

2007—2008 SEASON

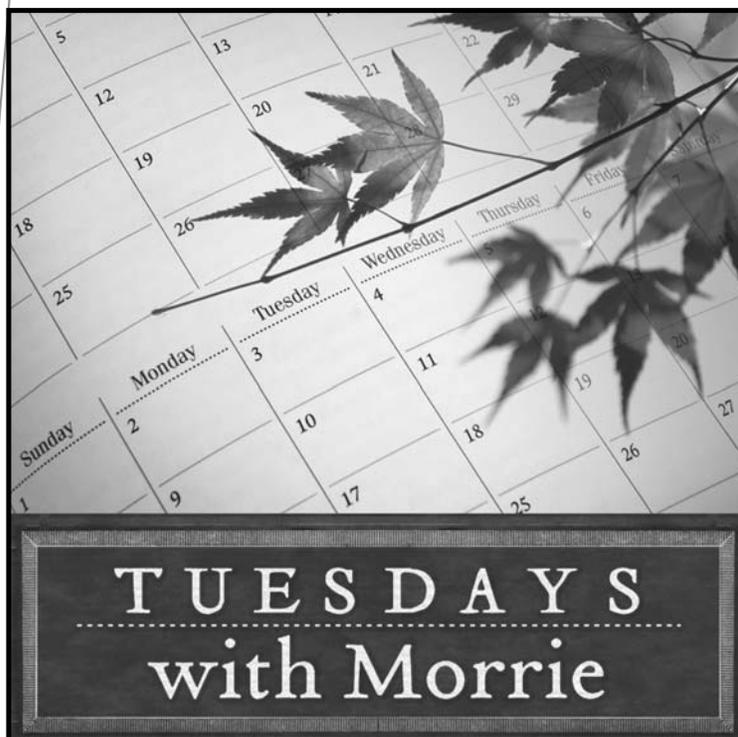
WU?[@]therep

TUESDAYS WITH MORRIE

by Jeffrey Hatcher and Mitch Albom
Directed by Mark Cuddy

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At The Rep, we know that life moves fast—okay, really fast. But we also know that some

things are worth slowing down for. We believe that live theatre is one of those pit stops worth making and are excited that you are going to stop by for a show. To help you get the most bang for your buck, we have put together **WU? @ THE REP**—an IM guide that will give you everything you need to know to get at the top of your theatergoing game—fast. You'll find character descriptions (**A/S/L**), a plot summary (**FYI**), biographical information on the playwright (**F2F**), historical context (**B4U**), and other bits and pieces (**HTH**). Most importantly, we'll have some ideas about what this all means **IRL**, anyway.

CU@therep!



The Teacher's Lounge

In an effort to make our educational materials more accessible to students and easier for educators to incorporate into the classroom, our study guide is written in a student-oriented format. We hope that you will circulate this guide among your students in the weeks preceding your visit to The Rep, encouraging them to browse it before and after class and as time allows, using it as a launch point for both pre- and post-performance discussions. You may also want to visit our website, www.repstl.org, for additional information including educational games, activity suggestions and behind-the-scenes information.

Any materials, either from this guide or from our website may be reproduced for use in the classroom. As always, we appreciate your making live theatre a part of your classroom experience and welcome your feedback and questions.

NEATO!

Show Me Standards: CA 2, 3, 5, 6; FA 2, 3, 4, 5; HP 1, 2, 3 and Illinois Learning Standards: 1, 2, 5, 23, 25, 27.

MIHYAP: TOP TEN WAYS TO STAY CONNECTED AT THE REP

10. TBA Ushers will seat your school or class as a group, so even if you are dying to mingle with the group from the all girls school that just walked in the door, stick with your friends until you have been shown your section in the theatre.

9. SITD The house lights will dim immediately before the performance begins and then go dark. Fight off that oh-so-immature urge to whisper, giggle like a grade schooler, or yell at this time and during any other blackouts in the show.

8. SED Before the performance begins, turn off all cell phones, pagers, beepers and watch alarms. If you need to text, talk or dial back during intermission, please make sure to click off before the show resumes.

7. TMI Not to sound like your mom, but "if you need to go now, you needed to go then." Leaving the theatre during the performance is disruptive, so take care of any personal needs before the show starts.

6. RTM When you arrive at the theatre, read the production program. It's like a deluxe version of liner notes and a free souvenir, all in one.

5. P-ZA? NW! Though your ability to eat ten slices at one sitting may impress your friends, no one wants to listen to you chew, slurp or smack, so please leave all food, drink and gum outside the theatre.

4. TLK-2-U-L8R We know that you will be dying to discuss what you see onstage with your friends, but please wait until intermission. Any talking—even whispering—is very distracting for both the actors onstage and the audience seated around you.

3. LOL Without you, we really wouldn't have a show. It's your job to laugh when a scene is funny or maybe even shed a tear or two in a tender moment. However, since you are not the audience at *The Jerry Springer Show* please refrain from inappropriate responses such as talking, whistling, making catcalls or singing along with the performers.

2. SOP While it's great that you want a celeb picture of your day at The Rep, the theatre is off-limits to the paparazzi. Flash photography interrupts the performance and along with videorecording is prohibited by Actors Equity rules. You can sneak a peek at production photos on our website, www.repstl.org.

1. LLTA Let the actors know that you respect their work by remaining for the curtain call at the end of the performance. Show your appreciation through applause.

ALS

MITCH ALBOM is a 30-something sports writer and graduate of Brandeis University. While he always wanted to be a jazz musician, Mitch instead leads the fast-paced life of a sports journalist, enjoying the success and adventure of being very good at what he does.

MORRIE SCHWARTZ is a 70-something former professor of Mitch's, recently diagnosed with ALS. Despite the terminal nature of his condition, he insists on living out each day to its fullest instead of just dying quietly.



READ MORE ABOUT IT

We encourage you to examine these topics in-depth by exploring the following books, DVDs and websites.

Albom, Mitch. *Tuesdays with Morrie*. Anchor Reprint, 2005. Read the best-selling novel upon which the play is based.

Albom, Mitch. *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*. Hyperion, 2003. Try another of Albom's works with this novel about the meaning of life to both an individual and everyone he or she touches.

Schwartz, Morrie. *Morrie: In His Own Words*. Delta, 1997. Hear the story again, this time from Morrie's point of view.

***Tuesdays with Morrie*. 89 minutes, Buena Vista Home Entertainment, 2003, DVD.** Starring Jack Lemmon and Hank Azaria, this made-for-TV offering brings Albom's novel to life.

www.alsa.org The website of the ALS association includes information about the disease but also on research and hope for a cure.

Bak, Richard. *Lou Gehrig—An American Classic*. Taylor Publishing, 1995. Learn about the life and career about both the baseball player and the man fighting ALS.

BY

BASED ON THE best-selling novel of the same name, *Tuesdays with Morrie* is the chronicle of the last weeks of a relationship between Mitch and his dying college professor, Morrie. Morrie was Mitch's sociology professor, his favorite professor, in college. The two formed a very strong bond and promised to keep in touch after Mitch graduated. However, as so often happens, life became busy and the two lost contact for several years. In the years they were apart, Mitch went through a lot. We find out that he left college and started working as a jazz pianist. Living in the same apartment building as his beloved Uncle Mike, Mitch had plenty of musical adventures until Mike got sick with cancer. It was only a few months until Mike died, and at that point Mitch gave up his music and returned to school to pursue a degree in journalism. He threw himself into his studies, and after graduation, threw himself into his work. It wasn't long before the one-time jazz man was a sports reporter covering everything from the Super Bowl to the Olympics. He forgot about his former life, and about Morrie, until one night he was channel surfing and caught a story on *Nightline*. It was a story about a man who was living with ALS—Lou Gehrig's disease. The man was Morrie Schwartz.

AFTER SEEING his old professor on TV, Mitch is struck with the desire to reunite with the man who had meant so much to him. He picks up the phone and contacts Morrie, who invites him to visit the next week when Mitch is in town for work. When

Mitch arrives, he sees his old friend bent over a walker, struggling to get around on his own. He stays for lunch and discovers that Morrie must have round-the-clock care. He has a nurse to help him with everything from muscle massage to trips to the bathroom. The two men start to catch up on lost time. Morrie finds out that Mitch was once a musician, but is now a sports writer. He listens as Mitch tells about his life, his job, his fiancée—every moment filled with

something. He listens to everything, but he has one important question for his former student: "Mitch, are you at peace with yourself?" Mitch has no idea how to answer this. He hasn't thought about anything but deadlines and paychecks for so long, that he is thrown by

the very personal question. He makes an excuse to leave and heads out.

SOME TIME LATER, after weeks of hearing Morrie's voice in his head, Mitch decides to stop in for another visit. Morrie is in worse shape; he needs Mitch to help him shift in his chair so his muscles don't get sore. They talk, this time about regret and death. Mitch participates a little more in the conversation; he's not quite so afraid now. They agree that Mitch will come back and visit more often, in fact, he'll come back every Tuesday until there's no Morrie to come back to. They'll have a new class—a class about life. In the weeks that follow, both men learn a lot about each other and the world. Mitch discovers what he may have been missing in his own existence and learns what makes a life truly worth living.





TUESDAYS WITH MORRIE closely follows the novel of the same name, written by Mitch Albom. The story recounts intimate moments that occurred between Mitch and his mentor, Morrie, in the final months of Morrie's life.

THE REAL-LIFE Mitch Albom was born in New Jersey in 1958, but he grew up primarily in Philadelphia. Just like in the play, Albom earned his Bachelor of Arts from Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts in 1979. After taking one of Morrie's courses Albom was hooked and his sociology degree reflected his heavy study with Morrie. Mitch would go on to get master's degrees in journalism and business administration from Columbia University.

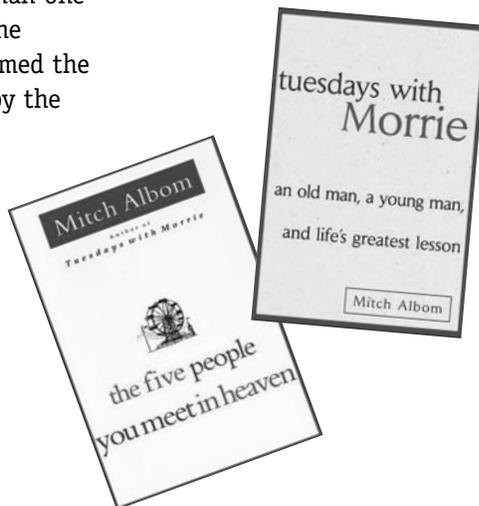
AS IN THE PLAY, Mitch was always interested in music and spent some time after Brandeis trying to make it as a jazz musician, working briefly as a nightclub singer and pianist. Albom also spent some time as an amateur boxer before moving into sports writing.

MITCH'S REAL-LIFE success mirrors that of the play, as Albom has earned various accolades as a writer, including winning an unprecedented seven Sports Editors of America (APSE) awards for his work (no one has before or since won any more than one of such award). Mitch also earned the highest honor in his field, being named the #1 Sports Columnist in the Nation by the APSE.

ALBOM CONTINUES to host two nationally syndicated radio talk shows, and is on ESPN's *Sports Reporters* every Sunday. Mitch may also be found as a regular contributor to other TV and radio shows.

WHILE THE PLAY chronicles Albom's successes in sports writing, Mitch also has spent time as a songwriter and lyricist. He has written music for a television movie directed by Arnold Schwarzenegger, and most recently wrote the lyrics for a song recorded by singer/songwriter Warren Zevon, featuring David Crosby on backup vocals.

MITCH ALBOM has also written a number of books, including bestsellers *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*, *Tuesdays with Morrie* and *BO*. His work spans various subjects, from the careers of sports figures (like *Fab Five*, a look at the story of the early 1990s phenom class of freshman at University of Michigan including future NBA stars Chris Webber and Juwan Howard) to intimately personal examinations of life and death as in *Tuesdays with Morrie*.





MORTARBOARD: a cap topped by a stiff, flat, square piece from which a tassel hangs, worn as part of graduation attire

SOCIOLOGY: the study of the origin, development, organization and functioning of human society

JERRY RUBIN: a high-profile American social activist during the 1960s and 1970s

ANGELA DAVIS: an American socialist organizer, professor who was associated with the Black Panther Party (BPP) and a one-time member the Communist Party USA

DEFERMENT: a temporary exemption from induction into military service

YIDDISH: a German language with a vocabulary from Hebrew and Slavic languages, spoken mainly by Jews in eastern and central Europe and by Jewish emigrants from these regions

ANGST: a feeling of anxiety or apprehension often accompanied by depression

ALS / LOU GEHRIG'S DISEASE: a chronic, progressive disease marked by gradual degeneration of the nerve cells in the central nervous system that control voluntary muscle movement

HUMMUS: a paste or dip made of mashed chickpeas and often eaten with pita bread

TABOULI: a salad of fine-ground bulgur, parsley, tomatoes, green onions, mint, olive oil and lemon juice

JAUNTY: easy and sprightly in manner or bearing

ADLAI STEVENSON: an American politician noted for support of liberal causes in the Democratic party; lost two races for president against Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1952 and 1956

NARCISSIST: one who is fascinated with oneself, expresses excessive self-love and vanity

APHORISM: a brief saying about a general truth or opinion

HOWARD COSELL: an American sports journalist known for an abrasive personality and tendency to give his opinions

ERUDITE: characterized by great knowledge; scholarly

CARPE DIEM (OR SEIZE THE DAY)

In *Tuesdays with Morrie*, Morrie instructs, “Everyday, have a little bird on your shoulder that asks, ‘Is today the day?’ Am I ready? Am I being the person I want to be?” As Mitch finds himself wrapped up in the hustle of his daily grind, Morrie encourages him to stop and seize the day. Morrie asks Mitch to really think about what’s important to him, and take the opportunities to invest his time in those things. Instead of looking ahead at what he wants to be, Morrie tells Mitch to be what he wants to be today. *Tuesdays with Morrie* shows us that while working toward future goals should be a part of all of our plans, we should not overlook what it is that we can do today.

GIVING

As the end of his life nears, Morrie devotes a lot of time to responding to letters sent to him, focusing on the thoughts and concerns of others as opposed to his own affliction. While Mitch cannot seem to understand why Morrie simply doesn’t allow people to just feel sorry for him, Morrie states, “Mitch, why would I take like that? Taking makes me feel like I’m dying. Giving makes me feel like I’m living.” *Tuesdays with Morrie* reminds us that we all have something to give to those around us—our time, our encouragement and whatever special talents that we may have. The play encourages us to be generous with our gifts, as there are always those less fortunate than ourselves.

HOPE

A major part of *Tuesdays with Morrie* is how the characters deal with the imminent death of Morrie. Throughout the play, Morrie refuses to take his condition lying down. In fact, he says, “When you’re in bed, you’re dead.” Despite knowing that his death is upon him, Morrie approaches each day bravely and ferociously. Regardless of his own condition, he continues to mentor Mitch and respond to letters from around the country. *Tuesdays with Morrie* forces us to take a look at ourselves and not to allow ourselves to be depressed about our problems. As Morrie shows us, there is always hope and something to live for.

LOVE

Mitch often wonders why Morrie has chosen to spend so much time with him and not another, more loyal student. It is beyond Mitch how Morrie can forgive him for losing touch after he was done with school. Morrie wisely says, “I forgave you long ago. That’s what you do with those you love...Forgive everyone everything.” *Tuesdays with Morrie* reminds us to appreciate those loved ones in our lives, and not to allow anything to keep us from those most dear to us.

B4



IN *TUESDAYS WITH MORRIE*, Mitch watches helplessly as Morrie rapidly succumbs to ALS. Throughout the play, Mitch deals with a mixed bag of emotions—confusion, guilt, anger and sadness (among others) as he watches his beloved friend and mentor die. Throughout the play, Morrie asks the seemingly tough-guy Mitch to be “touchy-feely,” and not afraid to cry. As happens to individuals in real life, Mitch is often ashamed or unable to express his emotions. Sometimes he just doesn’t seem to know exactly what he’s feeling.

GRIEF AND MOURNING, while not always understood, are universal human responses to the loss of a loved one. How you respond to the loss of a loved one is based heavily on who you are as a person, your relationship to the deceased and your background growing up. What’s important to remember is that there is no right or wrong way to cope with the loss of a loved one, and that there’s nothing to be ashamed of or afraid of in responding to and acknowledging your feelings.

SCIENTIFICALLY BROKEN DOWN, grief has three phases. The first is initial shock or disbelief, as an individual simply cannot believe the death has occurred. This phase may last anywhere from minutes to weeks. The second phase is one of expression. This phase may last anywhere from weeks to months, and is generally harder to pin down in terms of what’s actually occurring inside. This is typically the phase where an individual faces an array of emotions—just as Mitch did throughout the play. Often depression occurs in phase two as well. Phase three is the resolution, often after months or even years, when a person is able to finally accept what has happened.

WHILE GRIEF is an intensely individual experience, there are some typical hallmarks or symptoms of grief that people share. Those grieving often experience anger, disbelief, shock and numbness. Often there are feelings of guilt and intense sadness. It is not uncommon to be preoccupied with the deceased, sometimes even seeing visions or hearing the voice of the deceased. Typically sleep patterns and appetite are disturbed, sometimes there’s even weight loss associated with grief.

GETTING OVER GRIEF experienced at the loss of a loved one is never easy, but when an individual is ready to move on there are a number of steps or ways to ensure a return to normal life. One of the first steps to coming out of grieving is identifying and expressing feelings related to the loss (anger, guilt, anxiety, helplessness, sadness). Another part of getting over the grieving process is accepting the loss and talking about it. Resuming normal activities without the deceased and making decisions alone may also help getting over grief. It is important for the individual to continue to form new relationships, while not necessarily forgetting the relationship with the deceased, but acknowledging a moving on and continued interaction with others. An explanation of the grieving process and how it is affecting the individual may also be effective in helping one conquer grief.

GRIEF IS FELT across cultures around the world as a universal human response to the loss of a loved one, though the process and experience may differ from culture to culture. One of the things that best helps humans cope with grief is belief in an afterlife. Here are some ways that different cultures address death and what comes next.

HINDUISM

Death isn't thought of as merely an end to life, but as a part of a continual cycle of reincarnation. In death the soul sheds its body and takes on another body until it reaches an eternal resting place. This can be the peace of a personal God, but usually means dissolving wholly into the abyss of Brahman. One of the traditions in this religion is for the eldest sons of the deceased and other close male relatives to shave their heads as a sign of their grief and cleansing.

SIKHISM

While they don't believe in reincarnation, Sikhs also view death in a positive light. They believe that death opens the door to complete union with God. Sikhs do not bury their deceased, rather they cremate them and immerse the ashes in running water.

ISLAM

The Islamic holy book, the Koran, teaches that salvation depends on a man's actions in life. Like many other religions, however, repentance can turn evil toward virtue. Muslims believe that each person has a different life and different degrees of insight into God's truth. However, infidels who are presented with the truth and reject it will be given no mercy. Muslims believe that burial of the deceased should take place before noon, and that the body should be buried with the head towards Mecca.

JUDAISM

There is no notion of salvation in Jewish belief, and the notion of an afterlife is not well defined in the Old Testament. Jews believe that a moral life lived here on earth is the proper concern of man, and that final judgement should be left to God. In a common Jewish expression of grief, mourners often cut a slit in their outer clothes.

BUDDHISM

Buddhism sees ignorance, not sin, as the barrier to salvation. Life is basically suffering, and escape from this suffering is possible by following the noble path. Death is introduction to existence in another state. Buddhists believe that life/death is an endless cycle until an individual reaches Enlightenment, at which point the individual exists permanently thereafter in Enlightenment.

CHRISTIANITY

Christians believe that God has given everyone the gift of eternal life. The big question is where each person will spend this eternity. Heaven is a glorious place of everlasting peace in the presence of God, but Hell is a location where sinners are punished without any hope of relief. Different denominations of Christianity have differing beliefs on the afterlife. For example, Roman Catholics teach that souls first pass through Purgatory. In Purgatory souls must suffer for a time to be cleansed of their sins until they are free to enter Heaven. The duration of this time can be lessened by prayers of the living.

HUMANISM

Humanists believe that there is one life to live, and they do not believe in any life after death. They view death as the natural and inevitable end to life, and they focus on living happy and fulfilling lives while helping others to do so as well.





IN *TUESDAYS WITH MORRIE*, Morrie struggles through the rapid decline of Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), also commonly referred to as Lou Gehrig's disease. Lou Gehrig was a famous baseball player whose career and life was ended because of the disease.

IN STRINGENT medical terms, ALS is a progressive neurodegenerative disease that attacks nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord resulting in muscle weakness and atrophy. What that essentially means is that ALS progressively cuts off the path of communication and nourishment between the brain and voluntary muscles throughout the body. ALS is a fatal disease, and there is no known cure or treatment.

BASICALLY, YOUR BODY moves in the following way—1) Your brain says, "Move," 2) Motor neurons carry the message from the brain, down the spinal cord to the muscle, 3) The muscle receives the message and moves. ALS breaks down step number two, rapidly degenerating motor neurons until they no longer carry the message to muscles. Unable to receive signals from the brain, this renders the muscles unable to move. When muscles are unable to move, they atrophy or wither away, leaving the individual suffering from ALS paralyzed.

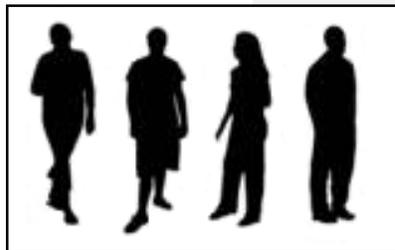
ALS DOES NOT affect the brain itself or involuntary muscle functions like the beating of the heart or digestion of food. It does, however, affect breathing, which as

Morrie states in the play, usually is the final stage of the disease. While breathing may seem involuntary, it can be controlled by conscious effort—you can hold your breath. True involuntary systems like heartbeat and digestion of food cannot be consciously controlled.

THE DISEASE moves quickly, and most diagnosed with ALS live somewhere between three and five years after diagnosis. While the disease does not treat any two individuals exactly the same, the afflicted usually find themselves rapidly losing the ability to move until they are essentially left paralyzed.

THERE ARE 15 new cases of ALS a day in America alone. It's estimated that approximately 30,000 Americans suffer from the disease at any given time. The disease seems to afflict men more often than women (60% of individuals with ALS are men), and 93% of those suffering from the disease are Caucasian. While the cause of ALS is uncertain, it is known that the disease is not contagious.

THOUGH THERE IS NO known cure or real treatment for the disease, promising new advances are being made in ALS research everyday. Medications are giving patients some hope, and a continual stream of experimental drugs hold potential for tomorrow's treatment of the disease.



- ▶ Do you know anyone with ALS or another terminal disease? How are they living with this challenge?
- ▶ How does a disease like ALS affect the individual's family? How might they cope?
- ▶ How do you think you would handle it if a friend or family member was diagnosed with a terminal disease? What is your role as their supporter?

WHEN NOT spending time with Morrie, Mitch seems to be pretty involved in his career—sports journalism. As a successful journalist, his career takes him all over the world, talking with sports stars in baseball, tennis, hockey, basketball and more. While the play makes it look pretty cool, what's sports journalism like in real life?

SPORTS JOURNALISM is the field of reporting that deals with sports, including print journalism (newspapers, magazines, etc.), radio, television and internet venues. At some newspapers, the sports department is mockingly called the “toy department” because sports journalists follow games instead of what some consider more important stuff. Sports journalism continues to carve out its place as an essential product in news media, however, as the world of sports continues to grow in its own wealth and importance.

AS MITCH STRUGGLES to balance hectic demands of his career in the play, so too do real sports journalists. Sports reporters face the same grueling deadlines that other journalists face, but the timing of sporting events (late in the day—closer to deadlines) often pushes sports reporters to the limit. Despite the abbreviated time frame in which sports journalists work, they are required to use the same tools as other journalists and are held to the same high level of ethics.

SPORTS JOURNALISM isn't just about scores and highlights; sports reporters are responsible for finding the story in the game. Sports journalism often transcends the game itself, taking on a socio-political significance with stories like Jackie Robinson breaking the color barrier in baseball. Recent sports journalists have broken stories like the use of steroids and athletes' salaries.



DOES SPORTS JOURNALISM sound like something you may want to pursue? Here's a quick rundown of how a day might go if you were a sports writer:

PRE-GAME

Think this is just about turning on the TV or driving to the game? NO! Pre-game includes you tracking down the rosters, statistics, coaches' names and schedules for both teams. This information isn't going to be your entire story, but it will be an important part of making your story more interesting and relatable. Also, before the game starts, you'll want to make sure that you get all of your background interviews. This will help you find the interesting story threads in the game, and add some spice to the statistics.

GAME TIME

Being a sports journalist means you're doing more than watching the game—you're keeping stats and watching the stories develop before you. This means you're making notes, thinking about the stuff you uncovered in pre-game and creatively considering what you'll write about after the game.

POST GAME

After the game you'll want to get your final interviews from heroes, coaches or any other individuals you followed. Now that all the legwork is done, it's time to write the story. Write as much as you can on any and all stories you considered, as it will help you when you move forward!

POST-POST GAME

Think you're done after you write your story? Not quite! It's time to re-read and re-write, cleaning things up and putting on some polish.



SWDXT?

"It is hard to find your way in life. The accidental journeys, the unexpected questions. We can't always do it alone. We need teachers."

- Mitch refers to Morrie as his teacher, but he doesn't seem to mean it only as a person who teaches at a school. Morrie is more of a "life" teacher. Do you know anyone like this? Why might a mentor like Morrie be helpful to have?

"Then Mike got sick. Pancreatic cancer...He couldn't handle it. And I couldn't handle it either...He was my hero. I didn't want to see him sick and weak!"

- Cancer can be a long and painful disease for those who are diagnosed, but diseases like this take their toll on more than just the patient. How might Mitch have been affected by his uncle's illness? How did this change his life and future?

"I look up, and I glimpse a figure, a small old man under a Japanese maple. I know deep down I should drop the phone, run to Morrie, give him a hug. But I don't, I got work to finish."

- Mitch wants to run to Morrie and comfort him, but he keeps working instead. Why does he ignore his instinct? What is holding him back? Have you ever had a time when you've been held back from expressing how you truly feel? How did you handle it?

"I'll ask again. Are you at peace with yourself? Are you trying to be as human as you can be?"

- Mitch is a bit thrown by this very personal question. What do you think Morrie means "be as human as you can be?" How can you be at peace with your life? Do you think Mitch is?

"It's the whole problem with this culture: More things is good, more money is good, more more is good!...Skip the shopping mall, have some friends over, exchange ideas!"

- What is Morrie trying to say about the way we live? It sounds like he believes things are replacing people in our lives. How can we avoid making material things more important than people? How can we reconnect with each other? Why is that important?

"The newest things in this room are you and my wheelchair. But this room is so changed now. It has filled up with such love and warmth and honesty and tears. This is a wealthy home."

- Clearly Morrie believes that it takes more than money to make a person wealthy. What would you say are truly valuable things in your life? Are these things you can buy or are they free?

"...if you wait until the last minute for the famous last words, well, you better have great timing. The wise and wonderful things you want to say at the end are the kind of things you should say all your life."

- Mitch wishes he could have said something meaningful to his uncle Mike before he died, but he never got the chance. Why do you think people put off saying what they really want to the people they care about? What are they afraid will happen if they go ahead and tell people how they feel? Is there something you'd like to say to someone that you've been holding back?