

Eng. 165 Report questions for *Our Town*

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1. *Our Town* is a philosophical/spiritual play that approaches its subject through the generic or typical rather than through the realistic individuality of its characters. How does *Our Town* succeed at representing life generically or typically instead of naturalistically? What is the point of such a representation? How does the third act help to answer this question? What philosophy about life does the play express?
2. Discuss the visual aspects of the play—props, staging, etc. How does the visual staging express the meaning of the play? What would be lost in a detailed realistic staging? Discuss the symbolism of the dramatic visual images.
3. Is there a dark side to *Our Town*? Does it have tragic or pathetic dimensions? Are these transcended by the overall vision of the play, or do they lurk beneath the surface, contributing to the play's power in an almost subversive way? This play has largely been relegated to high school or small local productions. Is it too simple or too dated to be produced seriously in a major production today? (There was a recent revival on Broadway, but some said it was primarily motivated by nostalgia.) Discuss the politics of this question. Could you imagine a satirical version of the play called *Our 'Burbs* or *Our 'Hood*?
4. Discuss the function of the Narrator. Does he represent God? If so, what kind of God/god might he be? If he is not "God," what is he? How does he fit with the quasi-Buddhist implications of the last act?