

2010 – 2011 SEASON

WU?@therep

OVER THE TAVERN

by Tom Dudzick
Directed by Michael Evan Haney

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**THE REPERTORY THEATRE
OF ST. LOUIS**
Repertory

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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 (**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, 7; FA 2, 3, 4, 5; SS 2, 6
and Illinois Learning Standards: 1, 2, 5, 15, 16, 18, 25, 27.

WELCOME!

The desire to learn, insatiable when awakened, can sometimes lie dormant until touched by the right teacher or the right experience. We at The Rep are grateful to have the opportunity to play a role supporting you as you awaken the desire for learning in your students.

We have all had memorable students who, in challenging the world around them, challenged us as well. Rudy Pazinski is one of those students. The Pazinskis give us a portrait of a family in 1959 that still rings true today. The dynamics of home, school and church cause Rudy to question the expectations levied upon him. As your students identify with Rudy and embrace his rebellion, they also see the price paid and the lessons learned.

It would be a good idea to take a minute on the bus to give your students these quick theatre etiquette reminders:

- This show has an intermission; there will be time for bathroom breaks before the show and partway through.
- The actors can hear the audience and appreciate the laughter, gasps and quiet attention to action. However, talking, moving around and eating is very distracting to others and can dampen the energy of what is happening on stage.
- Pictures, phone calls and texting are not allowed at any time during the performance.

Live theatre won't allow your students to take a passive role—they must work with us to create the experience which takes the learning deeper. Our unique ability to fuse words and images onstage allows your students to explore new ideas as well as excites their imaginations. We will do our part so your students will be stirred to understandings and self-awareness while delving into new and familiar worlds. You are doing your part by using The Rep to extend your intellectual and aesthetic curriculum. Thank you!

Marsha

Marsha Coplon
Director of Education

AVAIL

Though he's an honest, hard-working man, CHET PAZINSKI has a hard time making ends meet and supporting his family. This sometimes makes him very frustrated, putting him at a distance from the ones he loves.

ELLEN PAZINSKI is the glue that struggles to hold her family together. Between Chet and the kids, she sure has her work cut out for her!

Like any good nun, SISTER CLARISSA has a steady (and strong!) hand for disciplining young soldiers for Christ.

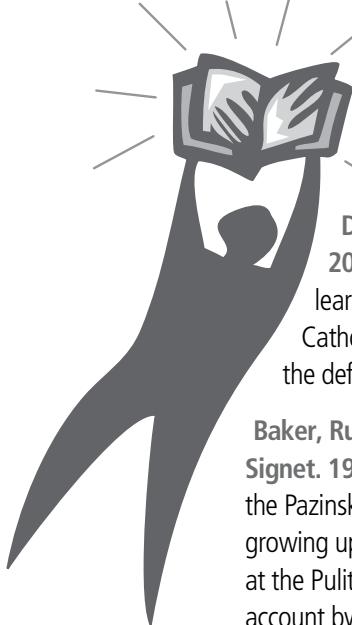
A bright, curious young man with an active imagination, 12-year-old RUDY seems to be asking all the "wrong" questions—causing everyone loads of trouble.

Though he may be cognitively disabled, 13-year-old GEORGIE possesses a jubilant spirit and an enthusiasm for each of his family members. Be careful what you say around him though, he's a little sponge who soaks up everything!

Like any teenager, 15-year-old EDDIE is fixated on girls, dirty magazines and the impure thoughts that inevitably come with both!

At 16, ANNIE is the oldest of the Pazinski children but has no more figured out than the others. Though she doesn't say much, there seems to be something stirring beneath her shy exterior.

READ MORE ABOUT IT



We encourage you to explore the following books, movies and websites for more information.

Hahn, Scott. *Catholic Bible Dictionary*. Doubleday Religion. 2009. Interested in learning more about the Catholic faith? Find out in the definitive reference.

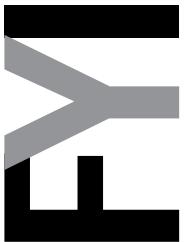
Baker, Russell. *Growing Up*. Signet. 1992. You've seen how the Pazinskis have dealt with growing up, why not take a look at the Pulitzer Prize-winning account by Russell Baker?

www.religionfacts.com/
Curious about a religion but don't know who to ask about it? Or maybe you want to see what else is out there besides what you already know? Check out ReligionFacts.com for information on religions spanning the globe!

www.vatican.va/
What's up with the Pope? Check it out online at the official Vatican website!

www.itgetsbetterproject.com/
Growing up is tough enough, but it's even more difficult if you're different. Check out the It Gets Better Project and find out what you can do to help raise awareness and tolerance while decreasing bullying.

www.catholic.org/
Want to stay abreast of what's happening in the Catholic community? Look no further than Catholic.org for up-to-the-minute news and information!



SPOILER ALERT

WHERE CAN YOU always find Rudy after school? Being held after with Sister Clarissa, of course! He can't ever seem to learn his catechism; he'd much rather play the funny guy and do Ed Sullivan impersonations. Sister isn't having any of his antics, however, as she condemns him to an indefinite number of after school detentions (or at least until Rudy learns his catechism).

LATER, BACK AT Rudy's home (which is right above his father's tavern), the kids are in their usual state of disarray as Ellen attempts to pull everything together for dinner. Georgie is sitting too close to the television, Rudy is obsessing over comic books, Eddie is fussing over dirty magazines (and dirty thoughts) and Annie is being ignored. When Chet walks through the front door, he adds to the mayhem—he's forgotten his contribution to dinner—the main course (spaghetti). A huge fight explodes between Chet and Ellen, ending with everyone fleeing the dinner table.

THAT NIGHT, after things have cooled off, Chet and Ellen attempt to make amends. They dance sweetly in the dark until Ellen suggests the notion of taking it easier on the kids. Chet becomes wildly defensive as he refuses to believe that his household isn't adequate.

ANOTHER AFTERNOON after school means another visit for Rudy and Sister. This time, Rudy seems to have actually been studying up. He can't help but question, however, his blind memorization. When Sister asks the questions of the catechism he begins to ask them back or answer them with his own imaginative speculations. While this would usually earn Rudy some corporal punishment (a ruler across the hand), he takes a stand today and refuses. He tells Sister that he no longer wishes to be a solider for Christ.



THAT EVENING, the Pazinski household is abuzz—Sister Clarissa is apparently coming over for a “surprise” visit. Everyone has their own apprehension over the visit—is she going to point out Eddie’s obscene drawing behind the dumpster? What will she make of Annie’s hair? And who taught Georgie to repeat foul language?!

THE CHARGED ATMOSPHERE overloads when Sister arrives as she’s come to reprimand Rudy for his behavior earlier in the afternoon. Ellen threatens to pull Rudy from school, Eddie tells his father off (right before running away) and Chet’s series of mini-explosions crescendos with a massive blowout. Amidst all the excitement, Sister collapses. Rudy rushes to her aid and administers her medication.

WHILE THINGS REMAIN volatile at the Pazinski household (Eddie is still gone, Annie is apparently baring herself before her window every night and Chet vows to put the house on lockdown to keep things under control), Rudy goes to visit Sister in the hospital. The two have a surprising meeting of the minds, as Sister encourages Rudy to keep causing trouble and asking questions. Chet shows up to visit, and Sister is forced to recount a chilling moment in her history (and Chet’s).

DAYS LATER, the family is all gathered back home for dinner (Eddie has come back for good), waiting for Chet to bring home the spaghetti. Will he triumphantly walk through the door with dinner and finally bring the family together in the happiness that they deserve? Or will the cycle of troubles continue?



TAVERN: an establishment for the sale of beer and other drinks to be consumed on the premises, sometimes also serving food

PAGAN: a person holding religious beliefs other than those of the main world religions (often used by Christians to refer to non-Christians in a negative way)

SALVATION: deliverance from sin and its consequences

DAMNATION: condemnation to eternal punishment in hell

CORPORAL: of or relating to the human body (corporal punishment consists of physical punishment such as caning or flogging)

ADMONISH: to warn or reprimand someone firmly

IGNORANT: lacking knowledge or awareness in general; uneducated or unsophisticated

CATECHISM: a summary of principles of Christian religion in the form of questions and answers, used for the instruction of faith

VENIAL: slight or pardonable

MORTAL: causing or liable to cause death; fatal

PURGATORY: a place or state of suffering inhabited by the souls of sinners who are atoning for their sins before going to heaven

BEEHIVE: a woman's domed and lacquered hairstyle, especially popular in the 1960s

KIELBASA: a type of highly seasoned Polish sausage, typically containing garlic

SAUERKRAUT: chopped cabbage that has been pickled in brine

HAREM: a group of females sharing a single mate

BLASPHEMY: the act or offense of speaking sacrilegiously about God or sacred things

THEOLOGY: the study of the nature of God and religious belief

VEXED: annoyed, frustrated or worried

INDELIBLE: not able to be forgotten or removed

MONSIGNOR: the title of various senior Roman Catholic positions, such as a prelate or an officer of papal court

ULCER: an open sore on an external or internal surface of the body, caused by a break in the skin or mucous membrane that fails to heal (typically in reference to the stomach)

CONVOLUTED: extremely complex and difficult to follow

NOVITIATE: the period or state of being a novice, especially in a religious order

HEMORRHAGE: an escape of blood from a ruptured blood vessel, especially when profuse

ED SULLIVAN: host of television's *The Ed Sullivan Show* 1948-71, he gave national exposure to many performers who at the time were on their way to stardom, including Elvis Presley and the Beatles

ROBERT YOUNG: American television, film and radio actor, best known for his roles in *Father Knows Best* and *Marcus Welby, MD*

JACK PAAR: American radio and television comedian and talk show host, best known for his stint as host of *The Tonight Show*

MENTALLY RETARDED (or Cognitively Disabled): the clinical term for a generalized disorder, characterized by significantly impaired cognitive functioning and deficits in two or more adaptive behaviors that appears before adulthood





ED SULLIVAN

SO WHO IS this guy that Rudy keeps impersonating ... this Ed Sullivan character? And why does he keep impersonating him throughout the play?

EDWARD VINCENT SULLIVAN is best known for his work on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, a variety television program which ran from 1948 through 1971. Sullivan is often credited with discovering and disseminating the most thrilling and innovative talent in popular culture during his run, introducing and spreading the word about acts like the Beatles and Elvis Presley. *The Ed Sullivan Show* ran longer than any other show of its kind—an astonishing 23 years.

ED WASN'T ALWAYS a wildly successful television host—he actually started as a newspaper journalist. He originally worked as a sportswriter, tapping into his love for boxing. He moved closer to his calling, however, when soon-to-be rival (an original gossip columnist and one of the most powerful entertainment reporters of his time) Walter Winchell left his newspaper for another. Sullivan took on the theatre column, focusing on Broadway shows and gossip surrounding them. His column quickly picked up steam and gained influence, and he became known as a powerful starmaker in his own right.

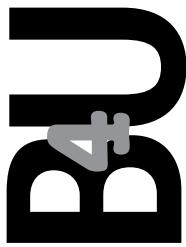
AFTER A DECADE OR SO of success in the papers, Sullivan was hired by CBS to take on *Toast of the Town*, a Sunday evening variety show (a type of television show that featured a variety of talent acts, including musical acts, magicians, juggling, sketch comedy and much more—think *America's Got Talent*). Though he was known for being kind of stiff and not having much of a personality (which led to him being rampantly impersonated, even on his own show), Ed Sullivan was highly successful (the show would soon be renamed *The Ed Sullivan Show*). He had a



keen sense for what viewers wanted and a deft eye for identifying talent. He wasn't afraid to feature contrasting and diverse forms of talent on the same show, from juggling to opera. He was also known for not discriminating in selecting performers, as he often defied pressure to exclude black musicians from his show (the Jackson 5 first appeared on his show). He also openly welcomed counterculture artists like The Doors, Janis Joplin and Marvin Gaye.

WHILE HE WAS FUNNY, innovative and extremely talented at what he did, Ed Sullivan was not without his vices. In particular, he had a knack for being easily offended and for holding grudges. Many popular artists ended up on the wrong side of Sullivan's wrath, including Jackie Mason, Buddy Holly, The Rolling Stones and Frank Sinatra. In many instances, Sullivan would ban from his show those he had a problem with; though in most cases the banned folks were able to make amends.

OVER THE COURSE of his illustrious career, Ed Sullivan introduced the world to more than 10,000 new performers. He was the nation's talent scout laureate and provided a place every Sunday evening for America to come together and be entertained as one.



TELEVISION TIME

BELIEVE IT OR NOT, television was not always the all-consuming media and entertainment giant that it is today. In our current society, most of us cannot imagine a day without a TV for weather forecasts, news reports or simply our favorite show. While the technology for television has been around for almost 100 years, it was only about 60 years ago that TV really took hold, becoming a household necessity for nearly every American.

THOUGH THE FIRST regularly scheduled television service in the United States began in July of 1928, it took quite a while for the new medium to catch on. At first, broadcasts were experimental and included radio shows over silent, static images. Moving pictures of faces or wind-up toys in motion came a few months later, and then in September, the first live television drama appeared when the one-act play *The Queen's Messenger* was shown.

DURING THE Golden Age of television, the three major networks (NBC, CBS and ABC) began to thrive when AT&T finished a nationwide system of coaxial cable, making transmitting signals easier. During the 1950s, signals could reach into the most remote corners of the US and began to give the nation a shared experience with everyone seeing the same thing at the same time. In 1952, for the first time the Democratic and Republican conventions were broadcast live, and issues that were once expressed only on the speakers' platform were now available in anyone's living room.

NEWSCASTERS LIKE Edward R. Murrow and Walter Cronkite gave everyone a view of the important realities facing the nation, but TV in the 50s also showed America a new form of entertainment. Tried and true radio successes like *The Guiding Light* jumped to TV, and variety shows like *The Ed Sullivan*

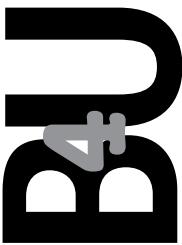
Show proved to be wildly successful. Though at the beginning of the 1950s only 9% of US households had a television, by the end of the decade 86% had at least one TV.

TV MAY HAVE BEEN building steam in the 1950s, but it became a true cultural force in the 60s. Between 1949 and 1969, the number of US households with at least one television set rose from less than a million to 44 million. The 60s helped realize the social and political power of the medium, with the first presidential debates televised (Kennedy versus Nixon) and coverage of Neil Armstrong's moon walk, which was viewed by 600 million people worldwide. Shows like *Seasame Street*, *Green Acres* and the first televised Super Bowl (Super Bowl I) continued to expand the education, entertainment and informative value of TV.

DURING THE 1970S, television began to reflect the diverse landscape of America, with several shows featuring prominent characters of color including *Good Times* and *The Jeffersons*. The 70s also saw a great television expansion as cable TV premiered with ESPN and HBO.

THE 80S USHERED IN an era of stand-up comics and their sitcoms, featuring shows like *Roseanne*, *Seinfeld* and *The Cosby Show*. The sitcom continued to surge throughout the 90s with long-running shows like *Friends* and *The Simpsons* (which is still running today!). Primetime soap operas saw a resurgence with *Beverly Hills, 90210* and its franchise of shows.

THE FIRST DECADE of the new millennium saw a shift from more narrative-based, fictional television to the more "real" genre of reality TV. Shows like *Survivor* helped define the genre and continue to go on strong today. High definition television became more prevalent, and today the technology continues to evolve into the more immersive world of 3D.



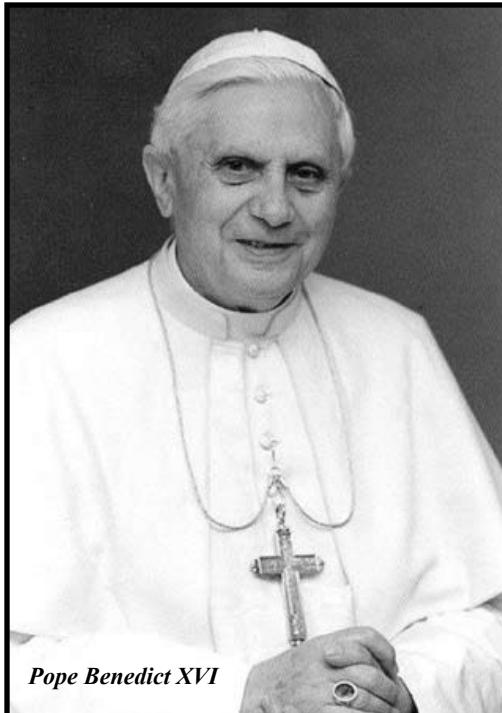
SISTER CLARISSA SAYS

UNLESS YOU SLEPT through the entire play, there's a good chance that you caught on to the fact that the Pazinski family is Catholic. What you may not have noticed, however, were some of the Catholic concepts alluded to in the play. Here's a quick explanation of some of the key Catholic beliefs mentioned in the play.

IF THERE'S ONE THING that all religions try to set up, it's a series of codes, virtues and rules to follow for better living. In Catholicism (and many other religions), if you violate such a rule, you have sinned. There are two types sins for Catholics, mortal and venial.

AS THE NAME IMPLIES, **MORTAL SINS** are fairly serious. Mortal sins separate the sinner from God such that the sinner is at risk of hell if his or her sins are not pardoned before death. There are essentially three criteria for defining a mortal sin—matter, knowledge and consent. In order to be a mortal sin, a sin must meet all three of the criteria. In terms of matter, a mortal sin must be grave—think murder, theft or worshipping other gods. The knowledge criteria tests whether or not the sinner has full knowledge of the sin and awareness of its magnitude. Consent, the final criteria, tests to see whether or not the sin was willfully and deliberately performed.

ON THE OTHER END of the spectrum there are **VENIAL SINS**. These sins, while not encouraged, do not result in separating the sinner from God or putting the sinner at risk



Pope Benedict XVI

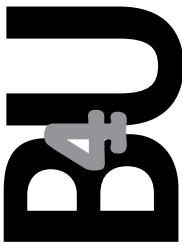
for hell. A similar three criteria are used to determine venial sins—matter, knowledge and consent. However, in the case of venial sins, the matter is not grave. Nor is the sin committed with full knowledge, and finally there is not a deliberate and willful consent to the act. Venial sins also differ from mortal sins in that a sin need only satisfy one of the criteria to be venial.

PERHAPS ONE OF THE most fascinating (and feared) subjects that religion deals with is the afterlife. While nearly all Christian religions believe in two post-death destinations—heaven and hell—Catholicism also includes a place called **PURGATORY** (though it's not unique to Catholicism, other religions have it, too). Essentially, purgatory isn't a permanent destination like heaven or hell, it's a transition spot for those who still have the lingering

effects of venial sins on their souls. Purgatory is a place to cleanse these sins from the soul so that one can enter into heaven.

WHILE IT MAY SOUND like a good place to stop off, purgatory isn't quite paradise. Though the end result is desirable and being there holds hope for something better beyond, being purged of sin in purgatory is achieved through pain and fire. Luckily, Catholics believe that prayers for the dead can help speed the process along. Purgatory should not be confused with **LIMBO**, which is the stop-off point for infants should they die before they are baptized.





RUDY'S AMERICA

RUDY IS very much a man of his time—one who was full of questions and ready for change. The 1950s was a decade of transition for most of the world, a final end to World War II and focusing instead on the Cold War, which had begun to develop in the 1940s. The Cold War pitted two conflicting political and economic ideologies—communism and capitalism—squarely against one another, and if nations like the United States and the Soviet Union (the opposite ends of the spectrum) had anything to say about it, only one could survive and thrive.

COMMUNISM, the system of the Soviets, was based on the notion that property was communally owned (that is, by the government) and that everyone has access to their needed share of goods and services. This essentially means that everybody—whether doctor or custodian—has the same amount of wealth. The focus is on individual equality and a lack of class divisions found in capitalism, but the cost for such equality is a larger, more powerful government.

IN CAPITALISM, the system of the United States, property is owned privately (individuals, not the government, own property), and wealth is distributed based on a scale of importance devised by the system. Unlike communism, in capitalism jobs that require more training and competency

tends to reap greater economic rewards. For example, most doctors have a higher income than most custodians. The trade-off with capitalism is that there can be vast disparities between social classes—while great wealth can exist on one end, great poverty can exist on the other.

THE CLASH BETWEEN communism and capitalism went much further than just arguments about which was better—there were a number of military conflicts from the Korean War to the Vietnam War, all boiling down to capitalist countries fighting communist nations. The Space Race between the United States and the Soviet Union began in the 50s with the launch of the Soviet satellite Sputnik, prompting the Red Scare in the United States (a fear of the communists and what they might be up to). Several Congressional hearings were held on the subject of anti-communism.

WITH ALL THIS conflict brewing, the 1960s exploded onto the scene in a very Rudy-kind of way. That is, a streak of counterculture (ideas that oppose those generally held in society) began to spring up, questioning the way things were. Rebellion replaced the fear of the prior decade, manifesting in the hippie movement. The decade was marked by a relaxing of the more conservative ideas held over the course of the 50s, with great strides being made in both gender and racial equality.

Timeline 1959

- January 1—Fidel Castro leads a revolution overthrowing Cuba's President, Fulgencio Batista.
- January 3—Alaska becomes a state.
- January 25—Pope John XXIII proclaims the 2nd Vatican council.
- January 27—NASA selects 110 candidates for the first US space flight.
- February 17—The US launches its first weather station, Vanguard II.

March 9—The Barbie doll is unveiled at the American Toy Fair.

March 28—China announces the dissolution of the Tibetan government.

March 31—The Dalai Lama flees Chinese suppression and crosses the border into India.

August 21—Hawaii becomes a state.

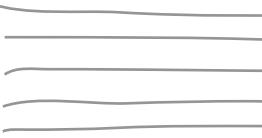
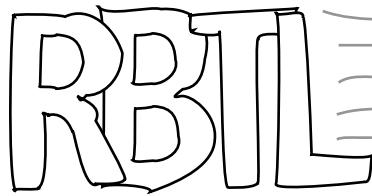
September 11—The US Congress passes a bill authorizing food stamps for poor Americans.

September 12—NBC launches *Bonanza*, the first color western on TV.

September 25—President Eisenhower and Soviet Premier Khrushchev began Camp David talks.

October 2—*The Twilight Zone* makes its debut on CBS.

November 3—Eisenhower lays the cornerstone for the CIA headquarters building in Langley, Virginia.



GROWING UP

No matter what anybody says, growing up isn't easy! Just look at the Pazinski family—Eddie and his impure thoughts, Rudy with his questions and Annie's insecurities—it can be a real jungle out there! And that's not even taking into consideration the rough home life with Chet and Ellen always fighting! But no matter what happens or how you feel, there's always light at the end of the tunnel and there are always people around you who care. What tough issues are you facing as you grow up? How can you help stay strong to keep pushing forward?

FAITH

Even though faith seems to be endlessly questioned in the play, it also seems that it's the one thing that carries everyone through to the end. Through it all, each character always seems to be looking forward, believing that the best is still yet to come. Each of these individuals could easily get lost in the present (and past) and simply wither away, but they each strive onward. Though it may come in different flavors, orientations and belief systems, faith is the common bond we all share. It is our unified hope and effort for progress and a better day. It is the better day that we don't just simply wait for—we make happen. Having a bad day? Have a little faith!

UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

No matter what her son has said or done in school, Ellen rushes to his defense. When Sister Clarissa raises a hand to strike Rudy, Ellen threatens to pull him from school. This is an unconditional love—no matter what Rudy says or does, Ellen will always love him

without question. Are there people in your life that deserve your unconditional love? What about you—is there somebody who unconditionally loves you? How do you feel to give that kind of love? To receive it?

RELIGION

Sister Clarissa is pretty by-the-books throughout the play, pronouncing Catholicism and being a solider for Christ, the only path toward salvation. In the end, however, she seems to accept that Rudy's path might be different. What do you think? Is being a soldier for Christ the only way to lead a religious life? Do you have to be Catholic to be a good person? Do you have to follow all the rules all the time in order to be loved by God? What religion are all of your friends? Are they the exact same as you?

QUESTIONING

Though Chet, Ellen and Sister Clarissa might not have liked it in the beginning, Rudy's curiosity and questioning of authority led to some new revelations and truths for his whole family, and presumably, a better and happier future for them all. Questioning authority and the status quo may be scary, but it is also the way many of society's changes are made. If we don't question, we can never make anything better or different at all. Just like Rudy, you can raise issues and questions that may lead to a change for the better for everyone. Have you ever stood up to authority and questioned accepted beliefs? What was the result?



TROUBLEMAKER OR INNOVATOR?

Young man, you are part of a long line of trouble makers. The first one started making trouble 2,000 years ago. And may I remind you that when he was your age he was confounding teachers in the temple with his wisdom. So I suggest you get busy.

—Sister Clarissa

THROUGHOUT THE PLAY, Rudy seems to be causing trouble around every bend. His questions, creativity and stubbornness not only cause his home to be turned upside down, but they also help to put Sister Clarissa in the hospital. With all that being said, why does Sister encourage Rudy to continue to “make trouble” when he visits her in the hospital?

SISTER CLARISSA alludes to what she might consider the model troublemaker—Jesus Christ. Many believe that He wasn’t necessarily highly esteemed in his day by religious leaders, as He seemed to contradict them without end. Jesus wasn’t interested in simply instigating problems, however—He was on a mission. He was well aware of what the rules and regulations of his faith were, but He had a different way of doing things.

THROUGHOUT HISTORY, there have been many individuals who “made trouble” by questioning the status quo (the normal way of doing things) and have brought to the table a new way of doing things. Among them are folks like Galileo and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. just to name a couple—but

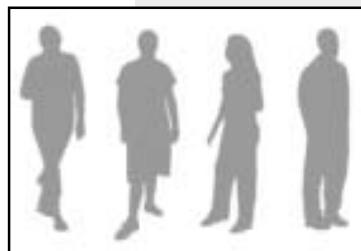
what makes them innovators instead of simply being glorified troublemakers?

ONE OF THE immediately obvious answers can be found by asking the question, “What was their impact?” Galileo changed the way we perceive our planet and solar system, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. changed the way we perceive equality and humanity. While it’s not a good idea just to mix up trouble for trouble’s sake, there does seem to be something honorable in trying to achieve a greater good.

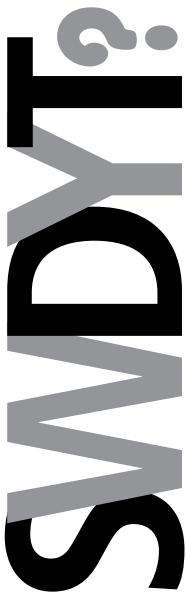
BUT SURELY, before we all go out causing trouble, there must be something else that separates the troublemaker from the innovator?

ANOTHER THING Galileo and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. had in common was a firm grasp of what the status quo truly was. That is, they were highly informed about the thing they questioned. Their questions weren’t snide remarks or attempts to merely detract from the norm, these innovators were interested in building a better, more informed world. Individuals like Galileo and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. were as equally concerned with answering questions as they were asking them, and their pursuit was for the greatest possible positive outcome for all involved.

SO BEFORE YOU GO around causing trouble, remember that there’s more than just a fine line between troublemaker and innovator, there’s a great deal of consideration and concern!



- * Are you an innovator? In what way?
- * Who are some more examples of innovators who have caused trouble in their own ways?



"ELLEN: What did he call us?

RUDY: Hellbound.

ELLEN: For what?

RUDY: 'Cause Daddy's left-handed."

- * Even in an age of science, reason and sophisticated technology, people still hold on to superstitions and folklore. What do you think of the notion that one would go to hell just for being left-handed? Are there are particular superstitions or folklore that you've heard recently or believe yourself?

"Jesus, I hate him, I hate him! I know I'll go to hell for saying that, but I can't help it, I do. Why does he have to be that way? You could do something, why don't you? Couldn't we have Robert Young for just one day? ... I pray every night for things to get better. If you could just let me know that you're listening. A sign. Nothing big. Just something so I'll know you're working on it."

- * Rudy spends a lot of time praying in the play, which most of the time seems to yield little to nothing. What do you think about what Rudy says here? What is the power of prayer in your life? Is prayer something only for Christians? What value is there in a seemingly unanswered prayer for any faith?

"I am not interested in what you see! I am interested in the teachings of the Holy Church as they have come down to us through Jesus Christ."

- * Sister Clarissa is entirely old school, entirely by the books. Meanwhile, Rudy seems to be more of the new age, questioning everything. What do you think of what Sister says here? Is there more value in simply learning what the books say over questioning for yourself? Does it have to be entirely one way or the other?

"And stuff like people stealing change from Blind Elmo's news stand; why doesn't God stop that? And kids throwing things at my brother Georgie, and making fun of him just 'cause he's retarded."

- * Though we never see it on stage, Georgie apparently gets picked on frequently. What do you think of picking on someone with a cognitive disability like Georgie? Do you know anyone with an intellectual or other developmental disability? How do you think you should treat these individuals? How would you want to be treated?

"Dad, remember that time Father Camillus told us not to watch Elvis Presley on Ed Sullivan? 'Cause he was evil and we'd all go straight to hell? So we watched. You were snapping your fingers. Annie and Eddie were singing. Mom was dancing with Georgie. And when Elvis was done, Ed says, 'Let's hear it for this fine, fine youngster!' So, I think God could learn a few things from Ed Sullivan."

- * Lots of characters end up doing things "wrong" in this play, though what they do doesn't always lead them to the expected result (i.e. a severe punishment). How do you think this play deals with right and wrong? What do you think of Rudy and what he has to say about God?

