think.
10. Students should also brainstorm when propoganda might have been used in WWII and if it is still used today. Ask students to come up with at least two examples of modern day propoganda, these examples can be serious political posters or spoofs.
11. Once each group has had time to analyze the artwork and complete their handouts, have them create their own propoganda poster based on the events in *A Wonderful Life*.
12. Ask the students to consider the following questions:
 - During what time period does *A Wonderful Life* take place?
 - What events or institutions could *A Wonderful Life* be supporting?
 - What is the main conflict of the story?
13. Once each group has created their poster, ask them to present their work to the class and explain what they've drawn and why.

FOLLOW-UP

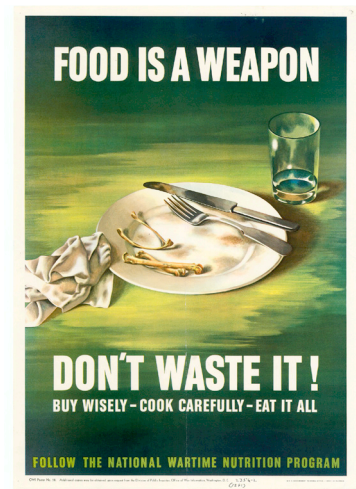
Students should:

- Determine what place propoganda has in *A Wonderful Life*.
- Explore how propoganda was or is used in American society.
- Assess how propoganda influences people's thoughts.
- Examine why certain pieces of artwork are considered propoganda.

Propaganda Artwork









LESSON

MIDDLE SCHOOL VISUAL ART AFTER THE SHOW: Propoganda

The Arts: Grades K-12

Content Standard 1: create (imagine, experiment, plan, make, evaluate, refine and present/exhibit) artworks that express concepts, ideas and feelings in each art form

Content Standard 6: identify representative works and recognize the characteristics of art, music, theatre and dance from different historical periods and cultures.

*Educators can teach this lesson during the course of one class period or they can extend it over multiple periods.

OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- Define characteristics of art based propoganda.
- Compare the messages propoganda sends to the masses through analysis of media.
- Differentiate between the propoganda used during World War II and an in modern society.
- Examine how films and other forms of media could be used to present propoganda.

Students should be familiar with the following supporting materials in this guide to be prepared for this lesson: "Character Summary," "It's a Wonderful Philosophy" and "Show Synopsis" in the *Student Guide to the Theatre*.

ACTIVITY/PROCEDURE

1. Ask the students if they have ever seen a poster or commercial urging them to buy a certain product or think a certain way.
2. As a class, create a list of examples.
3. What do these examples have in common?
4. Explain that these commercials or posters could be considered a simple form of propoganda.
5. Define the word propoganda for students.
 - Propaganda: information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote or publicize a particular cause or point of view.
6. Explain to the class that during times of war or conflict propoganda can be used to deliver messages to the public that are untrue or not accurate. This is usually done to appeal to people's emotions in order to gain support for a cause or movement.
7. Divide the students into groups of four.
8. Pass out the "Propaganda Artwork" handout attached to this lesson.
9. Ask each group to examine the artwork on their handouts and try to interpret what each image wants them to feel or think.
10. Students should also brainstorm when propoganda might have been used in WWII and if it is still used today. Ask students to come up with at least two examples of modern day propoganda, these examples can be serious political posters or spoofs.
11. Once each group has had time to analyze the artwork and complete their handouts, have them present their ideas to the class.
12. As a class consider the following questions:
 - What time period is the propoganda artwork we've seen from?
 - Which movies or cartoons have you seen examples of propoganda used?
 - What, if any, traits does *A Wonderful Life* have in common with traditional propoganda?
 - What could *A Wonderful Life* be trying to get us to think or feel?

FOLLOW-UP

Students should:

- Determine what place propoganda has in *A Wonderful Life*.
- Explore how propoganda was or is used in American society.
- Assess how propoganda influences people's thoughts.
- Examine why certain pieces of artwork are considered propoganda.

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**Educators can teach this lesson during the course of one class period or they can extend it over multiple periods.*

OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- Assess what propoganda is.
- Compare the messages propoganda sends to the masses through analysis of media.
- Differentiate between the propoganda used during World War II and in modern society.

Students should be familiar with the following supporting materials in this guide to be prepared for this lesson: "Character Summary," "It's a Wonderful Philosophy" and "Show Synopsis" in the *Student Guide to the Theatre*.

ACTIVITY/PROCEDURE

1. Ask the students if they have ever seen a poster or commercial urging them to buy a certain product or think a certain way.
2. As a class, create a list of examples.
3. What do these examples have in common?
4. Explain that these commercials or posters could be considered a mild form of propoganda.
5. Define the word propoganda for students
 - Propaganda: information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote or publicize a particular political cause or point of view.
6. Explain to the class that during times of war or conflict propoganda can be used to deliver messages to the public that are untrue or not accurate. This is usually done to try and appeal to people's emotions in order to gain support for a cause or movement.
7. Divide the students into groups of four.
8. Distribute the following to students:
 - Types of Propaganda Sheet
 - Poster Analysis Sheet
 - Student Worksheets
 - » *You can read the Propaganda Poster Fact Sheet aloud to students or make copies for them to read to themselves. Ask each group to examine the artwork on their handouts and try to interpret what each image wants them to feel or think.
9. Using the "Types of Propaganda" worksheet and the "Propaganda Fact Sheet," have a brief discussion of the different types of propoganda.
10. Make sure students have a clear understanding of the types of propoganda before they begin their work.
11. Have students complete the worksheets and the poster analysis in their groups.
12. As a class, go over the worksheets and poster analysis questions. Discuss any additional questions students may have about propoganda, the posters, or WWII.
13. Once the students have a clear understanding of particular propoganda techniques have them create a WWII era Propaganda Poster, a poster identifying propoganda in *A Wonderful Life* or a poster for a current social/political issue in their groups.
14. Ask each group to present their finished poster and explain:
 - For what era is the poster created
 - What it represents
 - Why it should be considered propoganda
 - The type of propoganda used

FOLLOW-UP

Students should:

- Determine what place propoganda has in *A Wonderful Life*.
- Explore how propoganda was or is used in American society.
- Assess how propoganda influences people's thoughts.
- Examine why certain pieces of artwork are considered propoganda.

Poster Analysis

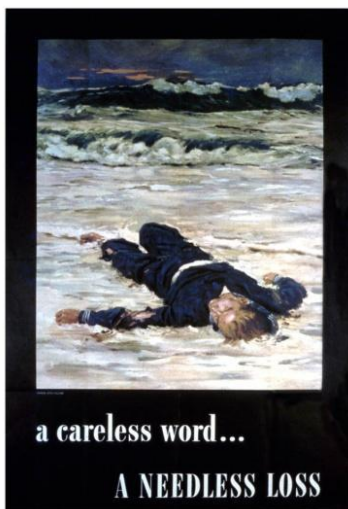


Student Worksheet

POSTER

TYPE(S) OF PROPAGANDA

DESCRIPTION/COMMENTS

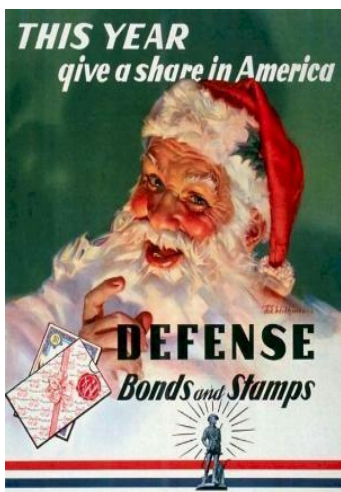


Student Worksheet

POSTER

TYPE(S) OF PROPAGANDA

DESCRIPTION/COMMENTS



Poster Analysis Questions

Directions: After choosing a poster, examine it carefully and answer the following questions.

1. For whom is this poster intended?
2. What is the poster trying to get the audience to do?
3. What is the theme of the poster?
4. What symbols, key words or well known images are used?
5. Is the use of the symbol/image/word successful?
6. What is the emotion conveyed by the poster?
7. How would you change the image to make it more powerful?
8. What type of propaganda does the poster use?
9. How successful do you think this poster was during WWII?
10. Would a similar image have the same impact in today's society? Why or why not?

Types of Propaganda

The purpose of propaganda is to systematically promote particular ideas, doctrines, or practices.

Common types of propaganda used during WWII

Name- Calling—the use of derogatory or negative words. This connects a person or a thing to a negative image or symbol. In this technique it is hoped that the audience will blindly accept the connection.

Example: Fascist, terrorist, cowardly, radical.

Glittering Generalities—these are virtue words (good, democracy, religious, motherhood) for which individuals have deep seeded ideas and feelings towards. Propagandists will use these words to get people to choose a side or fight a war but their definition of the word may not be the same as yours. It could be considered name-calling in reverse.

Example: If you are patriotic, you will fight in this war. Good people do (blank).

Euphemism—this is used when propagandists make something awful or negative more palatable. Words that are bland or neutral are often used.

Example: civilian deaths are “collateral damage,” lying is “fabricating,” and murder is “liquidation,” and during WWII (and other wars) death is “loss.”

Transfer—when the propagandist transfers the importance, power, or approval of something we respect and accept to something else they wish us to accept and respect. Symbols are often used.

Example: during WWII they often used Uncle Sam in posters to show that something was “American.”

Testimonial—the recommendation or endorsement of something by a recognizable person whose opinion is valued.

Example: a doctor selling a medication on television, a famous singer endorsing something and during WWII President Roosevelt telling Americans to buy War Bonds.

Bandwagon—everyone is doing it and so should you. No one wants to be left out or ignored so people will often join or agree when they believe “everyone” is doing something.

Example: peer pressure, joining a religious group or political party, buying a product or service and during WWII posters that said everyone has a Victory Garden, or scraps, or joins up.

Fear—the propagandist warns that something horrible will happen to the group or person if they do not follow a specific course of action.

Example: if you don't vote for me we will be attacked by our enemy, and during WWII posters that said if you don't conserve bacon fat, soldiers will die.

Winning over Hearts and Minds

Answers for Student Worksheet

Poster One—Bandwagon

The poster encourages everyone join the war effort-to build arms for victory.

Poster Two—Fear

The poster shows children in the shadow of the Nazis. If you do not buy war bonds-the Nazis will come for your children.

Poster Three—Euphemism and Fear

The poster shows a sailor face down on the beach and his death is called a “loss” in order to shock the viewer without offending them. Euphemistic language is used by calling this sailor's death a loss. The poster also uses fear as a motivator in order to emphasize the importance of silence in times of war.

Poster Four—Glittering Generalities

The poster shows a woman canning food and supporting rationing. It is “patriotic” to do these things and is a glittering generality because *patriotic* means different things to different people.

Poster Five—Transfer

The poster shows men fighting in the American Revolution and WWII. If you believe that the Revolutionary War was necessary then of course you should fight in this war. The poster transfers the importance of and reason for the American Revolution to WWII.

Poster Six—Testimonial

The poster shows Santa telling everyone to buy war bonds. There are few figures more recognizable than Santa.

WHAT IS A WONDERFUL LIFE?

A Wonderful Life
The Musical



A scene from *It's a Wonderful Life*.

Musical theatre allows its audiences to suspend their disbelief and bask in an alternate version of reality. In this theatrical version of the world, it is commonplace for a character to burst into song, fifty relative strangers to enter a dance break perfectly in sync and for years to pass in a literal blink of an eye. There are numerous theatrical forms in the world besides musical theatre

with their own standards and peculiarities; however, they all rely on the same basic framework to tell their stories. There is drama, tragedy, comedy, tragicomedy, satire, romantic comedy and realism to name a few. Musical theatre, by its very nature, is usually not terribly realistic since people don't often nonchalantly burst into song in the course of their everyday lives, yet, it can contain elements of realism. *A Wonderful Life* is an interesting example of a piece of theatre and though it is clearly a musical, it does not fall neatly into one of the genres mentioned above.

A Wonderful Life contains elements of tragedy within its story as it chronicles the life of George Bailey. The audience watches George deal with the death of his father and become trapped in a seemingly endless cycle of disappointment until he can no longer cope and contemplates suicide. However, *A Wonderful Life* it is not quite a tragedy since bumbling Clarence, Angel Second Class, saves him.

A Wonderful Life is certainly a tale with amusing characters that contains a very happy ending, so perhaps it could be classified as a comedy. However, as heartwarming as the ending may be, it incorporates death, betrayal, theft, jealousy, religious aspects and the idea of suicide. For *A Wonderful Life*, the genre of comedy does not seem to be a good fit either.

If viewed through a satirical lens, both George and Henry Potter could be characters created by the authors to show the foibles of greed, materialism and blind ambition. Satire exposes the weakness or vices of an individual or a society and ridicules these negative behaviors. George is so caught up in the idea of a "perfect" life that he comes perilously close to losing everything he holds dear and Potter resorts to petty thievery out of anger. However, *A Wonderful Life* does not hold either man up as an example of what to do or not do. There does not seem to be an obvious bias in the work that leads the audience to scorn or ridicule one man over the other.

The genre of tragicomedy may be the best fit for this particular musical though the definition provided by *Merriam-Webster* is vague, "a drama or a situation blending tragic and comic elements." Combining the idea of tragicomedy with romance, which is defined as "a narrative treating imaginary characters involved in events remote in time or place and usually heroic, adventurous, or mysterious," may be the most fitting classification for *A Wonderful Life*. Combining these genres takes into account the serious aspects of the show, its uplifting conclusion, the love story between George and Mary and the fantastical elements provided by Clarence. However, this classification is simply a combination of four different genres into one phrase, a romantic tragicomedy.

A Wonderful Life is a piece of musical theatre that defies straight forward classification. However, the beauty of *A Wonderful Life* is that it is a narrative that encompasses so many different ideas that it develops into its own unique creation. The audience views a work that balances elements of tragedy, realism, comedy and romance.

LESSON

ELEMENTARY LANGUAGE ARTS AFTER THE SHOW: The Genre of *A Wonderful Life*?

The Arts: Theatre

Content Standard 1: Students will create theatre through improvising, writing and refining scripts.

Content Standard 2: Students will act by developing, communicating and sustaining characters

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.1.d

Review the key ideas expressed and explain their own ideas and understanding in light of the discussion.

**Educators can teach this lesson during the course of one class period or they can extend it over multiple periods.*

OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- Understand the meaning of the words: Genre, Comedy and Tragedy.
- Work collaboratively to create a cohesive theatre presentation to demonstrate their understanding of these terms.

Students should be familiar with the following supporting materials in this guide to be prepared for this lesson: "Character Summary," "What is *A Wonderful Life*" and "Show Synopsis" in the *Student Guide to the Theatre*.

ACTIVITY/PROCEDURE

1. After seeing *A Wonderful Life* at Goodspeed, ask the students what kind of story they think the show was. Was it funny or sad? Was it both?
2. How was *A Wonderful Life* different than a show on television or a play?
3. Ask the students to brainstorm what made *A Wonderful Life* different than other forms of entertainment they've seen.
4. Explain to the class that the show is a musical that is a genre of theatre.
5. Share that *A Wonderful Life* is a musical but there can be different genres within a particular art form.
6. Write the following titles on the board:
 - *Monsters Inc.*
 - *Where the Red Fern Grows*
 - *Old Yeller*
 - *Looney Tunes*
 - *Bambi*
 - *The Bridge to Terabithia*
 - *Big Hero 6*
7. Ask the students to identify what these titles have in common and how they are different. Create a Venn diagram on the board to help them group the similar titles together.
8. State that there are many different genres, but the most basic are Comedy and Tragedy.
9. Generate a list of the specific elements that make a piece fit into the genre. Use the above titles of examples of each genre.
10. Once the students understand the definitions for each comedy and tragedy break then into groups of four.
11. As a class, brainstorm a definition for each genre. Write the definitions on the board.
12. Explain that each group must identify a comic or tragic moment in *A Wonderful Life*. Students may use the "Character Summary," "Show Synopsis" and the "What is *A Wonderful Life*?" Sections in the *Student Guide* to help them identify specific moments.
13. Once the groups have decided on a comic or tragic moment in the show they should create a tableau that represents that moment in *A Wonderful Life*.
14. Make sure that the students understand that:
 - A tableau is a living snapshot of the story. Students will hold and maintain a pose to convey their chosen moment.
 - The tableaux must include all the students in the group.
 - e.g. A tableau of Clarence pretending to fly could be considered a comic moment.
15. Each group will present their tableaux to the class.
 - The group will provide a title for each tableau, what genre they think their moment fits into and then get into position.
16. Once each group has presented their tableaux, ask the students observing to identify what made each moment comedic or tragic.
17. Ask the students performing:
 - What did they do to portray the tone of their moment in the story? –In their facial expression, body language, etc...
18. As a class, ask them to consider:
 - Could *A Wonderful Life* be considered a tragedy or a comedy?
 - What characters (if any) in *A Wonderful Life* get a happy ending?
 - What makes something a happy ending?

FOLLOW-UP

Students should:

- Analyze why identifying a genre for a musical work is important.
- Assess how *A Wonderful Life* would be different if it conformed strictly to the definition of comedy or tragedy.
- Determine why *A Wonderful Life* fits into multiple genres.

LESSON

MIDDLE SCHOOL LANGUAGE ARTS AFTER THE SHOW: The Genre of *A Wonderful Life*?

The Arts: Theatre

Content Standard 1: Students will create theatre through improvising, writing and refining scripts.

Content Standard 2: Students will act by developing, communicating and sustaining characters

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.6.6-8.6

Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

**Educators can teach this lesson during the course of one class period or they can extend it over multiple periods.*

OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- Understand the meaning of the words: Genre, Comedy, Tragedy, Farce, Melodrama and Bourgeois Drama.
- Work collaboratively to create a cohesive theatre presentation to demonstrate their understanding.

Students should be familiar with the following supporting materials in this guide to be prepared for this lesson: "Character Summary," "What is *A Wonderful Life*" and "Show Synopsis" in the *Student Guide to the Theatre*.

ACTIVITY/PROCEDURE

1. After seeing *A Wonderful Life* at Goodspeed, ask the students what kind of story they think the show was. Was it funny or sad? Was it both?
2. Explain to the class that the show is a musical. Ask the students to brainstorm a list of other theatre productions they've seen. How were these productions similar to *A Wonderful Life*? How were they different?
3. Share that *A Wonderful Life* is a musical but there can be different genres within a particular art form. State that there are many different genres, but that some of the genres used in theatre are:
 - Comedy: a play, movie, television program, novel, etc., that is meant to make people laugh (e.g. *Looney Tunes*)
 - Drama: a play, movie, television show, or radio show that is about a serious subject and is not meant to make the audience laugh (e.g. *Casablanca*)
 - Tragedy: a play, movie, etc., that is serious and has a sad ending (e.g. *Titanic*)
 - Farce: a funny play or movie about ridiculous situations and events (e.g. *I Love Lucy*)
 - Melodrama: a work (as a movie or play) characterized by extravagant theatricality and by the predominance of plot and physical action over characterization (e.g. A soap opera)
 - Bourgeois Drama: A serious play, such as *Death of a Salesman*, which deals with the domestic problems of the middle and lower class.
4. Once the students understand the definitions for each genre break them into groups of four.
5. Explain that each group must decide if *A Wonderful Life* fits into the genre of Comedy, Tragedy, Farce, Melodrama or Bourgeois Drama based on their memories of the show. Students may use the "Character Summary," "Plot Synopsis" and the "What is *A Wonderful Life*" Sections in the *Student Guide* to help them.
6. Once each group has decided on a genre, ask them to select a moment in the show that they feel represents their choice of genre. Each group will then write a short scene based around their selected moment from the show. Please indicate that the group must act out their scene in the style of their genre.
7. When creating their scene ask the students to consider:
 - How their selected moment from *A Wonderful Life* impacted the shows characters.
 - Why their moment fits into a specific genre.
8. Each group will present their scene to the class.
 - The group will provide a title for their scene, what moment they picked from the show, what genre they chose and then get into position.
9. Ask the students observing:
 - How did the specific moment chosen relate to the show as a whole?
 - What was different in the tone of each group's scene?
 - Did the group get the desired audience response?
10. Ask the students performing:
 - What did they do to portray the tone of their moment in the story? – In their facial expression, body language, etc...
11. As a class, ask them to consider:
 - As a whole could *A Wonderful Life* be considered Comedy, Tragedy, Farce, Melodrama or Bourgeois Drama?
 - What characters (if any) in *A Wonderful Life* get a happy ending?
 - What makes something a happy ending?

FOLLOW-UP

Students should:

- Analyze why identifying genre is important to understand a work.
- Assess how *A Wonderful Life* would be different if it conformed strictly to the definitions of Comedy, Tragedy, Farce, Melodrama or Bourgeois Drama.
- Determine why *A Wonderful Life* could fit into multiple genres.

LESSON

HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH

AFTER THE SHOW: The Genre of *A Wonderful Life*?

The Arts: Theatre

Content Standard 1: Students will create theatre through improvising, writing and refining scripts.

Content Standard 2: Students will act by developing, communicating and sustaining characters

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1.b

Work with peers to set rules for collegial discussions and decision-making clear goals and deadlines, and individual roles as needed.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners.

*Educators can teach this lesson during the course of one class period or they can extend it over multiple periods.

OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- Categorize the following terms based on specific characteristics: Genre, Comedy, Tragedy, Farce, Melodrama and Bourgeois Drama.
- Determine how the terms mentioned apply to *A Wonderful Life*.
- Create an original theatrical presentation that demonstrates their understanding of specific theatrical genres.

Students should be familiar with the following supporting materials in this guide to be prepared for this lesson: "Character Summary," "What is *A Wonderful Life*" and "Show Synopsis" in the *Student Guide to the Theatre*.

ACTIVITY/PROCEDURE

1. After seeing *A Wonderful Life* at Goodspeed, ask the students what kind of story they think the show was. Was it funny or sad? Was it both?
2. Explain to the class that the show is a musical. Ask the students to brainstorm a list of other theatre productions they've seen. How were these productions similar to *A Wonderful Life*? How were they different?
3. Share that *A Wonderful Life* is a musical but that there can be different genres within a particular art form. State that there are many different genres, but that some of the genres used in theatre are:
 - Comedy: a play, movie, television program, novel, etc., that is meant to make people laugh (e.g. Looney Tunes)
 - Drama: a play, movie, television show, or radio show that is about a serious subject and is not meant to make the audience laugh (e.g. Casablanca)
 - Tragedy: a play, movie, etc., that is serious and has a sad ending (e.g. *Titanic*)
 - Farce: a funny play or movie about ridiculous situations and events (e.g. *I Love Lucy*)
 - Melodrama: a work (as a movie or play) characterized by extravagant theatricality and by the predominance of plot and physical action over characterization (e.g. A soap opera)
 - Bourgeois Drama: A serious play, such as *Death of a Salesman*, which deals with the domestic problems of the middle and lower class.
4. Once the students understand the definitions for each genre break then into groups of four and pass out the attached scene.
 - Explain that each group must choose two genres from the list mentioned above and will act out the scene from *A Wonderful Life* twice, once in the style of each genre. Students may use their memories of the show and the "Character Summary," "Show Synopsis" and the "What is *A Wonderful Life*" sections in the *Student Guide* to assist them with their acting choices.
5. Once the groups have decided on their two genres, they should fill out a T sheet that includes elements/characteristics of each genre that they can refer to for the activity. Then they will each choose a role in the scene from *A Wonderful Life*. They will have a few moments to rehearse a scene based on a particular genre and should make an effort to clearly demonstrate which genre is being depicted through their acting.
6. Each group will present their scene to the class.
 - The groups will each share what genres they chose and then get into position.
7. Ask the students observing:
 - Which genre seemed to be depicted by the scene?
 - How did the change in genre change the narrative?
 - What was different in the tone?
 - Did the group get the desired audience response (e.g. If you were portraying a comedy, did the audience laugh)?
8. Ask the students performing:
 - What did they do to change the story? – In their facial expression, body language, etc...
 - What kinds of acting changes were needed to depict a different genre?

FOLLOW-UP

Students should:

- Analyze why clearly identifying the genre of a work is important.
- Assess how *A Wonderful Life* would be different if it conformed strictly to the definitions of Comedy, Tragedy, Farce, Melodrama or Bourgeois Drama.
- Determine why *A Wonderful Life* could fit into multiple genres.

INTERESTING FACTS

A Wonderful Life *The Musical*



Jimmy Stewart receiving the French Croix de Guerre with Palm in 1944

- Filming for *It's a Wonderful Life* took place during a summer heat wave.
- Jimmy Stewart served in WWII and was one of the highest-ranking officers in the United States Auxiliary Air Force.
- Casting directors considered Ginger Rogers, Olivia de Havilland, Martha Scott and Ann Dvorak for the role of Mary Bailey before ultimately awarding the role to Donna Reed.
- *It's a Wonderful Life* is the second film to star Jimmy Stewart that Sheldon Harnick helped turn into a musical. *She Loves Me* is based on the film *The Shop Around the Corner*.
- Jimmy Stewart was 37 years old when he portrayed George Bailey as an 18 year old and beyond.
- A short story written by Phillip Van Doren Stern in 1939 entitled *The Greatest Gift* was the inspiration for both *A Wonderful Life* and *It's a Wonderful Life*.
- Bedford Falls is not a real place. Frank Capra combined the towns of Seneca Falls and Bedford Hills to create the town name.
- The protagonist of *The Greatest Gift* is George Pratt not George Bailey.
- Joe Raposo passed away before a complete production of *A Wonderful Life* was staged.



**CLICK HERE to
watch the making of
*It's A Wonderful Life***

[https://www.youtube.com/
watch?v=lhaKfDyRoH4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lhaKfDyRoH4)

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THEATRE ETIQUETTE

A Wonderful Life
The Musical

Seeing a musical at the Goodspeed Opera House is a unique and exciting experience. All the members of the production, both cast and crew, work hard to give you a great show. As an audience member, you also have an important job. You must help the performers give their best performance possible. You can do this by practicing these rules of theater etiquette:

- Do laugh when the performance is funny.
- Do applaud when the performance is over. Applause is how you say “thank you” to the performer. The actors will bow as you applaud. That is how they say “Thank you for coming.”
- Do stand and applaud if you thought the show was outstanding.
- Don’t forget to turn off your cell phone. A ringing or buzzing phone can be very distracting. It can also be embarrassing for you if it is your phone that is disrupting the show!
- Don’t text during the performance.
- Make sure to visit the restroom before the production begins.
- Don’t speak or whisper during the performance. Whispering is still speaking, so only in an emergency should whispering occur.
- Remember that the overture (introductory music) in musical theatre is part of the performance, so remain silent when the show begins.
- Don’t take pictures during the performance. It can be very distracting to the actors and it can result in an accident.
- Don’t put your feet up on the seats or kick the seat in front of you.
- Do sit **ONLY** when your seat is in the folded down position.
- Do remain in your seat for the entire performance. If you must leave, exit during intermission. In an emergency, calmly walk toward the nearest exit.



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