

**Title:** Our *Our Town*

**Grade Level:** Eleventh Grade

**Curriculum Areas:** English, Literature, Theater

**Purpose / Objective:**

"Our *Our Town*" is designed to teach a work of literature to students in a personal way and encourage them to research the history of their own town with the goal of writing an original play about local history and residents. Students will become more intimate and familiar with Thornton Wilder's play as they study it in order to emulate the playwright's style and follow a similar development pattern. They will gain a sense of ownership over the material by producing their own play based on their local community, and will gain new insights into that community through research.

**Procedure / Activities:**

1. Students will read and discuss in class Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*, keeping in mind their upcoming project so that they can notice elements of the play that they may or may not want to include in their own piece. The class should discuss character, theme, setting, and other elements of the play as well as style and staging. This portion of the unit should take one to two weeks.
2. Students begin working on the research portion of the project. Divide the class into three groups: one group will research people, one buildings, and one events. Allow about a week of in-class research. Try to provide as many resources as possible so that out-of-class assignments are few. Each group should prepare a presentation of their findings in order to bring the other groups up to speed with their research.
3. Students will share findings from their research with the class during one class period. Students will then decide which pieces of information they would like to include in their play. Students should choose titles and themes for the three acts just as Wilder does for his play and decide whether to keep such conventions as the stage manager and the absence of properties.
4. Once decisions are made, break the students into the three groups again, assigning members from each of the research groups into each of the new writing groups. Assign one act of the play to each group and have them write the dialogue and stage directions for that act,

basing their sections loosely on Wilder's acts, respectively. This portion should take one to two weeks, depending on the class.

1. When the play is complete, assign roles to the students and have them read their own work, revising and editing if necessary. Once the product is satisfactory, plan a staging or staged reading of the show, depending on time and the desire/ability of the class. Invite other classes to see the piece. If there are more characters than students, double cast the roles, if there are more students than characters, assign jobs such as costuming, stage management, etc. to students who do not wish to be on stage.

**Additional Activities:**

N/A

**Time Required:** 6 weeks on a 90-minute block schedule, but may be shortened or lengthened as necessary

**Materials:**

1. Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*
2. Pen
3. Paper

**Additional References:**

N/A

**Lesson Plan Provided By:**

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