

## ***Our Town* Timed Essay Plan Sheet**

Write a timed extended response responding to the following prompt: Determine two or more themes of *Our Town* and explain how they are developed over the course of the play.

**Intro:** Begin by recording a thesis statement below. To compose the introduction, consider the upside-down triangle strategy. The thesis is the narrow point; broaden out a little to begin and then lead to that point. You might find it helpful to plan the essay before trying to write the entire introduction; just start by writing a thesis statement. You can return to plan the rest of the introduction later.

--Collect your Cornell Notes for each act, Socratic Seminar Charts, Do Nows, etc. Look over what you've written to consider possible themes and how Wilder conveyed those ideas. Then, using the template below, try to compose a thesis statement for your essay.

### **Thesis Statement:**

---

---

---

---

[Example: *Our Town* explores two themes, \_\_\_\_\_ (theme one) and \_\_\_\_\_ (theme two), which are developed through \_\_\_\_\_ (first way developed) and \_\_\_\_\_ (second way developed).]

### **Introduction**

Hook: gains interest, introduces the topic in a general way—but not TOO general. It shouldn't be able to serve as an intro for any essay about theme. What is a main idea/theme you will address? Connect to that specific idea without discussing the play itself.	
TAG it: Title, Author, Genre. Be sure this information is included in the intro.	
Main idea of the specific text. This can be connected in the same sentence as TAG information.	

Thesis Statement:	
-------------------	--

An outline for the **body** of the essay might look something like this:

- I. Body Paragraph 1 Focus/Topic Sentence
  - A. Evidence 1 – Use page references in parentheses as appropriate
    - 1. Commentary/interpretation
    - 2. Commentary/interpretation
  - B. Evidence 2
    - 1. Commentary/interpretation
    - 2. Commentary/interpretation
- II. Body Paragraph 2 Focus/Topic Sentence
  - A. Evidence 1
    - 1. Commentary/interpretation
    - 2. Commentary/interpretation
  - B. Evidence 2
    - 3. Commentary/interpretation
    - 4. Commentary/interpretation
    - 5.

Planning the Body

**Body Paragraph 1**

Topic Sentence (must connect back to the thesis statement)	
Evidence 1 (embed/paraphrase and cite)	
Explanation of evidence (Don't simply summarize the quote; ANALYZE. Why is this quote/evidence important in building your thesis?)	

Transition:	
Evidence 2 (embed/paraphrase and cite)	
Explanation of evidence and link back to topic sentence, thesis	

### Body Paragraph 2

Topic Sentence (must connect back to the thesis statement)	
Evidence 1 (embed/paraphrase and cite)	
Explanation of evidence (Don't simply summarize the quote; ANALYZE. Why is this quote/evidence important in building your thesis?)	
Transition:	
Evidence 2 (embed/paraphrase and cite)	
Explanation of evidence and link back to topic sentence, thesis	

Note: You may need to adapt the outline; however, the organization should be clear. For example, if you need or want to include a third piece of evidence to develop the idea, that's great. You would want to use a transition, embed or paraphrase the evidence and cite it, and then analyze the evidence, showing its connection to the topic sentence and thesis. Furthermore, even though a

section is labeled “Body Paragraph 1” on this planning sheet, that section may require more than one paragraph: You don’t want a body paragraph to get so lengthy that the reader loses track of the argument or organization. A good place to begin a new paragraph may be after a thorough explanation of evidence that required several sentences. Therefore, you may end up with more than four paragraphs (i.e., intro, two body paragraphs, conclusion) in your essay.

**Conclusion**

Restatement of Thesis (different words)	
Summary of three main points	
“So what” statement/connect back to intro	

**Style Revision**

To strengthen your essay, apply the stylistic recommendations below:

- Do not call the author by first name only (e.g., Thornton Wilder or Wilder but not Thornton).
- Scan your essay and examine the verbs.
  - If you have “being” or “linking” verbs (e.g., is, are, was), revise the sentence to have a stronger action verb.
  - Use present tense verbs to describe events in the text (e.g., “Emily asks her mother if she is pretty” rather than “Emily asked her mother...”).
  - Look for variety and specificity of verb choices.
- Scan your essay and revise diction to avoid informal language.
  - Eliminate use of first- or second-person pronouns (e.g., I, me, we, us, our, you, your).
  - Eliminate the use of contractions (e.g., write “do not” rather than “don’t”).
  - Eliminate the use of informal or vague words [e.g., a lot, kind of, sort of, stuff, thing, this (without a noun)].
- Use a variety of transitional words and phrases (between and within paragraphs).
- Do an inventory of your sentences. Do you have
  - A variety of sentence beginnings (e.g., prepositional phrases, adverb clauses, transitional words/phrases, participial phrases)
  - A variety of sentence types (simple, compound, complex, compound-complex)
  - A variety of sentence lengths
  - A well-used semicolon to combine two closely related sentences
  - At least one use of parallel structure for emphasis or specificity