

Our Town Character Breakdown

"Our Town" is the Pulitzer Prize winning play by Thornton Wilder performed with minimal scenery and props, exploring the simplicity of daily life, love, and the inevitability of death told over a 10 year period in a small town 1901-1914. Overall, "Our Town" is a reflection on the cyclical nature of life, the value of human connections, and the profound beauty found in everyday moments.

All ethnicities and genders welcomed. The cast is actually a company of actors, who are staging the play. Smaller parts require good, versatile actors to play multiple characters. Looking for actors with strong focus to detailed movement and spacial awareness. The ability to mime actions and use of minimal props is a must. There will be choral singing sung intermittingly throughout. Do not need to have an excellent voice, just be able to sing in a choir setting.

Stage Manager – age and gender open. Must be a good storyteller, able to command the stage and engage the audience. Loves people, easy going and grounded with a clear wisdom. This character is the all-knowing narrator who may be speaking for the author. The Stage Manger literally sets the stage, describes the action and introduces the actors. Steps in and out of the action as other characters. He guides Emily in her return to the living world.

Emily Webb – female. Goes from age 16 to 20. In 1901 the age 16 was more sincere and innocent than today. The love story with her and George is the spine of the action of the play as their marriage joins the two families. She has the strongest love of life and enthusiasm. Emily's appears in Act 3 after she dies during childbirth, and she desires to relive everything that was so wonderful, but finally comes to a bittersweet wisdom about the fleeting and ephemeral state of living.

Mr. Charles Webb – male age between 30 and 55 or so. He is highly educated and is the editor and owner of the only local newspaper *Sentinel*. Has a strong connection with his daughter. Lives across the way from the Gibbs.

Mrs. Myrtle Webb – female age between 30 and 55 or so. The loving but firm mother of Emily and Wally. Reveals her character through her conversation with Mrs. Gibbs; she represents the typical mother and housewife. She is busy and hard working but also loving and a good friend.

Wally Webb – young boy age 11 to 13 and younger brother of Emily. Dies young from a ruptured appendix while on a Boy Scout trip so must possess the ability to show range from the vibrancy of life to the stoic calm of the afterlife.

George Gibbs – male. Goes from age 16 to 20, (and is 32 in the final act appearance). It is a 16 of 1901 which is a sincere and naïve age. He is an idealist and a romantic with his head in the clouds and not much of one for bookwork, but a charming and goodhearted teen who falls in love with Emily. The love story with him and Emily is the spine of the action of the play. He strongly and sincerely desires to be the best person he can be for the love of his life. His grief in the last act must be a stark and heartbreaking difference to his joyous and hopeful youth.

Dr. Frank Gibbs – male age between 30 and 55 or so. He is the town doctor and family man and father to George and Rebecca. Pragmatic and logical, but kind more apt to lead his son to the right choice through thoughtful observations and questions than through a lecture. He loves his

wife but can be dismissive of her dreams at times in a “I know what is best for you” sort of way that men had during this time.

Mrs. Julia Hershey Gibbs – female age between 30 and 55 or so. Mother of George & Rebecca. Strong love for her family. A romantic who dreams of visiting Paris. Strong connection with her son and a friend to Mrs. Webb. Her fierce love of her children is starkly contrasted with the still and disconnected person she becomes at the end in the afterworld.

Rebecca Gibbs – young girl age 11 to 13, four years younger than George. Has a strong sense of energy and wonder about the world. Amazed at the stars and the earth’s place in the galaxy. She realizes that Grover’s Corners is part of New Hampshire, part of America, part of the world, the universe. This expanding image is central to Wilder’s theme. Has a strong & important short speech about this at the end of Act 1. Is close with her older brother, George.

Joe Crowell – male (or female) age 14 or so. Delivers the newspapers and sets up important sense of friendliness among the neighbors of the small town. A scholar at Massachusetts Tech, he is killed in France during World War I before he can use his education.

Howie Newsome – male. Delivers the milk, and guides a 17-year old horse named Bessie around with a wagon. Sets up important sense of friendliness among the neighbors of the small town. Howie appears during Emily’s return to the past in the last act.

Simon Stimson – adult (usually male, open to female casting) unspecified age. Leader of the church choir and organist, but has deep problems and a clear drinking problem. Attitude is acerbic, bitter and short-tempered. He/she is possibly depressed. Stimson’s drinking is the town’s scandalous gossip. As a suicide who hangs himself in the attic, Simon’s memories of the past are negative as he/she carries their bitterness into the afterlife.

Constable Bill Warren – adult male, age unspecified. There to keep the town safe, friendly and helpful, a kind person.

Mrs. Louella Soames – adult female, age unspecified. Sings in the choir and loves to spread gossip. Sharp and funny but also charming and lovable. She is a spirit in the last act.

Professor Willard: (upper teen-adult M/F) A professor of the State University who provides historical context about Grover’s Corners in a bit of a frantic and academic manner.

Si Crowell: (younger teen M/F) Joe Crowell’s younger brother who takes over the paper route in Act 2 to indicate the passage of time.

Samel “Sam” Craig: male, 20s-30s, the son of Julia Gibbs’ sister Carey, he comes back from Buffalo after twelve years’ absence. He provides exposition in the last act.

Joe Stoddard: male, age unspecified, The town undertaker in Grover’s Corners.

Farmer McCarthy: a voice among many who have passed away.

People in the crowd/choir singers/funeral attendees