

# WU?<sup>@</sup>therep

## THIS WONDERFUL LIFE by Steve Murray Conceived by Mark Setlock Directed by Martha Banta

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# the 11

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](http://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, 7; FA 2, 3, 4, 5; HP 2,3; SS 2, 4, 6 and Illinois Learning Standards: 1, 2, 5, 14, 15, 16, 18, 22, 25.

## 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](http://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.

# A/S/L

Heroic to a fault, GEORGE BAILEY always lends a hand to those in need, putting others before himself. On this Christmas Eve, however, he has exhausted all of his own resources and finds himself in dire need of help.

FRANKLIN and JOSEPH, angels on watch this Christmas Eve, hear the town's prayers for George and send CLARENCE, an angel who has not yet earned his wings, on a journey through George's life in order to try and save him.

MR. POTTER, the greedy banker bent on taking over Bedford Falls, continuously tries to snake away George's family business, Bailey Building and Loan. If he succeeds, nothing will stop him from taking full control over the town.

UNCLE BILLY doesn't help matters much; in his absent-mindedness he always seems to be wrecking things for George and the business.

The girl next door and the love of George's life, MARY HATCH always sees the best in George. Even in his darkest hour, she has unconditional faith in him and his big heart.

Hee Haw! SAM WAINWRIGHT, a friend of George and former suitor of Mary, is a local boy who has gone on to make millions in the manufacturing of plastics from soybeans.

HARRY BAILEY, whom George saved from an icy lake when he was a child, is George's kid brother and a World War II hero inspired by George's heroic deeds.

MR. GOWER, the local pharmacist, is another touched by George's heroism (George saved him from a grave error in filling a medication).

George's beloved children, JANE, PETE, TOMMY and ZUZU, are among the many individuals praying hard for George's salvation, but they're also among the many reasons why he is under so much pressure. With no money and so many mouths to feed (and Zuzu facing grave sickness), George has to figure out something to support his family.

The NARRATOR, a calm, cool, collected voice of objectivity, serves as a guide for our journey through the many voices in George's story.

## READ MORE ABOUT IT

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



*It's a Wonderful Life*, 130 minutes, Paramount, 2006, DVD.

See the movie that started it all.

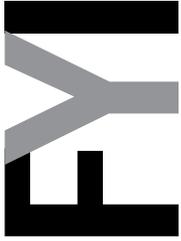
*Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, 129 minutes, Sony Pictures, 2000, DVD. One of Frank Capra's popular hits, this political movie also starred Jimmy Stewart.

Van Doren Stern, Philip. *The Greatest Gift*. Studio Books, 1996. Check out the short story on which the movie was based, and see how many differences you can spot.

[www.therealbedfordfalls.com](http://www.therealbedfordfalls.com) Take a look at this site from Seneca Falls, NY, which suggests that this town was the real-life basis for Capra's movie setting.

[www.nmha.org/go/information/get-info/depression/holiday-depression-and-stress](http://www.nmha.org/go/information/get-info/depression/holiday-depression-and-stress) Depression and stress around the holidays are quite common and can have many causes.

Blumenthal, Karen. *Six Days in October: The Stock Market Crash of 1929*. Atheneum, 2002. Get a better understanding of one of the biggest economic problems in our country's history.



*THIS WONDERFUL LIFE* is a one-man stage adaptation of the famous 1940s film *It's a Wonderful Life*. What does that mean? It means you'll have to stay on your toes to keep up as the actor shifts between playing the narrator and over a dozen characters from the movie all by himself, right before your very eyes on stage!

**THOUGH THE ACTION** kicks off with a funny little introduction, the play dives head first into some serious drama very quickly. It's Christmas Eve in Bedford Falls, and in a moment of desperation the entire town prays for the salvation of George Bailey. Something of a local hero, George has always put the welfare of others before his own, costing him all of his hopes, dreams and ambitions. Though he's made a career of saving others, tonight George stands penniless and alone on a bridge, contemplating suicide as he is unable to save himself.

**UP IN HEAVEN**, angels Franklin and Joseph are on duty. They hear the town's prayers and send Clarence (an angel in training attempting to earn his wings) down to save George. But before Clarence can land on the bridge and stop George from committing suicide, he must take a trip through George's life to see how he can save him.

**GROWING UP**, George had big dreams of leaving his small town and exploring the larger world, but even at a young age, he would be called upon to sacrifice himself and his dreams for others. When he was just 12 years old, he pulled his kid brother Harry from an icy lake, saving his brother's life though losing his own hearing in one ear. After graduating high school and saving up money for his great explorations, George was forced to stay home and take over the family business (Bailey Building and Loan) after his father died of a stroke. And years later, after marrying his long-time sweetheart Mary Hatch, another opportunity to see the world (on his honeymoon) was dashed by a failing economy and the greed of local banker and landlord Mr. Potter. George was forced to



give up his honeymoon in order to save the family business and the town from Potter's clutches.

**THROUGH GEORGE'S** continued work (and sacrifice) in the family business, he was able to help others in town to escape Potter's greed (and high rent costs) by helping them build their own homes. Meanwhile, old friend Sam Wainwright rolls into town in a giant car flaunting his money and a trophy wife. He's had great success in manufacturing plastics from soybeans, a venture he tried to get George to join. Sam's success serves as a painful reminder of George's lost dreams, and in a moment of weakness George considers giving up the family business for a lucrative position under Mr. Potter. While he has the fortitude to remain firm, news that Mary is pregnant ratchets up the tension. To make matters worse, Uncle Billy loses \$8,000 of their business money, and Zuzu, George's daughter, falls severely ill.

**HAVING NO OTHER** options, George crawls back to Mr. Potter. Potter (knowing about the lost money) accuses George of squandering the company's money away for his own personal whims and calls the police. George flees to the bridge, contemplating suicide so that his family may collect his life insurance money and continue on without him. Amid all of this turmoil, he wishes that he had never been born.

**AS GEORGE** prepares to take his final breaths, Clarence drops in, taking George on a journey through a world where he was never born. Clarence reveals to George all of the lives that he has touched, and what a gift his life has been—not only to himself, but also to all those around him.

**INSPIRED BY HIS ENCOUNTER** with the angel, George returns home with a renewed vigor. To his surprise, he finds that the town (and Sam Wainwright) has pitched in to help him and his family. In the end, as Clarence earns his wings, George realizes that it is a wonderful life after all.



**SCURVY:** a disease caused by a deficiency of vitamin C

**DOTTY:** somewhat mad or eccentric

**VAMP:** a woman who uses sexual attraction to exploit men

**AVAST:** a nautical exclamation meaning stop or cease

**SQUALL:** a sudden violent gust of wind or a localized storm, especially one bringing rain, snow or sleet

**JIMMY STEWART:** one of the finest actors of the Golden Age of Hollywood; starred in the original *It's a Wonderful Life*

**CHARLESTON:** a form of dance named for the city of Charleston, South Carolina with roots in Lindy Hop and Jazz, popular in various forms from the 1920s to the 1940s

**ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW:**

a 1975 musical comedy film parodying the science fiction and horror films of its day; a cult classic that originated as a midnight movie, still playing in theatrical venues to this day

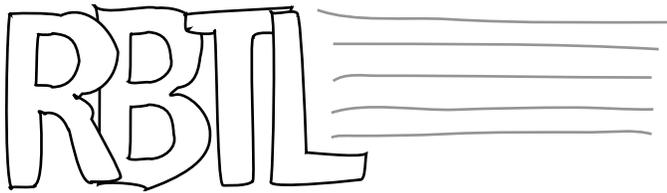
**PENNY ANTE:** poker played for very small stakes

**MOSS-BACK:** an old fashioned or extremely conservative person

**MISAPPROPRIATION:** dishonestly or unfairly taking something (especially money belonging to another) for one's own use

**MALFEASANCE:** wrongdoing, especially by a public official

**ROTGUT:** poor-quality and potentially toxic liquor



## SELFLESSNESS

A major theme that *This Wonderful Life* deals with is selflessness, or the ability to put others' needs before your own. In the play, George is forced to give up his dreams of seeing the bigger world outside of Bedford Falls and doing bigger things than the town allows, but always in order to help someone else. Can you think of people who have given up things for you? Are there ways that you can be selfless for those around you, particularly those less fortunate than yourself?

## DREAMS

Over the course of the play, George seems to continually put his dreams aside in order to fulfill the wishes of others. As he contemplates giving up all that remains,

his life, he wishes that he was never born. Clarence reveals to him, however, that George never really lost his dreams at all. In fact, he achieved all of the bigger and better things he had hoped for, all in his backyard. In the end, what was bigger and better was touching the lives of everyone around him. What are your dreams? How can you use your talents and aspirations to help those around you?

## VALUE OF LIFE

The title tells us from the beginning—this is a wonderful life. And though George doesn't see it until the end, he realizes that there's no problem too big to handle. There are always friends, family and other loved ones around who will lend a hand if you just ask. It's okay to be afraid sometimes, we all are! That's why we're here—to help when you need it!



*IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE*, the inspiration for *This Wonderful Life*, is a classic 1946 film directed by the legendary Frank Capra. Known for his ability to tread the delicate line between sentimentality and insight, Capra's work as a director spans nearly four decades and over 50 films.

**BORN IN ITALY** to a fruit picker on May 18, 1897, Frank Capra would not get to taste the American dream until he came to the United States at age six. Despite his family's wishes (they always pushed for him to quit school and work), he pursued his dreams of success and achievement.

**A TALENTED** and intelligent young man, school proved to be an inspiration to Capra as he was coming up. Among the top in his high school class, he pursued a degree in engineering before making his way to Hollywood (though he was bitten by the theatre bug in high school).

**AFTER EARNING** his degree, Frank served in the armed forces during World War I. Upon his return, he attended a "cattle call" (casting call for extras) for a film starring Harry Carey (an Oscar-winning actor of the day). Frank boldly introduced himself to Carey while on set, an introduction that would serve him later in his career when he and Carey collaborated on the film *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*.

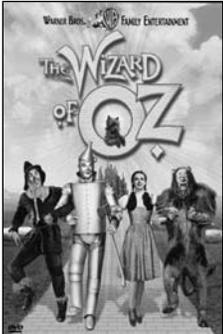


**FROM THERE**, Capra nudged his way further into the business as a gag writer, slowly inching his way toward directing his own feature films by working with great names of the day like Hal Roach, Mack Sennett and Harry Langdon. It wasn't long before Capra's talent was recognized, and he inked a deal with Columbia Studios.

**ONCE ON HIS OWN**, Capra converted his seemingly limitless potential into astounding productions. His early film *It Happened One Night* (1934) became the first film to win all five major Oscars (Best Lead Actor, Lead Actress, Director, Picture and Screenplay), and marked the beginning of Capra's critical acclaim. From there he won two more Best Director Oscars for his work on *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* (1936) and *You Can't Take it with You* (1938). By this point in his career, Capra had established his optimistic tone with stories about underdogs taking on the larger establishment.

**ODDLY ENOUGH**, films that were considered some of Capra's best work—*It's a Wonderful Life* (1946) and *State of the Union* (1948)—were both box office flops. While he continued to direct into the 1960s, his work never rivaled that of his earlier efforts. Capra died in 1991, having accrued three Oscars and a Lifetime Achievement award for his work as a writer and director in Hollywood.

# B4



TAKING PLACE in the 1940s, *This Wonderful Life* spans a time in American history that was rife with tension, conflict and drama. Over the course of two decades (the 1930s and the 1940s), the world would rise, fall and be born anew with determination, hope and the strength to move forward.

THROUGH THE '30S AND '40S, Americans slid from the liberality and economic success of the '20s into a more conservative lifestyle inspired by the key events of the two decades—the Great Depression (1930s) and World War II (1940s). There was a marked rise in militarism (the building, maintenance and use of large, strong, national military forces), which played a key role in lifting America from the Depression during the war.

THE GREAT DEPRESSION, a time of dramatic economic downturn, is typically acknowledged to have spanned from about 1929 to 1939 in the United States. Starting with Black Tuesday (October 29, 1929) and the crash of the stock market, the decade of the Depression was marked by a sharp decline in international trade, personal incomes, tax revenues and prices. Though America was hit hard by the Depression, the economic effects reached across the world, affecting both industrialized nations and those providing the raw materials for industry. There was no sector left unscathed, as construction was halted, crop prices plummeted, and mining and logging reaped little rewards. Most people were left penniless and without work for much of the decade, hardly able to scrape by and survive.

IN THE UNITED STATES, the end of the Great Depression is often marked with America's entrance into World War II. Nazi Germany seized control of Denmark, Norway, Benelux, France and the Soviet

Union over the course of 1940–41, though the United States did not directly respond until December 7, 1941, when the Japanese (an ally of the Germans) attacked Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The attack marked America's official entrance into World War II, which fostered a renewed sense of national patriotism and economic growth through production of war implements. Alongside President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's economic stimulus plan (known as the New Deal), this production boosted the economy, bidding farewell to the hard times of the Great Depression. After suffering a series of defeats, both the Germans and Japanese surrendered, with the war officially ending on September 2, 1945.

THOUGH THE GREAT DEPRESSION and World War II were prominent during the time in which *This Wonderful Life* takes place, there were other things going on. In fact, in the 1930s Hollywood entered its Golden Age, a time in which studios churned out more than 50 classic films. Among the classics still widely watched today are *The Wizard of Oz*, *Gone with the Wind* and, of course, *It's a Wonderful Life* (the movie on which this play is based). Radio also came into its own golden age, becoming the most popular mass medium in industrial nations. The board game Monopoly was born during the 1930s, and in its first year became the best selling game in America.



*THIS WONDERFUL LIFE* centers around events that take place on Christmas Eve, a widely celebrated Christian holiday here in the United States. However, Christmas isn't the only holiday that takes place during the winter, as various cultures, faiths and peoples celebrate a vast array of winter holidays.

## HANUKKAH

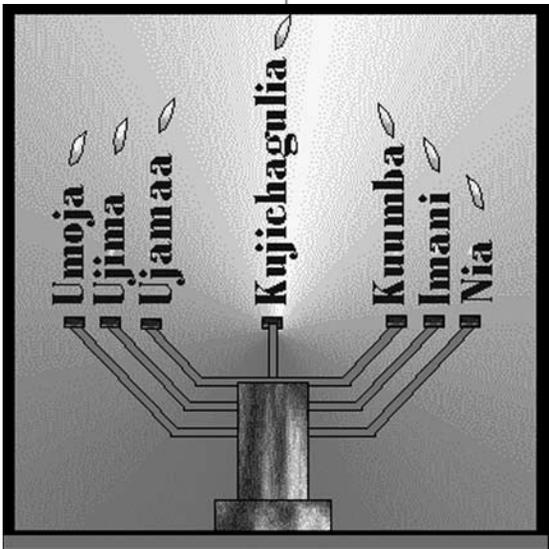
Every year, Jews celebrate a rededication to Temple during the Festival of Lights. The holiday spans eight days, in late November to late December. On each of the eight nights, candles are lit on the menorah while friends and family celebrate their culture, eat potato latkes, play dreidel games and exchange gifts. It is a time to give thanks and revere the glory of God.



## KWANZAA

Often called the fastest growing holiday in the world today, Kwanzaa may be one of the youngest as well. Created in 1966 by Long Beach State University professor Maulana Karenga, the holiday is a non-religious celebration of African culture and community. The holiday focuses on seven principles to carry on throughout

the year—*umoja* (unity), *kujichagulia* (self-determination), *ujima* (collective work and responsibility), *ujamaa* (cooperative economics), *nia* (purpose), *kuumba* (creativity) and *imani* (faith).



## BOXING DAY

Boxing Day, a holiday with roots in the Medieval Ages, is celebrated in the United Kingdom, Canada, New Zealand and Australia annually on December 26. It is a holiday based on the principle of giving gifts to those less fortunate than yourself, since lower classes were often forced to work on Christmas Day.

## SAINT NICHOLAS

Across the world (in some dozen countries or more, including right here in the United States) some form of festival or celebration honoring Saint Nicholas takes place. While in most countries "St. Nick's Day" occurs sometime in December, some countries celebrate Saint Nicholas as late as the spring and summer months. Historically known as a festive gift giver, it is believed that Saint Nicholas is the real-life root for Santa Claus. In the United States, St. Nick's Day is typically celebrated in areas with strong German influences such as Milwaukee, Cincinnati and right here in St. Louis. So on the evening of December 5th, put out an empty shoe or sock. If you've been good, Saint Nicholas may just leave you a treat!



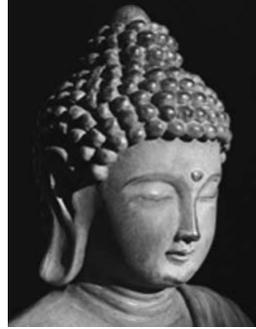
## TA CHIU

Taking place in Hong Kong as well as other areas in China, this Taoist festival occurs every year on December 27th. Celebrating peace and renewal, people use this day to summon the ghosts of their ancestors to renew their lives and grant wishes for the coming year. In some localities, a priest will read aloud the names of every towns person. Once complete, this list will then be burned so that the smoke will carry to the heavens and the people will be remembered by the gods.

## EID AL-ADHA

This Feast of Sacrifice is an important time in the Islamic faith. Commemorating Abraham's great sacrifice in giving up his son, the feast reenacts Abraham's obedience to God by sacrificing an animal and then sharing it with the poor. Held in the last month of the Muslim calendar (November or December each year), the Feast of Sacrifice is a time for visiting friends and family, and exchanging gifts.

*A Ta Chiu celebration in Hong Kong*



## BODHI DAY

Observed on December 8th, Bodhi Day is the day Buddhists celebrate Siddhartha Gautama's realization of Enlightenment. In monastic Zen practice, Bodhi Day is marked by a 10-day retreat during which the monks meditate 10 to 12 hours a day. On the final night, monks sometimes stay up through the night, symbolically imitating Buddha's commitment to meditate until he attained enlightenment. In Buddhist homes, sometimes a ficus tree is decorated with multi-colored lights, strung with beads to symbolize the way all things are united, and hung with three shiny ornaments to represent the Three Jewels—the Buddha, the Dharma (the way or law), and the Sangha (the spiritual community).



## HO HO HO

WHAT DOES CHRISTMAS mean to you? Is it a time to give the ones you love presents? A time to receive presents? What is this whole Christmas thing really about?

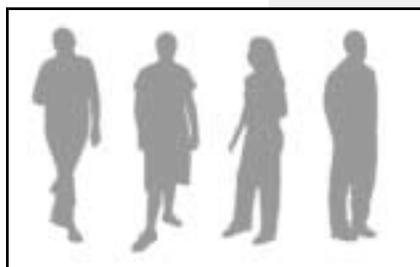
THE CHRISTMAS that we celebrate has roots far deeper than the Christian holiday that we know today. In fact, Christmas has a rich lineage that can be traced as far back as the ancient Romans, who celebrated the winter solstice on December 25 by honoring the sun gods and goddesses. The winter solstice was known as a “rebirth” of the sun, and early Christians saw a strong connection between the birth of the sun and the birth of the Son of God. Another pagan contributor to the holiday was Scandinavia, which celebrated a winter festival called Yule, usually in late December or early January. It was a time of togetherness, family, feasting and fun.

AS THE CATHOLIC CHURCH came into being, the celebration of Christ’s birth waivered from December 25 to March 25, since the New Testament gives no specific date as to when Jesus was born. It was not until the Middle Ages that the Twelve Days of Christmas would be designated as December 25–January 5. Religious wars and reformation banned the holiday and brought it back into being time and time again, though by 1870 (when President Ulysses S.

Grant signed a law declaring it a federal holiday) Christmas was here to stay.

“WHERE’S SANTA AT?!” Well, Santa Claus did not arrive on the Christmas scene until German-American cartoonist Thomas Nast conceived of him in 1863, though he was inspired by legendary figures like Saint Nicholas, Father Christmas and Kris Kringle. And that whole gift giving thing actually has two roots. The first is found in the three kings who went to Jesus when he was born, bearing lavish gifts. While that was enough to give us our generous inspiration, to create the gift giving tradition of today, we also call upon Saint Nicholas and the reputation he had for leaving small gifts in children’s stockings on December 5th.

TODAY, CHRISTMAS has evolved into a multi-billion dollar extravaganza that spans all industries far and wide, from bakeries to car dealerships and everything in between. Sounds of the season jingle to the tune of new holiday music released each year. Hollywood has immortalized the classic tales of Christmas characters like Rudolph and Bob Cratchit. Commercials on TV try to sell us everything from jewelry to Chia Pets. Toy companies compete for children’s (and adults’) attention with their latest and greatest rewards for good boys and girls. Amid all the commercialized craziness, it’s easy to lose sight of what Christmas is really all about, and what it means to you.



- \* What are your holiday traditions and expectations?
- \* Is Christmas a special religious time for you?
- \* Are the holidays just parties, or reminders of what a precious gift life is, as it ended up being for George Bailey?

## S.A.D.

WHILE THE TITLE of the play rings with a certain optimism about life and the joyous holiday season, the central issue in *This Wonderful Life* is George's depression. While he may just be under the weather momentarily, there is a more serious medical condition that afflicts as many as a half a million people in the United States—seasonal affective disorder (also called SAD).

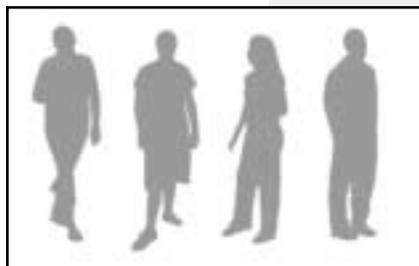
SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER is a particular type of depression, one in which symptoms typically begin in October or November and subside in March or April, corresponding with the shortening hours of sunlight in the day (though they can be known to afflict a patient as early as August or as late as January). Some of the key symptoms include a change in appetite (especially a craving for sweet or starchy foods), weight gain, daytime fatigue, difficulty concentrating, lethargy and avoidance of social situations.

MOST INDIVIDUALS afflicted with SAD experience mild to moderate symptoms, though they can be severe. The disorder typically doesn't afflict those under 20 years old, and for adults the risk of SAD decreases as they get older. It sometimes manifests

itself in other psychiatric conditions, like severe depression or alcohol abuse. Seasonal affective disorder is more common in women than men, and is more common in northern geographic regions.

THE MOST EFFECTIVE and common treatment for winter SAD is light therapy. Light therapy is administered via a special light box or a light visor that you wear on your head like a hat. Either method incorporates varying degrees of bright fluorescent light, which is shown to reverse the symptoms of SAD. In fact, between 50% and 80% of individuals treated show a complete reversal of the symptoms. For those not fully helped by light therapy, anti-depressants and behavior therapy are also administered. Typically, a regimen of the three forms of treatment best serves the patient.

SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER isn't limited to the winter months, as there is a corresponding (though less common) condition for the summertime as well. Summer SAD may be triggered by high heat and humidity, and is often treated with summer trips to cooler climates.



- \* Do you know anyone who has succumbed to depression during the holidays? This time of year is often very stressful, and that stress coupled with possible SAD can get anyone down.
- \* Have you ever felt depressed during the winter months? How did you combat it? How did it affect your life?



# SWDY?!

***“Big—see! I don’t want one for one night. I want something for a thousand and one nights, with plenty of room for labels from Italy and Baghdad, Samarkand...”***

- \* George is after a suitcase large enough to take him around the world. He’s clearly very excited by the possibility of leaving home to explore. Do you think his excitement is really just about seeing new places? If not, what else might be driving him to leave?

***“I couldn’t face being cooped up for the rest of my life in a shabby little office. Oh, I’m sorry Pop, I didn’t mean that. But this business of nickels and dimes... I just feel like if I don’t get away, I’d bust.”***

- \* Some people are expected to join the family business after they get out of school, but what if they have different plans? Where does one’s duty to family end? Is it more important to follow your own path or help your family?

***“You’re right when you say my father was no business man...But he did help a few people get out of your slums, Mr. Potter. People were human beings to him, but to you...they’re cattle.”***

- \* George’s father was known as a good man, willing to put his own needs aside for the needs of others, but it didn’t get him very far in the business world. Do you think it is necessary to be money-hungry like Mr. Potter in order to be successful? Is there a way to be a good person and still a good at business?

***“Strange, isn’t it? Each man’s life touches so many other lives, and when he isn’t around he leaves an awful hole, doesn’t he?”***

- \* Clarence shows George just how important he is in the world. Have you ever felt as small as George, like your life didn’t matter? What do you do to make yourself feel better? How can you help others do the same?

***“Mary did it! She told a few people you were in trouble and they scattered all over town collecting money. They didn’t ask any questions. Just said ‘If George is in trouble—count on me.’”***

- \* Without even knowing it, George has been the best kind of person—one who everyone cares about. How can we all be that kind of person? What does it take? Do you think it’s difficult to be giving and selfless, or is it easier than we might think?

***“...remember, no man is a failure who has friends.”***

- \* Clarence reminds George just how important it is to have friends. Do you ever think about your friends and how important they are to you? Do you ever consider what it would be like if they weren’t around? How would your life be different without them? How would theirs be different without you?