

About the play our town



Summary and Critical Analysis of “ Our Town” In the play, “ Our Town” Thornton Wilder depicts common American rural life on an emblematic structure of birth-marriage-death. The inevitability of death and decay prevails over the whole play, but the readers, concurrently, are reminded of the fact that life, yet, flows away its own pace in the face of such eternal decay and inevitable end. Life is paced with the struggle to survive fulfilling the needs, to find a companion, to love and then even to experience the sorrow caused by this eternal end. In fact Wilder suggests that since life flows away, one should live “ every, every minute” of it during their lifetime. Again the play deals with another theme that since life is transient, traditions and values of life also undergo changes.

In Act I, the stage that represents Gibbs and Webb families is largely inactive and lifeless because of the absence of daily activities. After the manager’s short description, daily activities begin on the stage. Throughout the whole play the milkman, the paperboy, Gibb’s family pantomime their typical activities and household chores. At the end of this Act, the audience comes to learn about the romantic affair between Emily and George.

Act II mainly deals with George and Emily’s ceremony and also their retrospective details of their relationship in the past. The manager narrates how things change along the passage of time. He describes how George and Emily go to schools together. In the past years affection grew between the two through different events such as being elected class president, treasurer, baseball leader, etc. Now they are going to be tied with marital bond. George’s future father-in-law informs him about the change in the traditional view about a bride. He says to George that his father advises him to use his wife as property in order to be happy in conjugal life. But he did

not follow his advice; he is happy in his conjugal life. It essentially reveals that traditional views change along the passage of time.

Act III deals with the funeral of Emily who died in childbirth. It is the most heart-touching part of the play. It crucially contributes to the development of the theme that life is valuable and should live his or her life to the fullest. Emily's spirit does not want to join with the dead. She wants to revive the most pleasing parts of her life. Only now, the audiences are aware of the value and pleasures of life.

The primary themes of the play have been worked out by the use of different imagery and symbols such as " morning", " natural cycles of life and death", " transience of life", " the time capsule", " the bond of marriage" etc. The characters of the play are found to be busy with their daily life; but the way they perform their activities reveals their inattentiveness to the artfulness of life in the town. Amid these daily affairs, people of the town perform the important activities -such choosing finding and finding life-partner, marriage, rearing up children, etc- of their life. Indeed life with all of its well and woes is accepted -by the town people as well as by the audience- as it is. But it is until Emily's spirit appears at the town with a view to revive her past; they perceive the true significance of their life.