

# Study Guide

Steppenwolf Theatre Company's  
Arts Exchange Program Presents



A new play by Eric Rosen  
Based on the novel by Sherwood Anderson  
Directed by Jessica Thebus

Dear Teachers,

I am very pleased to have you as part of our 2001-2002 Arts Exchange season. We at Steppenwolf understand the difference a teacher can make in the lives of his or her students. It was a great teacher that gave the founding members of Steppenwolf the courage and confidence to express themselves creatively. We want to help you make that difference with your students.

The Steppenwolf Arts Exchange Program presents to you a new theatrical adaptation of *Winesburg, Ohio* based on the book by Sherwood Anderson. It is about a boy coming of age in a small Midwestern town, surrounded by ordinary people who gradually reveal that they are burdened and elated by extraordinary passions.

The study guide materials we have provided contain contextual information that will help in connecting the elements of the production to your year's curriculum. We realize that not every classroom is the same and our audience varies in age, so the study guide tends to cover a lot of ground. You can select, edit and copy to meet your own needs and timeline. Please always feel free to use whatever sections work best in your classroom.

Each section includes Discussion Questions, and Section III features special *Act It Out! Write It Out!* classroom activities. The activities we suggest will be discussed and demonstrated at our pre-show teacher workshops, which we encourage you to attend. It's a great experience, and fun too!

Please don't hesitate to call us with any questions about our programs or materials. We look forward to seeing you and your students at the show!

Hallie Gordon  
Director of the Arts Exchange Program  
Steppenwolf Theater Company

Steppenwolf Theatre Company's  
Arts Exchange Program  
Presents

# Winesburg, Ohio

A New Play by Eric Rosen  
Based on the Novel by Sherwood Anderson  
Directed by Jessica Thebus

Study Guide Creators

Ann Boyd  
Heather Brown  
Robin Chaplik  
Katherine Cross  
Hallie Gordon  
Kimberly Senior  
Jessica Thebus  
Nicole Wiley

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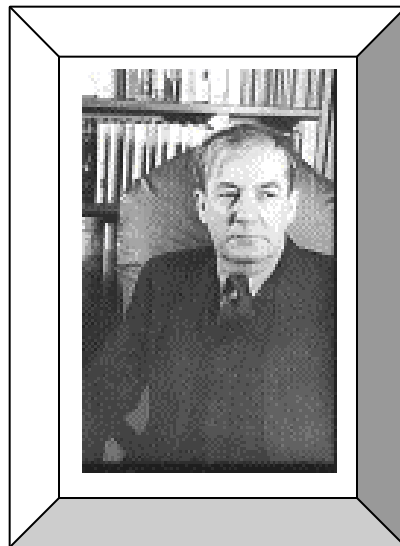
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# Section I

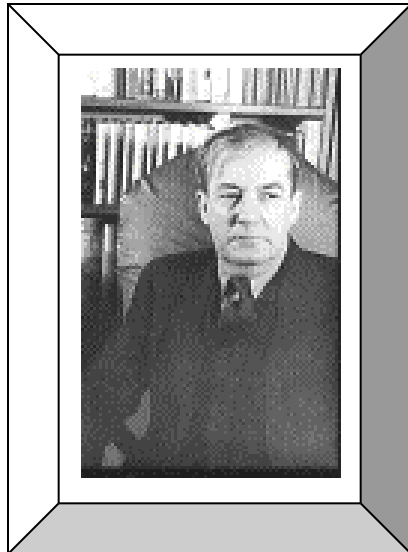
## Author Sherwood Anderson



- A. Biography Timeline
- B. The Chicago Literary Renaissance
- C. Anderson's Literary Peers
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# Section I

## Author Sherwood Anderson



- A. Biography Timeline
- B. The Chicago Literary Renaissance
- C. Anderson's Literary Peers
- D. Discussion Questions

# Sherwood Anderson



American writer Sherwood Berton Anderson was born on September 13, 1876 in Camden, Ohio. He is best known for his collection of short stories, *Winesburg, Ohio*, which reveal “sympathetic insight into the thwarted lives of ordinary people.” Between World War I and World War II, Anderson helped to break down formulaic approaches to writing, influencing a subsequent generation of writers.

The third child of a harnessmaker and house painter who had a fondness for storytelling, Anderson received an uneven education. As a young man, he was intent on establishing his financial independence. He married, had three children, and worked, with growing dissatisfaction, in the business world until 1909, when he suffered a nervous collapse.

In Chicago, he encountered writers Carl Sandburg, Ralph Bell, Theodore Dreiser, and others associated with the Chicago literary renaissance, a flowering of letters sustained by a group of young writers many of whom, like Anderson, had come of age in small Midwestern towns in the late nineteenth century.

- 1884** Anderson family moves to Clyde, Ohio, the town where Sherwood grows up, attends school, and holds many jobs to support the family. The town later becomes a kind of model for *Winesburg, Ohio*.
- 1895** At the mother’s death, the family breaks up. Sherwood travels to Chicago, where he finds work as an unskilled laborer in cold storage warehouses. Attends night classes in business subjects.
- 1898** Leaves Chicago to serve in Cuba in the Spanish-American War.
- 1899** Moves to Springfield, Ohio, to complete a high school education at the Academy of Wittenberg College, where he makes helpful contacts in business and advertising.
- 1900** Returns to Chicago to work as an advertising copywriter and solicitor. Begins writing essays about business for an advertising journal and later essays about literature.
- 1904** Marries Cornelia Lane, well-educated daughter of an Ohio manufacturer, and continues working in Chicago and writing about the advertising profession.
- 1906** Moves to Cleveland, Ohio, to operate a goods-distribution company and makes his way successfully as an entrepreneur. Aims at financial greatness.
- 1907** Moves to Elyria, Ohio, to operate another goods-distribution company and to continue an upwardly mobile life. In Elyria, the last of his three children is born.
- 1909** Starts writing fiction (which remains long unpublished) about unhappy manufacturers and financial moguls who need personal and sexual liberation.
- 1912** Disillusioned with business and under psychological pressure, is afflicted late in November by aphasia, amnesia that hospitalizes him and ends his Ohio business career and his traditional family affiliation.
- 1913** Returns to Chicago to earn his living by writing advertising copy; also writes fiction as part of the city’s artistic group. Becomes acquainted with Carl Sandburg, Edgar Lee Masters, Harriet Monroe, Margaret Anderson, Francis Hackett, Ben Hecht, Floyd Dell, and other Chicago Renaissance figures.
- 1914** Discovers the stylistically avant-garde writings of Gertrude Stein. Publishes “The Rabbit-Pen,” a traditional story in *Harper’s* and, in various “little magazines,” less traditional stories and essays about writing.
- 1915** Unhappy with writing derivative fiction, is in the winter suddenly inspired to write “Hands,” the first *Winesburg, Ohio* story. Successive stories about Winesburg come into being over many months.
- 1916** Is divorced from Cornelia and marries Tennessee Mitchell. Continues writing advertising copy and stories. Publishes his first novel, *Windy McPherson’s Son*, about an industrialist who has wealth but not happiness.
- 1917** Publishes his second novel, *Marching Men*, in which the hero finds meaning through organizing laborers into potentially effective unions.
- 1918** Publishes *Mid-American Chants*, free-verse regional poetry reminiscent of Whitman and Sandburg. Lives in New York City and writes movie publicity. Seeks publication of the Winesburg stories as a book.
- 1919** *Winesburg, Ohio* published May 8; reviews are mixed and sales scant.



**First wife Cornelia Lane**

- 1920** Lives briefly in Alabama and then in Palos Park, Illinois. Publishes *Poor White*, a novel about the industrialization of the Midwest.
- 1921** Visits Europe and meets Gertrude Stein and other writers. Publishes new stories as *The Triumph of the Egg*. Wins the *Dial* prize of \$1,000 for his stories. By mail, introduces the young Ernest Hemingway to Gertrude Stein and other authors in Europe.
- 1922** Finally abandons his work as an advertising writer and leaves his second wife and Chicago for New York City. Meets Elizabeth Prall, a bookstore manager and daughter of a successful merchant.
- 1923** Publishes *Many Marriages*, a novel about sexual liberation, and *Horses and Men*. Lives in Reno, Nevada, to obtain a divorce from Tennessee.
- 1924** Marries Elizabeth Prall. Moves to New Orleans, where he advises young William Faulkner. Publishes *A Story Teller's Story*, his first autobiography.
- 1925** Publishes a financially successful novel, *Dark Laughter*, about psychological freedom. Visits the mountains of southwestern Virginia, where he buys a small farm.
- 1926** Publishes *Tar: A Midwest Childhood*, an autobiographical novel and *Sherwood Anderson's Notebook*, a collection of essays. Settles on his farm near Troutdale, Virginia, where he builds Ripshin, his only permanent house. Very briefly visits Europe, where he is depressed, uncomfortable with Hemingway, and uncommunicative with Stein.
- 1927** Becomes owner, reporter, writer, and publisher of the two small Smyth County, Virginia newspapers, the *Marion Democrat* and the *Smyth County News*. Publishes *A New Testament*, prose poetry.
- 1928** Meets and falls in love with Eleanor Copenhaver, daughter of a prominent family in Marion, Virginia, and a career social worker with the National Young Women's Christian Association.
- 1929** Publishes *Hello Towns!*, an anthology of small-town newspaper writings. Separates, despondent and perhaps suicidal, from Elizabeth.
- 1930** Begins traveling secretly with Eleanor to observe and write about labor conditions in southern manufacturing towns.
- 1931** Publishes *Perhaps Women*, a treatise on women's potential to redeem men facing the difficulties of modern life.
- 1932** Is divorced from Elizabeth and continues courting Eleanor. Travels to a radical labor conference in Europe. Publishes *Beyond Desire*, a political novel about southern labor organizing.
- 1933** Travels across America to observe and write of depression-era social conditions for *Today* magazine. Marries Eleanor. Publishes his last collection of stories, *Death In the Woods*. Begins writing his final memoirs.
- 1934** Publishes *No Swank*, appreciative essays about his literary friends and their books. Continues to write social essays.
- 1935** Publishes *Puzzled America*, collected mostly from his *Today* magazine social essays.
- 1936** Publishes his last novel, *Kit Brandon*, about mountain moonshiners. Continues writing his memoirs.
- 1937** Publishes *Plays: Winesburg and Others*. Continues writing his autobiography.
- 1938** Visits and writes about Mexico. Continues his memoirs.
- 1940** Publishes *Home Town*, an illustrated treatise on the vanishing American small town and the best traditional American values once found there.
- 1941** Dies March 8 in Colon, Panama, while traveling with Eleanor to visit and write about life in South America. Leaves his memoirs unfinished.



**Sculpture of fourth wife Eleanor Copenhaver**



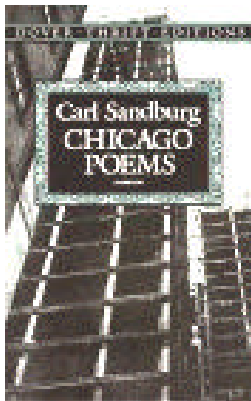
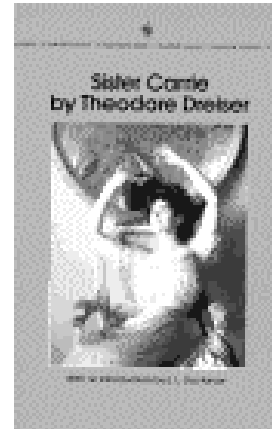
# Chicago Literary Renaissance

*Spoon River Anthology*  
Edgar Lee Masters



The Chicago Literary Renaissance was the flourishing of literary activity in Chicago during the period from approximately 1912 to 1925. The leading writers of this renaissance – Theodore Dreiser, Sherwood Anderson, Edgar Lee Masters, and Carl Sandburg – realistically depicted the contemporary urban environment, decrying the loss of traditional rural values in the increasingly industrialized and materialistic American society and the failure of the romantic promise that hard work would automatically bring material and spiritual rewards. Most of these writers were originally from small Middle Western towns and were deeply affected by the Regionalism of the 1890s that foreshadowed the Realism of 20<sup>th</sup> century literature. The renaissance also encompassed the revitalization of journalism as a literary medium; writers

such as Floyd Dell, Anderson, Dreiser, and Sandburg all were associated at one time with Chicago newspapers. The Little Theatre established in 1912 by Maurice Browne became an important outlet for the creative talents of young playwrights.



The first stirrings of the Chicago Renaissance were felt after the World's Columbian Exhibition of 1893, an event that attracted young Middle Western writers to the city. The Little Room, a literary group that included both artists and patrons of the arts, encouraged literary activity. *The Dial* magazine, established in 1880, grew to be a respected literary organ. Henry Blake Fuller and Robert Herrick, who belonged to the genteel tradition, wrote several novels that foreshadowed the later Realistic novels of Dreiser and Anderson. Hamlin Garland, already famous for novels on the bleakness of Middle Western rural life, was associated briefly with the Little Room.

The appearance of Theodore Dreiser's Naturalistic novel *Sister Carrie* (published 1900; suppressed until 1912), Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919), Edgar Lee Masters' collection of poetic epitaphs, *Spoon River Anthology* (1915), and Carl Sandburg's *Chicago Poems* (1916) marked the height of the Chicago Renaissance. Two Chicago literary magazines – *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, founded 1912 by Harriet Monroe and the *Little Review* (1914-1929), founded by Margaret Anderson – published exciting new verse by such local poets as Vachel Linday, Edgar Lee Masters, Floyd Dell and Carl Sandburg.

After World War I the writers began to disperse, and by the Great Depression of the 1930s the Chicago Literary Renaissance had ended.

Sherwood Anderson's plain spoken language typifies the spirit of the Chicago Renaissance, a movement that expressed the new tone and pace of American life in the twentieth century. Challenging established English usage by boldly experimenting with a variety of dialects, Chicago authors created a modern urban idiom.



*American Voices of the Chicago Renaissance* Summary: [www.niu.edu/univ\\_press/books/258-3.htm](http://www.niu.edu/univ_press/books/258-3.htm)

Britannica Online: [www.britannica.com](http://www.britannica.com)

The Chicago Renaissance: <http://facluty.millikin.edu/~dguillory.hum.faculty.mu/chicagoresistance.html>

*Sister Carrie* Image: <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/DREISER/carrie.html>

*Spoon River Anthology* Image: <http://www.boondocksnet.com/cb/masters.html>

Wooley, Lisa. *American Voices of the Chicago Renaissance*. Northern Illinois University Press.

# Anderson's Literary Peers



## **Carl Sandburg (1878-1967)**

Carl Sandburg was a product of the Swedish immigrant community in Galesburg, Illinois, where he had briefly attended Lombard College, before roaming the byways of America, finally settling in Milwaukee, there becoming active in Socialist politics. These facts are important because, unlike the so-called “genteel” and aristocratic writers who preceded him, Sandburg was attracted to the working class, the people who lived in the tenements and slums that were also part of Chicago, the newest citizens with dirt under their fingernails. Unlike Henry Blake Fuller who wrote of the upper classes and took a rather negative view of the city, Sandburg was an optimist whose tone remained positive even in the most trying of circumstances. Significantly, Sandburg later composed the most optimistic literary document of the dark days of the Great

Depression, the long, oratorical poem *The People, Yes* (1936).

## **Edgar Lee Masters (1869-1950)**

Edgar Lee Masters was born in Garnett, Kansas. In 1880 his family settled at Lewistown, Illinois, near Spoon River, where Masters grew up on his grandfather's farm. Lewistown and Petersburg became models for the scene of his poems in *Spoon River Anthology*. Masters' father was a lawyer, and did not encourage his son's literary aspirations, refusing to support studies in this field. He attended Knox College and was admitted to the bar in 1891. Edgar Lee Masters met Carl Sandburg in 1914, right around the time he began the serial publication of his masterpiece, *Spoon River Anthology* (1915). Based loosely on the lives of people in his own family and in the hometowns of his boyhood, *Spoon River Anthology* is ultimately modeled on the *The Greek Anthology* of classical antiquity. Masters employs the highly effective strategy of having people speak frankly from the grave, where no further harm can befall them. Most of the speakers in the imaginary town of Spoon River (named after the real river in Western Illinois) have suffered some indignity, treachery, or injustice during their lifetime.



## **Harriet Monroe (1860-1936)**

Born in Chicago, Illinois, on December 23, 1860, Harriet Monroe was educated at the Dearborn Seminary in Chicago and the Visitation Convent in Washington, D.C., graduating from the latter school in 1879. During the next decade her ambition to become a dramatist and a poet was encouraged by such literary figures as Robert Louis Stevenson, with whom she corresponded. Monroe would likely have remained only a minor figure but for her ambition to establish a forum for contemporary poets. The single most unifying element in the lives of many of the Chicago Literary Renaissance writers was *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* (1912), the brainchild of Harriet Monroe, who was herself a

### **Ben Hecht (1894-1964)**



Ben Hecht was a reporter and literary author in Chicago from 1914-1924. Chicago was a site of origin for jazz, and Hecht described songs, groups and places that were prominent there during the 'jazz age' of the 1920s. His musical training contributed to many accurate observations about early jazz. However, his intellectual stance and cynical tone rejected this type of popular culture. From a literary standpoint, Hecht describes the decadence of the twenties. His style was influenced by aesthetic writers and characterized by the use of slang and clever phrases. While he was not considered to be a major fiction writer, he had a significant influence as part of the Chicago literary renaissance.

### **Gertrude Stein (1874-1946)**

Born February 3, 1874, Gertrude Stein was an avant-garde American writer, eccentric, and self-styled genius, whose Paris home was a salon for the leading artists and writers of the period between World Wars I and II. Stein spent her infancy in Vienna and Paris and her girlhood in Oakland, Calif. At Radcliffe College she studied psychology with the philosopher William James. After further study at Johns Hopkins medical school she went to Paris, where she was able to live by private means. Stein was among the first collectors of works by the Cubists and other experimental painters of the period, such as Pablo Picasso (who painted her portrait), Henri Matisse, and Georges Braque, several of whom became her friends. At her salon they mingled with expatriate American writers, such as Sherwood Anderson and Ernest Hemingway, and other visitors drawn by her literary reputation. Her literary and artistic judgments were revered, and her chance remarks could make or destroy reputations. In her own work, she attempted to parallel the theories of Cubism, specifically in her concentration on the illumination of the present moment and her use of slightly varied repetitions and extreme simplification and fragmentation.



### **Thornton Wilder (1897-1975)**

Thornton Niven Wilder was born in Madison, Wisconsin on April 17, 1897, the son of Amos Parker Wilder and Isabella Niven Wilder. His twin brother died at birth, and Wilder grew up with an older brother, Amos, and three younger sisters, Charlotte, Isabel, and Janet. This multi-talented family lived in China for a time, where Amos Parker Wilder was U.S. consul general to Hong Kong and Shanghai. Thornton Wilder began writing as a boy. He finished high school in California, attended Oberlin College in Ohio, and received his undergraduate degree at Yale and his graduate degree at Princeton. By the time he died on December 7, 1975, at his home in Hamden, Connecticut, Thornton Wilder was an American icon and an internationally famous playwright and novelist. To this day, his works are read, performed and

appreciated by audiences worldwide.

# Sherwood Anderson

## Discussion Questions



- The writers of the Chicago literary renaissance dealt with decaying urban environments. In what way do writers of today face the same realities?



- Much of Anderson's writing reflects themes and events in his own life. Can you identify any themes common to both his life and the stories of *Winesburg, Ohio*?



- Anderson is acknowledged as a major influence on artists such as Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner. Can you identify ways in which Anderson influenced these, or other, writers?



# Section II

## Place and Setting



- A. *Winesburg, Ohio* Literary Background
- B. Small Town Literature
- C. The Real-Life Winesburg
- D. Discussion Questions



# Winesburg, Ohio

## Literary Background

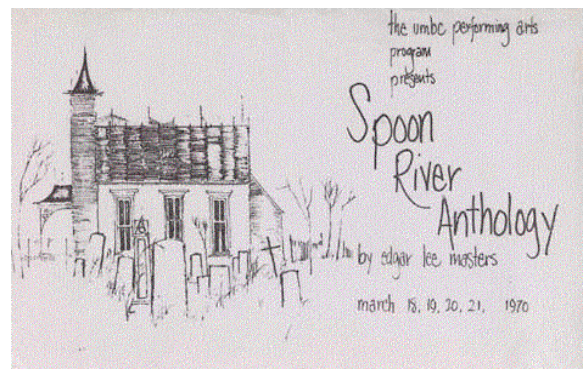
Sherwood Anderson began writing *Winesburg, Ohio* in 1915. At this time, he was living alone in a rooming house at 735 Cass Street, and working at the Critchfield Agency. His mind had been set in motion with the reading of two books - *Spoon River Anthology* by Edgar Lee Masters (which has also been adapted for the stage) and *Three Lives* by Gertrude Stein.

Anderson's earlier books, though accepted by his publisher, were unable to express his inner self. Then, years later, he described his experience of a certain day, which turned out to be the start of *Winesburg, Ohio*. He had been in his room, depressed and frustrated with the loss of his job hanging over his head, when inspiration struck him and he wrote "Hands." This story was included in *Winesburg, Ohio* and is considered one of the best stories. Immediately after this he wrote "The Book of the Grotesque," which is the first story in the book, and "Paper Pills," and so on. All the stories fell into place one after the other and *Winesburg, Ohio* was born.

The town of Winesburg, which is the setting for all the stories, is based on Anderson's memories of his hometown, Clyde, Ohio. The stories echo Anderson's experiences in his small mid-western town. The hero in all the stories, George Willard, stands in as the author, and it is believed that many of the other characters were old neighbors and acquaintances from Clyde.

There are twenty-five stories in the entire set up of *Winesburg, Ohio* (counting the four parts of "Godliness"). Certain characters are repeated in the stories, with George Willard remaining the mainstay. The last few stories round up the entire series, with the final story, "Departure," showing George leaving his hometown in search of adventure and learning.

*Winesburg, Ohio* has been attacked by some critics as a morbid book and full of sexual innuendo. But in writing about our darker emotions, Anderson attempts to depict the intricacies and variety of human experience.



Literature Notes on Winesburg, Ohio: [www.pinkmonkey.com/booknotes/monkeynotes/pmWinesburg05.asp](http://www.pinkmonkey.com/booknotes/monkeynotes/pmWinesburg05.asp).

*Spoon River Anthology* Program: [www.umbc.edu/theatre/p/spoon70/spoon\\_program.html](http://www.umbc.edu/theatre/p/spoon70/spoon_program.html)

*Three Lives* Image: [www.sagara.org/images/books/gertrude\\_stein\\_three\\_lives.jpg](http://www.sagara.org/images/books/gertrude_stein_three_lives.jpg)

# Small Town Literature

When Sherwood Anderson wrote *Winesburg, Ohio*, he became part of the American literary tradition by writing about one of its most significant themes: life in a small town.

One of Anderson's major influences in writing *Winesburg, Ohio* was Edgar Lee Masters' *Spoon River Anthology*. Masters' work was considered shocking upon its release in 1915, but is now considered his greatest collection of poetry. Each poem in the collection is written in the form of an epitaph for one of the many characters buried in a small town cemetery. The epitaphs reveal things about the characters that they would have chosen to conceal during life. Although the characters and the town of Spoon River are fictional, they are based upon real people Masters knew as a boy in his own Illinois hometown.

Like Masters, Sherwood Anderson wrote about the repressed feelings and desires of small town residents, and based his characters on people he really knew. As a result, his work caused scandal and outrage among the people of Clyde, Ohio, the real-life basis for *Winesburg*. And just like *Spoon River Anthology*, *Winesburg, Ohio* gradually came to be known as its author's best work.

Later, author Thornton Wilder wrote another masterpiece of small town literature - the play *Our Town* - but took a very different approach. Rather than exposing the buried secrets, hypocrisy, and oppression that other writers, like Masters and Anderson, portrayed as lurking beneath the surface of small town life, Wilder chose to celebrate the decency and simplicity of the inhabitants of Grover's Corners, New Hampshire. The unhappiness in the play stems from everyday realities like accidental death, not from social injustice or economic oppression, and there is no attempt to inject biting social commentary into the story.

Writers continue to comment on small town life in different ways. Some prefer to idealize it, while others emphasize the darker side. Here you will find a list of books that all deal with some aspect of small town life, from a variety of viewpoints.

## Small Town Literature: High School through Adult

- **Lucky Jim**, Kingsley Amis
- **A Crime in the Neighborhood**, Suzanne Berne
- **The Snapper**, Roddy Doyle
- **In the Pond**, Ha Jin

Compiled by author Tom Perrotta for  
<http://www.salon.com/books/bag/2000/12/08/perrotta/>

- **Bastard Out of Carolina**, Dorothy Allison
- **An American Tragedy**, Theodore Dreiser
- **The Virgin Suicides**, Peter Eugenides
- **The Yoknapatawpha novels**, William Faulkner
- **Madame Bovary**, Gustave Flaubert
- **The Wessex novels** (especially **Jude the Obscure**), Thomas Hardy
- **The Scarlet Letter**, Nathaniel Hawthorne
- **The Lottery** and **We Have Always Lived in the Castle**, Shirley Jackson
- **Desperation**, **Needful Things**, **It**, and **Salem's Lot**, Stephen King
- **The Stepford Wives**, Ira Levin
- **Main Street** and **Babbitt**, Sinclair Lewis
- **Ballad of the Sad Cafe**, Carson McCullers
- **The Complete Stories**, Flannery O'Connor
- **The Oath**, Frank Peretti
- **A Simple Plan**, Scott Smith
- **The Moon is Down**, John Steinbeck

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mailing list

<http://www.webrary.org/rs/flbklits/smalltown.html>

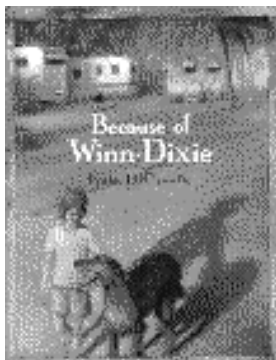
# SMALL TOWN BOOKS:

## MIDDLE THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL

### **A Year Down Yonder (Newbery Medal Book, 2001)**

**By Richard Peck**

This linked series of carefully crafted vignettes is set in rural Illinois during the Depression, when fifteen-year-old Mary Alice leaves Chicago to spend a year with Grandma Dowdel. Her initial apprehension at life in a small town with a scheming old woman gradually gives way to admiration and love as she recognizes the warm heart behind Grandma's shenanigans. "Peck's characters are fully realized, from the quiet widow nursing her war-injured son, to Maxine Patch, running out of Grandma's house draped only in the biggest snake outside the Brookfield Zoo," said Caroline S. Parr, chair of the Newbery Award Selection Committee. "These stories will, like Maxine, streak 'straight into the annals of undying fame.'" *A Year Down Yonder* is a sequel to Peck's 1999 Newbery Honor book, *A Long Way From Chicago*.



### **Because of Winn-Dixie (Newbery Honor Book, 2001)**

**By Kate DiCamillo**

When a stray dog appears almost magically in the midst of the produce section of the Winn-Dixie grocery store, he leads ten-year-old India Opal Buloni from one new friend to the next in a small Florida town. The stories she gathers from each new friend help her to piece together a new definition of family. "This humorous and touching first novel is as flavorful as the lozenges once made in town by Littmus W. Block, that taste sweet and sad at the same time," said Parr.

### **Hope Was Here (Newbery Honor Book, 2001)**

**By Joan Bauer, Nancy Paulsen**

Hope Was Here tells the story of sixteen-year-old Hope and her aunt and their move to a small town in Wisconsin to join the "short order dance" of life at the Welcome Stairways Diner. In the course of just a few months, Hope encounters issues as diverse as her customers: corruption in politics, a new love, serious illness and the meaning of family. "Bauer juggles story lines as well as Hope juggles plates, and the lessons of waitressing expand into lessons about the essentials of life," said Parr.



Ace The MSAT - Newbery Books: [www.acethemsat.com/newberrybooks.html](http://www.acethemsat.com/newberrybooks.html)

### **More Recommended Reading:**

- **Goodnight, Mr. Tom**, Michelle Magorian
- **Following Fake Man**, Barbara Holmes
- **Razzle**, E. Wittlinger
- **The Moffats**, Eleanor Estes
- **Shiloh**, Phyllis Reynolds Naylor
- **When Zachary Beaver Came To Town** and **My Louisiana Sky**, Kimberly Willis Holt
- The **Betsy Books**, Maud Hart Lovelace
- The **Little House** Series, Laura Ingalls Wilder
- **The Moorchild**, Eloise McGraw
- **To Kill A Mockingbird**, Harper Lee
- Anything by Willa Cather

Compiled by Drew Richardson and Sara Yu, Bank Street Bookstore, New York City  
[www.bankstreetbooks.com](http://www.bankstreetbooks.com)



# The Real-Life Winesburg

The town of Winesburg, Ohio is in reality only a fictitious place. However, it bears acute resemblance to Clyde, the birthplace of Sherwood Anderson. Anderson grew up in Clyde and characterized the townspeople. This new realism in writing influenced many other writers like Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner and John Steinbeck.

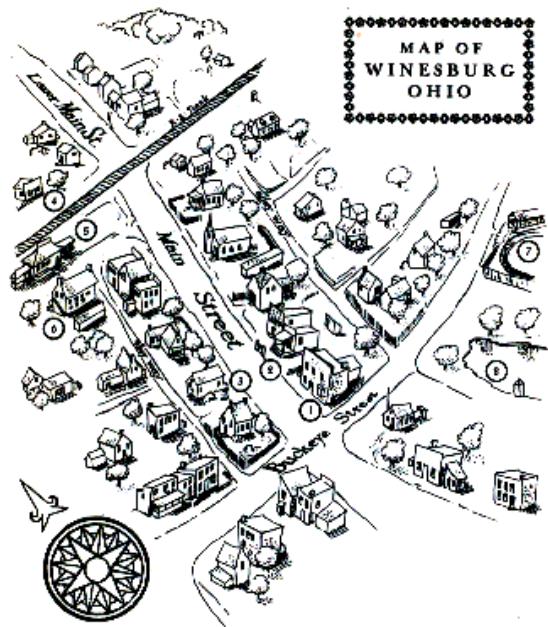
This book, however, shocked the residents of Clyde. Anderson was scorned by many older critics, though praised by many younger ones.

The town of Clyde has certainly achieved fame through this book. People visit the place made famous by the book. Yet the people apparently never forgave him recognizing themselves in it even though the names were changed!



## LEFT:

A present-day aerial map of Clyde, Ohio.



## RIGHT:

A map of Anderson's Winesburg, Ohio at the time of the book's publication in 1919.

# The Winesburg Photo Album

The following are pictures of real locations in Clyde, Ohio, which correspond to Sherwood Anderson's life and stories.



**Left:**

The Presbyterian Church, 133 West Forest, was built in 1869, the tower was added in 1891 and remodeled in 1960.

From the book "Winesburg, Ohio":

"Three times during the early fall and winter of that year Curtis Hartman crept out of his house to the room in the bell tower to sit in the darkness looking at the figure of Kate Swift lying in her bed and later went to walk and pray in the streets. He could not understand himself. For weeks he would go along scarcely thinking of the school teacher and telling himself that he had conquered the carnal desire to look at her body."

**Right:**

Waterworks Pond, now Community Park, was the setting for many scenes in the book. Here is one of them:

"George and Helen arose and walked away into the darkness. They went along a path past a field of corn that had not yet been cut. The wind whispered among the dry corn blades. For a moment during the walk back into town the spell that held them was broken. When they had come to the crest of Waterworks Hill they stopped by a tree and George again put his hands on the girl's shoulders. She embraced him eagerly and then again they drew quickly back from that impulse. They stopped kissing and stood a little apart. Mutual respect grew big in them. They were both embarrassed and to relieve their embarrassment dropped into the animalism of youth. They laughed and began to pull and haul at each other. In some way chastened and purified by the mood they had been in, they became, not man and woman, not boy and girl, but excited little animals."



**Above:** Sherwood Anderson's Residence, 1887, 214 Race Street in Clyde, a private home. The house sits above Waterworks Pond.



**Above:** Sherwood Anderson's Residence, 1888-1895, 129 Spring Avenue in Clyde, now a private residence. The house sits near the old spring where the first Clyde resident lived. The spring was filled in years ago after a child drowned in it.

# Place & Setting Discussion Questions



- Based on a place familiar to you, create your own *Winesburg, Ohio*. Which locations are most theatrically interesting? How would you rename the locations? What would you call the town?



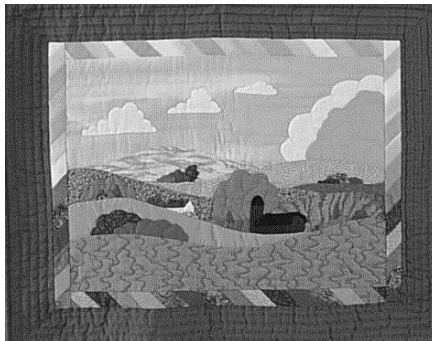
- How is *Winesburg, Ohio* similar to periodicals, TV programs, books, and films of our time?



- Using books from the Small Town Literature reading list or others of your choosing, compare and contrast the ways different writers approach small town life.



- Think of a secret - or make one up - and write a short story or character sketch based on this secret.



# Section III

## Character

Grotesque:

adjective - departing markedly from the natural, the expected, or the typical

noun - a style of decorative art that may distort the natural into absurdity, ugliness, or caricature

A. Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary

*It was the truths that made the people grotesques... the moment one of the people took one of the truths to himself, called it his truth, and tried to live his life by it, he became a grotesque and the truth he embraced became a falsehood.*

- Sherwood Anderson in *Winesburg, Ohio*

- A. *Winesburg, Ohio* Character Breakdown
- B. Getting to Know Your Character
- C. Character Analysis
- D. Interview With Actor Andrew White
- E. Discussion Questions
- F. Act It Out! Write It Out!



# Winesburg, Ohio Character Breakdown

The characters of *Winesburg, Ohio* are all flawed, ineffectual, incomplete. They all have passion buried inside, unfulfilled dreams and hopes. Their grotesqueness stems from their inability to effectively communicate or release their repressed passions.

**The Narrator (George as an adult):** A resident of Winesburg – possibly also a grotesque figure.

**George Willard:**

George is the only character who is woven through most of the stories. He acts like a medium of communication to the figures he encounters, allowing them to express their desires and thoughts. Many figures seek him out as the only person in Winesburg to whom they can release their pent up frustrations and emotions.

**The Old Writer (Narrator):** The writer dreams of grotesque figures, whose attempts to possess absolute truths destroy them. The stories of *Winesburg, Ohio* are the portraits of these grotesque figures.

**Tom Hard:** Tandy's father. Tom is an agnostic who spends his time trying to destroy the religious views of his neighbors. He largely ignores his daughter.

**Elizabeth Willard:**

George's mother. Elizabeth owns the New Willard House. She is worn out. An illness took the life out of her, though she had been passionate in youth and still retains some life inside.

**The Stranger:** A drunkard. He comes to Winesburg to kick his drinking habit but fails.

**Helen White:** The daughter of the wealthy banker. She is considered the richest, prettiest girl in town.

**Kate Swift:** Winesburg's school teacher. Kate is a strong woman who is often cold, though her students have seen a strong passion in her.

**Tandy Hard:** The young forgotten daughter of Tom Hard. She has a significance her father cannot see.

**Ned Currie:** Alice Hindman's lover when she is young. He leaves her to go to the city.

**Curtis Hartman:** The Reverend of the Presbyterian Church of Winesburg. A quiet man who would pray for God's help with his sermons, wishing he felt more passion for his job.

**Tom Willard:** George's father. Elizabeth married him against her father's wishes. Tom is proud to be the leading Democrat in a Republican town.

**Alice Hindman:** Abandoned by Ned Currie as a girl, she was unable to give her body to anyone else and so lived in waiting and loneliness for years. Finally she accepted being alone forever.

**Seth Richmond:** A quiet, intense boy. The town believes he is very deep like his father was, yet Seth wishes he was able to feel excited or impassioned.

# \*\* Getting to Know Your Character \*\*

Some actors like to explore everything they could possibly know about their character. The more you know, the more precise your choices, and the more real the character will be to you and your audience. For instance, you can decide that you like dogs (a general choice) OR you can decide that you only like small dogs (more specific) OR you can decide that you only like poodles (most specific). Often, an unusual choice will be the most interesting. For instance, you can play a pet shop owner who loves animals or you could play a pet shop owner who hates animals. The second choice is more unusual than the first.

Here's a list of questions to get you thinking about your character:

1. What is his/her name?
2. How old is he/she?
3. Does he or she appear attractive? What is the first impression one would get from them?
4. Does he or she have any abnormalities?
5. Does he/she get along well with others?
6. Does he/she accept responsibility?
7. Does he/she have any pets?
8. Does he/she have any hobbies?
9. Is he/she married and what kind of relationship is it?
10. Could he or she have any mental problems?
11. Was he/she smart in school or at their place of work?
12. Would you consider this person to have traveled widely?
13. What kind of food does this person like most and why?
14. Does this person like music, and if so what kind of music in particular?
15. Does this person drink a lot of alcohol?
16. What do you think this person is like at home where nobody else is watching?
17. Does he/she believe in God?
18. What are this person's views on war?
19. Does this person buy cheap or expensive things?
20. What does this person think of Holidays?
21. What makes this person laugh?
22. Does this person have self-confidence?
23. Is this person clumsy?
24. Does this person brag?
25. Is he/she involved in politics? How would he/she vote?
26. Does this person get along with older/younger people?
27. Does this person speak well or poorly?
28. What kind of house/apartment/condo does this person live in? Does he/she rent or own?
29. What kind of magazines/books would this person read?
30. How would this person react if caught in a severe fire, storm, etc?
31. Does this person live alone?
32. What kind of temper does this person have?
33. Is this person easily embarrassed? What embarrasses them?
34. What is his/her favorite season?
35. What would make this person cry?
36. Does this person express himself/herself freely?
37. What would this person do if he/she won the lottery?
38. What would he/she do for fun? What are his/her hobbies?
39. Does he/she smoke?
40. What was this person like 5 years ago?

As you can see, there are many choices one can make. It's always tempting to play a part as if your character is the coolest and most perfect person (since we're rarely able to be so rehearsed in real life) but the uncool choices are often more interesting. Everybody has their own little quirks so let your character enjoy a few too!

# Character Analysis

## Irving Howe, in his introduction to *Winesburg, Ohio*:

Narrow, intense, almost claustrophobic, [the book] is about extreme states of being, the collapse of men and women who have lost their psychic bearings and now hover, at best tolerated, at the edge of the little community in which they live. It would be a gross mistake if we were to take *Winesburg, Ohio* as a social photograph of “the typical small town.” Anderson evokes a depressed landscape in which lost souls wander about; they make their flitting appearances mostly in the darkness of night, these stumps and shades of humanity. Figures like Kate Swift are not, nor are they meant to be, “fully-rounded” characters such as we can expect in realistic fiction; they are the shards of life, glimpsed for a moment, the debris of suffering and defeat. In each story one of them emerges, shyly or with a false assertiveness, trying to reach out to companionship and love, driven almost mad by the search for human connection. In the economy of *Winesburg* these grotesques matter less in their own right than as agents or symptoms of Anderson’s preoccupation.



Scholar Irving Howe

Misunderstanding, loneliness, the inability to articulate, are all seen by Anderson as virtually a root condition, something deeply set in our natures. Nor are these people, the grotesques, simply to be pitied and dismissed; at some point in their lives they have known desire, have dreamt of ambition, have hoped for friendship. In all of them there was once something sweet, “like the twisted little apples that grow in the orchards of *Winesburg*.” Now, broken and adrift, they clutch at some rigid notion or idea, a “truth” which turns out to bear the stamp of monomania, leaving them helplessly sputtering, desperate to speak out but unable to. *Winesburg, Ohio* registers the losses inescapable to life, and it does so with a deep fraternal sadness, a sympathy casting a mild glow over the entire book.



*“Referring to the people of the book – the people of my own Winesburg – they are people that I personally would be glad to spend my life with. Certainly, I did not write to make fun of these people or to make them ridiculous or ugly, but instead to show by their example what happens to simple, ordinary people – particularly the unsuccessful ones – what life does to us here in America in our times – and on the whole how decent and real we nevertheless are.”*

- Sherwood Anderson on his *Winesburg, Ohio* characters

Introduction to *Winesburg, Ohio*: [http://yunus.hacettepe.edu.tr/\\_b9852621/introwohio.htm](http://yunus.hacettepe.edu.tr/_b9852621/introwohio.htm)

Irving Howe Image: [www.bcpl.net/~cterkowi/howe.jpeg](http://www.bcpl.net/~cterkowi/howe.jpeg)

Sherwood Anderson Image: [http://www.americaslibrary.gov/assets/jb/jb\\_0913\\_anderson\\_2\\_m.jpg](http://www.americaslibrary.gov/assets/jb/jb_0913_anderson_2_m.jpg)

Sherwood Anderson Quotation: [www3.wcu.edu/\\_eberly/courses/672/pub/shaw.html](http://www3.wcu.edu/_eberly/courses/672/pub/shaw.html)

# \*\* Interview With Actor Andrew White \*\*

Andrew White last appeared on the Steppenwolf studio stage a year ago, in *The Ordinary Yearnings of Myriam Buddwing*. He is a founding member of the Lookingglass Theatre Company and has performed in more than a dozen Lookingglass shows, most recently in *They All Fall Down: the Richard Nickel Story*, also directed by Jessica Thebus. He teaches classes and workshops with the Lookingglass Outreach Program. Andrew will play multiple roles in *Winesburg, Ohio*.

## **What made you start acting?**

I wish I could say that I was "compelled by my craft," that I really didn't feel alive until I was tackling Hamlet, that I had an inexplicable and insatiable hunger for Broadway when I was four. But I think I just like when people look at me and smile and clap. Also, I saw some great plays and great performers when I was growing up. I remember a production of *Richard III* I saw in high school where my jaw was open most of the show and I left thinking, "I want to do THAT!"

## **Did you go to school for acting?**

Yes, I went to Northwestern University because they have a great theater program and a great liberal arts curriculum. Before that I was in a public high school in Los Angeles.

## **What types of characters interest you? Why?**

I think every actor wants to play a role that is the "most opposite" of how he or she perceives him or herself. But these days I find almost any character challenging. Or rather, whatever show I'm in or role I'm performing, the challenge to go out and be true to the character and keep the character honest is a constant and exciting challenge.

## **How do you first begin to approach a new character?**

It depends a little bit on the production, the director, the play, etc. I try to get a feel for the character physically as soon as I can, so I can feel comfortable walking in that person's body. Taking the person outside of the theater "for a walk" is always a good exercise, a way to be myself figuring out where the person's eyes go, what his posture's like, how he holds his body, what he thinks about.

## **What was the most challenging role you ever played and how did you tackle it?**

I got to play Satan once, in an adaptation of Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*. I tried to make him as sweet and considerate and calm as possible. So his power was implicit - he never had to actually show it, it was always there in reserve.

## **Is there a specific character that you have always wanted to play and not yet had the opportunity?**

Almost any Shakespeare, actually. I worked on it a lot in school, but haven't yet gotten the chance to try it out in a professional arena. I'm particularly interested in Richard II, Iago, and of course, the Danish Prince, ol' whatshisname...

## **How much of yourself - how much Andy White - is in each of the characters that you play?**

Hmmm, that's a tough one. Inevitably, a lot of me -- if only because it's my body, my vocal cords, my brain, etc. Ideally, all of me is in each of the characters. That is, I hope to bring all of my human experience to a role, to a play, to rehearsal. My own experience as a human is what's going to help me connect to the character. But I hope, too, it's not just exclusively Andy White, because that would be awfully boring -- for me, as well as for the audience. The task isn't to exclude parts of me, but to include parts of other people, to layer the character on top of me. These are questions that have haunted me my whole career, and hopefully, they'll continue to do so. That's what keeps it interesting.



# Character Discussion Questions



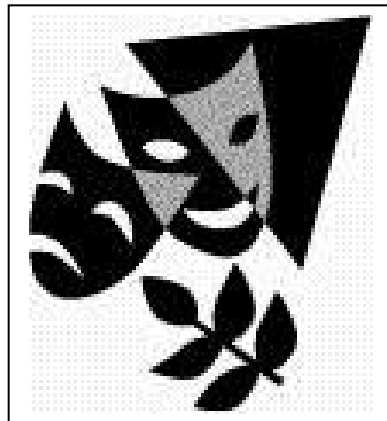
- What characters in literature have inspired you? Why?



- Who are the characters in *Winesburg, Ohio* to whom you relate and why? How do you relate to characters in other novels or stories?



- After viewing the performance of *Winesburg, Ohio* - or after reading the book - which character do you find most compelling? Why?



<http://home.earthlink.net/~esasmor/Masks.gif>

# Winesburg, Ohio

## Act It Out! Write It Out!

### CHARACTER SCULPTURES

Using the characters from *Winesburg, Ohio* or creating original ones, students create character sculptures using each other's bodies. Students form pairs. One student in each pair will be the *sculptor* and the other the *sculpture*. The sculptor molds the sculpture by slowly pulling on imaginary strings covering the sculpture's body. Encourage sculptors to add lots of details to their sculptures (i.e., hand gestures, facial expressions, positions of hips, knees, and feet).

Other details for sculptors to consider as they create:

- What is this character feeling in this moment?
- Who or what is she/he looking at?
- Where is this character in this moment? Outside? What is the weather like? Inside? What kind of room?
- How is this character trying to affect another character?
- What just happened?
- What is about to happen?

After a few minutes, sculptures hold their poses and sculptors go on a "museum tour" of all the characters that have been created in the room. Ask the class to contribute their thoughts and impressions of what characters were created and ideas represented. What moments from *Winesburg, Ohio* or other stories or books were created in the character sculptures?

Then, of course, the students who were sculptures get to become the sculptors!!



### CHARACTER ROOMS

Five students. Choose a character from *Winesburg, Ohio* (or a character from another book or story) and use the following exercise to create a room in her/his home.

The room has six sides: four walls, a floor, and a ceiling. Students must describe every object and piece of furniture on each wall. They must touch each imaginary item they describe, demonstrating with their hands and bodies the item's size, shape, and weight. Encourage the students to specify colors, textures, smells, imperfections, secrets. They should speak in **third-person** and use the phrase "**yes, and...**" when they take their turn:

- Student 1: On this wall there is a beautiful picture frame with silver curlicues along its edges.
- Student 2: **Yes, and** the floor is covered with a pretty, red rug that has a spot in this corner.
- Student 3: **Yes, and** over here there is a plant that's 8-feet tall with leaves in the shape of hearts.

What kinds of objects and furniture work with the character's personality, occupation and lifestyle?

\*In reading a story with your class, take time out to **six-sided where** the settings. This will give students an opportunity to physicalize their images of the spaces around characters and add their own details.

## CHARACTER WALK

Brainstorm with your class to create a fictional town or city. Give it a name. In the following exercise, your students will create some of the characters that inhabit this place.

Push some desks aside and create free space in the classroom. In groups of five, have students move through the free space imagining that a string is pulling them by the tip of their nose. Encourage them to exaggerate this and then to make it less extreme as if they were being pulled very very gently. Ask them to imagine what kind of character they might be as they walk through the world in this manner. What is their age? Occupation? What are they wearing? Where are they going? Where are they coming from? Each group should be given a different body part to be pulled with (i.e., shoulders, stomach, hips, knees, feet).

After everyone has had a chance to perform in a group, invite one student to come up before the class and perform her/his character walk. Encourage this student to stay committed to her/his performance so that the rest of the class can observe and write. Watching the character carefully as she/he moves through the free space, students should write down their answers to the questions below (plus any others you are inspired to ask):

- How old is this character?
- What kind of home does this character live in? Apartment? House? Big? Small?
- Who lives with this character at home?
- What kind of work does this character do?
- What was this character's favorite subject in school when she/he was young?
- What is this character's favorite color?
- Name a talent this character has.
- What kind of music does this character listen to?
- What is the last thing this character thinks about before she/he goes to sleep?
  - What is a secret about this character? –or- What is this character's secret wish?

Students should also be given a couple of minutes to write extra observations and ideas that occur to them. After three or four students have performed. Have each student write a short story about one of the characters. This story should involve the character's **secret or secret wish**.



## WRITE IT OUT!

1. Pretend you are a character who lives in Winesburg. Write about your day. What is your job? Who are your friends? What are your problems? What is your secret wish?
2. Pick any two characters from *Winesburg, Ohio* and imagine a conversation between them. Is there a subject they are both interested in? Do they disagree strongly about something? Write the discussion as dialogue.
3. The book *Winesburg, Ohio* has very little dialogue in it. Write a story about someone you know without using dialogue. How does this make the story different?
4. The chapters of *Winesburg, Ohio* have very short titles that describe the most important idea in them. Write a title for a character you make up, then tell a story about that character to help us understand the title.

# Section IV

## Page-to-Stage



- A. Chamber Theatre Adaptation
- B. Adapting Literature For Performance
- C. An interview with the Director
- D. Discussion Questions

# Chamber Theatre Adaptation

Adapting a novel for the stage is complex work - just ask Eric Rosen. While there are many methods and styles of adapting literature to theatre, this production of *Winesburg, Ohio* uses many of the techniques of "Chamber Theatre," an idea developed by Robert S. Breen. The following selection is what Robert Breen has to say about his theory from the book *Chamber Theatre*.

Chamber Theatre believes that there is a technique for presenting narrative fiction on the stage in such a way as to take full advantage of all the theatrical devices of the stage without sacrificing the narrative elements of the literature. The technique is called Chamber Theatre. Like chamber music, which explores in intimate fashion the character and quality of a few instruments in harmonic relationships, Chamber Theatre explores the relationships among characters in a narrative context provided by the narrator's intimate association with the audience. This technique was first demonstrated publicly in 1947 at Northwestern University after a series of classroom experiments designed to improve the oral interpretation of fiction.

Chamber Theatre is dedicated to the proposition that the ideal literary experience is one in which the simultaneity of the drama, representing the illusion of actuality (that is, social and psychological realism), may be profitably combined with the novel's narrative privilege of examining human motivation at the moment of action.

Chamber Theatre is not interested in the problems of transforming fiction into drama; it resists the temptation to delete narrative descriptions and rewrite summaries as dialogue. No effort is made in Chamber Theatre to eliminate the narrative point of view which characterizes fiction; indeed, the storyteller's angle of vision is emphasized though physical representation on the stage.

In Chamber Theatre, the narrator and the audience relate to each other directly for they are together in time and place; the narrator as a character in the story relates to the other characters directly for they share a remembered time and place, while the audience and the characters in the story relate to each other indirectly for they have their existence in different times and places. More succinctly, we can say that the audience is in one time and place, the characters in another time and place, while the narrator-character alternates his existence between both settings.

Breen, Robert S. *Chamber Theatre*. Wm Caxton Ltd: 1986.

# Adapting Literature For Performance

Adaptation is, in and of itself, an art and a science. Adapters have to take a book and make it work for the stage. Using chamber theatre adaptation, you can see how Eric Rosen took this section of *Winesburg, Ohio* by Sherwood Anderson to create the section of the script for the new play.

The Reverend Curtis Hartman was pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Winesburg, and had been in that position ten years. He was forty years old, and by his nature very silent and reticent. To preach, standing in the pulpit before the people, was always a hardship for him and from Wednesday morning until Saturday evening he thought of nothing but the two sermons that must be preached on Sunday. Early on Sunday morning he went into a little room called a study in the bell tower of the church and prayed. In his prayers there was one note that always predominated. "Give me strength and courage for Thy work, O Lord!" he pleaded, kneeling on the bare floor and bowing his head in the presence of the task that lay before him.

The Reverend Hartman was a tall man with a brown beard. His wife, a stout, nervous woman, was the daughter of a manufacturer of underwear at Cleveland, Ohio. The minister himself was rather a favorite in the town. The elders of the church liked him because he was quiet and unpretentious and Mrs. White, the banker's wife, thought him scholarly and refined.

The Presbyterian Church held itself somewhat aloof from the other churches of Winesburg. It was larger and more imposing and its minister was better paid. He even had a carriage of his own and on summer evenings sometimes drove about town with his wife. Through Main Street and up and down Buckeye Street he went, bowing gravely to the people, while his wife, afire with secret pride, looked at him out of the corners of her eyes and worried lest the horse become frightened and run away.

For a good many years after he came to Winesburg things went well with Curtis Hartman. He was not one to arouse keen enthusiasm among the worshippers in his church but on the other hand he made no enemies. In reality he was much in earnest and sometimes suffered prolonged periods of remorse because he could not go crying the word of God in the highways and byways of the town. He wondered if the flame of the spirit really burned in him and dreamed of a day when a strong sweet new current of power would come like a great wind into his voice and his soul and the people would tremble before the spirit of God made manifest in him. "I am a poor stick and that will never really happen to me," he mused dejectedly, and then a patient smile lit up his features. "Oh well, I suppose I'm doing well enough," he added philosophically.

The room in the bell tower of the church, where on Sunday mornings the minister prayed for an increase in him of the power of God, had but one window. It was long and narrow and swung outward on a hinge like a door. On the window, made of little leaded panes, was a design showing the Christ laying his hand upon the head of a child. One Sunday morning in the summer as he sat by his desk in the room with a large Bible opened before him, and the sheets of his sermon scattered about, the minister was shocked to see, in the upper room of the house next door, a woman lying in her bed and smoking a cigarette while she read a book. Curtis Hartman went on tiptoe to the window and closed it softly. He was horror stricken at the thought of a woman smoking and trembled also to think that his eyes, just raised from the pages of the book of God, had looked upon the bare shoulders and white throat of a woman. With his brain in a whirl he went down into the pulpit and preached a long sermon without once thinking of his gestures or his voice. The sermon attracted unusual attention because of its power and clearness. "I wonder if she is listening, if my voice is carrying a message into her soul," he thought and began to hope that on future Sunday mornings he might be able to say words that would touch and awaken the woman apparently far gone in secret sin.

# The Script

Actors are handed a script that uses different coding to help them understand it. These codes can include the name of the character followed by a colon to let everyone know whose line it is, the use of italics to give stage directions, and the use of capital letters to indicate singing. Keep in mind that new scripts go through many drafts. Pay close attention to this scene in the production of *Winesburg, Ohio* to see how it changed during rehearsals.

*(It starts to snow. In special light, we see the Reverend Hartman in his study, looking down at Kate Swift in her bedroom, who is staring at George Willard, who is working in the office of the Winesburg Eagle.)*

**Narrator:** ONE LATE NIGHT IN JANUARY, SNOW FELL SOFTLY ON THE STREETS OF OUR TOWN.

**Narrator, George, Hartman, and Kate:** WHILE ONLY THREE SOULS WERE AWAKE, UNABLE TO ENJOY THE COMFORTS OF SLEEP

**Narrator and Hartman:** THE REVEREND IS SITTING ALONE IN THE DARKNESS PREPARING

**Hartman:** FOR A REVELATION FROM GOD

**Narrator and Kate:** THE TEACHER IS LEAVING HER HOUSE FOR A WALK IN THE COLD, COMFORTING STORM

**Narrator and George:** WHILE GEORGE WILLARD SITS IN HIS OFFICE, PRETENDING TO WORK.

**Narrator, George, Kate and Hartman:** EACH HAS A SECRET SONG.

**Kate and Hartman:** MY JESUS I LOVE THEE, I KNOW THOU ART MINE, FOR THEE ALL THE FOLLIES OF SIN I RESIGN. MY GRACIOUS REDEEMER MY SAVIOR ART THOU, IF EVER YOU LOVED ME, STAND BY ME NOW.

*(Then Choir joins in, establishing church. Reverend Hartman comes down a level to the church pulpit, faces the audience as if they are the congregation, and the ensemble is in the choir.)*

**All:** MY JESUS I LOVE THEE, I KNOW THOU ART MINE, FOR THEE ALL THE FOLLIES OF SIN I RESIGN. MY GRACIOUS REDEEMER MY SAVIOR ART THOU, IF EVER YOU LOVED ME, STAND BY ME NOW. *(Choir then repeats in a hum under Hartman's speech)*

*(Hartman speaks very slowly and badly, stuttering and nervous. Members of the choir twitch, cough, fall asleep, etc. through this.)*

**Hartman:** Today we are. Joined together... joined together to celebrate, that is to worship in a spirit...that is a spirit of celebration. And today is a special day... in which that celebration... that celebration is special because of ... the community we draw together.

**Choir:** Amen.

**Townsperson:** My god that was awful.

**Townsperson 2:** Well, at least he's a godfearing, respectable man. Even if he is boring.

*(They disperse.)*

**Narrator:** The Reverend Curtis Hartman was pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Winesburg, and was possibly the worst preacher in five counties. Each week he would go to his little study and pray.

**Hartman:** OH LORD, PLEASE GIVE ME THE STRENGTH TO PREACH YOUR WORD. AND PLEASE DON'T LET ANYONE FALL ASLEEP. OR AT LEAST NOT SNORE. AMEN.

**Narrator:** The study had but one window. One Sunday morning in the summer as he sat by his desk in the room, the minister was shocked to see in a room in the house next door, a woman lying in her bed and smoking a cigarette while she read a book.

*(Kate is singing a piece of the song. Hartman is writing notes at his desk and looks up and sees Kate during this. He looks away, back to his desk. Writes. Then looks up again at her. Then away. Then up. Then rests his hand on his chin staring at her. Halfway through her song, Kate softens, allowing Hartman to speak over her singing.)*

**Kate:** *(Singing absently, while smoking.)* DRAW STRENGTH FROM HEAVEN FROM POWER DIVINE. FOR THEE ALL THE FOLLIES OF SIN I RESIGN. IN MANSIONS OF GLORY AND ENDLESS DELIGHT I'LL EVER ADORE THEE IN HEAVEN SO BRIGHT.

**Hartman:** Is that... it couldn't be... Kate Swift, the schoolteacher? Nearly undressed? And smoking? This is outrageous. She doesn't even have the decency to close the window shade – On the other hand, I never noticed how lovely her shoulders are... Well, she has lived in New York City. Perhaps her smoking means nothing.

**Narrator:** That Sunday, the preacher's sermon attracted interest because it was full of passion and clarity and conviction. Not one among the congregation fell asleep.

*(Music and choir singing, repeating scene opening. Kate and George are in the ensemble singing.)*

**Choir:** MY JESUS I LOVE THEE, I KNOW THOU ART MINE, FOR THEE ALL THE FOLLIES OF SIN I RESIGN. MY GRACIOUS REDEEMER MY SAVIOR ART THOU, IF EVER YOU LOVED ME, STAND BY ME NOW. *(Singing under Hartman's solo, below.)* DRAW STRENGTH FROM HEAVEN, O GOD OUR FATHER, THERE IS NO SHADOW OF TURNING WITH THEE. ALL I HAVE NEEDED, THY HAND HATH PROVIDED, AS THOU HAST BEEN, THOU FOREVER WILL BE.

**Hartman:** *(singing tenor solo over Chorus at measure ten.)* MY JESUS I LOVE THEE, I KNOW THOU ART MINE, FOR THEE ALL THE FOLLIES OF SIN I RESIGN. MY GRACIOUS REDEEMER MY SAVIOR ART THOU, IF EVER YOU LOVED ME, STAND BY ME NOW.

*(Hartman speaks to the audience again, now impassioned and clear and without notes. Choir hums song under Hartman's speech.)*

**Hartman:** It is a mistake for you to think that your minister is a man set aside and intended by nature to lead a blameless life. I have been tempted and have surrendered to temptation. It is only the hand of God, placed beneath my head, that has raised me up. As he raised me so also will he raise you. Do not despair. In your hour of sin raise your eyes to the skies and you will be again and again saved.

**Choir:** GIVE US THE POWER GIVE US THE STRENGTH STAY WITH US LORD IN OUR HOUR OF NEED, GIVE US THE POWER GIVE US THE STRENGTH, DELIVER YOUR MERCY, LORD UNTO ME. AMEN.

*(Dispersing.)*

**Townsperson:** Now that was interesting.

**Townsperson:** He's so handsome!

**Narrator:** And now began the real struggle in the soul of the minister.



# An Interview with the Director

Jessica Thebus, the director of *Winesburg, Ohio*, is an Artistic Associate with Steppenwolf Theatre. She holds a doctorate in Performance Studies from Northwestern University, where she has taught courses in performance. Jessica has also taught and designed courses at DePaul University, Columbia College, The University of Chicago, The Piven Theater Workshop and Center Theater. She has both directed original productions and performed with Center Theater, Redmoon Theater, Lookingglass Theater, Lifeline Theater, Caravan Productions and the Piven Theater Workshop, as well as touring internationally with the Bread and Puppet Theater.

## **What excites you about Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*?**

There are many things that excite me about the book. It is a real classic that is often overlooked--it's so much more than just a portrait of a small town. It's dark and personal and very unsentimental. The characters are so deeply and succinctly drawn. That's what makes it feel theatrical to me. We meet so many people who are similar to each other but with important differences that shade their stories in just the right way. Also, the fact that it seems like a collection of short stories but is really a novel in a short story form. The way that the story of George and Elizabeth Willard slowly emerges is very powerful.

## **Which one of the *Winesburg, Ohio* stories strikes you the most, and why?**

I love the unfolding of the mother's story, and the story of who she was as a girl--wanting to be an actor, dressing in men's clothes. And then the gradual demise of that dream as she did what was expected of her . . . Even though her story is sad, it contains so much passion that it gives the book almost an operatic dimension.

## **When did you first become a director? What led you on that path?**

I started directing in college, and I think what led me to it was the experience of teaching and leading theater workshops. I found that I had a certain clarity about the theatrical process and the truths we were telling on the stage as a teacher and director that I didn't have as an actor. I am excited about telling stories in an emotional and visual way and also love working with people. A rehearsal room is a great place to bring these things together.

## **What process took place in adapting the book into a play?**

### **As a director, how were you a part of that?**

I consulted often with the adapter and discussed which stories and characters to focus on and how best to bring them to life. I was fortunate to be very involved in this process and in the pre-production creative workshops.

## **Why was the choice made to use music and singing?**

It came out of the desire to capture the feeling of what is said and what is unsaid in *Winesburg, Ohio*. These people say one thing but feel another. They have so much passion and dedication to truth that they become twisted because it is all unexpressed. On the stage, you need to find a way to let the audience see the surface of the character as well as the interior--and song seems a great way to capture the passion and emotion of that repressed interior.

## **How do you feel the homogenous small-town atmosphere of *Winesburg, Ohio* is relevant to the multi-cultural Arts Exchange audience?**

The cultural issues are not the same but the psychology is. Hidden passions are not bound by race or religion. I think it's unusual in how deeply it deals with characters of many different ages and their experience of each other. It is also a wonderful coming-of-age story - George Willard. We see the world--his family, his friends, his employer, girls he likes. We follow his eyes, but then also see the whole stories of people looking back on their own lives. This combination makes it a story about the tangled love that connects people of all different ages.

# Adaptation Discussion Questions



- Looking at the excerpts on the previous pages, do you think adapter Eric Rosen was true to Anderson's intentions? What changes occurred and how do those changes affect the story?



- Cast your favorite book. Which well-known actors would you cast? Which people from your own life?



- What book would you like to see adapted?

