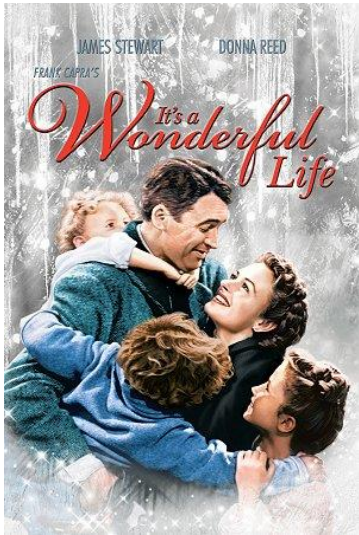


At the Movies – It's a Wonderful Life



Title: [It's a Wonderful Life](#)

Country: USA

Year: 1946

Motion Picture Rating: [PG](#)

Notable Actors: James Stewart

Synopsis: On the Christmas Eve of Bedford Falls, the guardian angel Clarence is assigned to convince the desperate George Bailey not to commit suicide. George is a good man that sacrificed his dreams and his youth on behalf of the citizens of his small town. He inherited the loan business of his father and he gave up traveling the world and joining University as scheduled. Later he resisted the proposals of the evil banker Mr. Potter, and never sold his business to protect the poor community of Bedford Falls and offer a means to afford to buy their own house. He married his beloved Mary Hatch Bailey and had four children with her and a tough life with his family. When his uncle Billy loses US\$ 8,000.00, found and stolen by Mr. Potter, George decides to commit suicide, since he believes he worth more dead than alive. When Clarence sees that he is not able to persuade George to give up his intention, he decides to show the life in town if George had never existed. – Source [IMDB](#)

Background: The movie was inspired on a 1943 short story entitled [The Greatest Gift](#) written by Philip Van Doren Stern. You can read the story here ([PDF](#)). It is also worthwhile to note that It's a Wonderful Life was written and directed by the very gifted Frank Capra who directed another American classic also starring James Stewart, namely Mr Smith goes to Washington (1939).

BEFORE VIEWING...

Have a look at the following questions before you watch the movie. There are spaces provided for you to take notes. You can either pause the movie to take notes, or write them after viewing it. Just make sure that your note taking doesn't interrupt your careful watching.

PART 1 - Questions about the story

1) What **themes** are present in this movie? And how do they relate to today's world/society?

2) This question relates to **symbolism**. Near the beginning of the story, George Bailey is given a **brand new suitcase** from his former boss, Mr. Gower. What do you think the suitcase symbolizes or represents?

3) This question is about the main **setting** for the movie. Most of the story takes place in **Bedford Falls** town in upstate New York in the **1940s**. Describe 2 things that illustrate this particular time and place. An example is provided already.



Example: *The soda shop is an interesting place where people can hang out and get a refreshing drink.*





4) Who is **Mr. Potter**? What does he do? What are some of his personality characteristics?

5) a) What is a 'run on the bank'? b) What happens to the 'Building and Loan' when its customers get nervous? c) Why are they nervous?

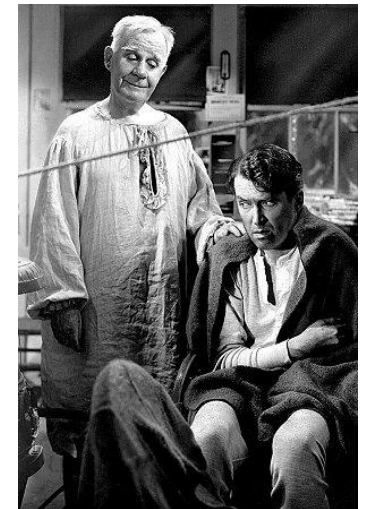
6) Also with regards to **setting**, When George is shown as if he never existed the town (Bedford Falls) he used to know and live in no longer exists but is now Pottersville. Describe the setting of **Pottersville**. How does it contrast with that of Bedford Falls? How do its people seem different??





7) Another question about **symbolism**. After George is having a terrible day, he finds out Zuzu is sick with a cold and checks on her. She tells him that the **petals** from her flower have fallen off and she asks daddy to paste them back on. a) What does George do? b) What do you think the petals may symbolize or represent?

8) How does **Clarence** – George’s **guardian angel** – get George to “come around” and not be suicidal anymore?



PART 2 - Lessons & Morals

By '*Lessons*' I mean: what are the **life lessons** to be learned from this story? And by '*Morals*', I mean what are some good or righteous behaviors that we can learn from the story as they relate to our own lives and society??

- 1) What **life lessons** do you think the movie offers us?
- 2) What **morals** are presented in the movie's plot? And do you think people from today still follow these morals? Why or why not?
- 3) Which of these lessons or morals do you believe to be timeless?
- 4) **Family & Community**. Have we lost the sense of family & community, or are these still intact and thriving in modern society?

PART 3 – Angels & Guardian Angels

One type of angel - a guardian angel - appears in the movie and is represented by Clarence. Here is some basic information about these followed by some discussion questions:

What are angels?



- An angel is an **eternal spirit** created by God; it is a celestial or **supernatural being** that acts as an intermediary between God and humans.
- The word '*angel*' comes from the Greek word '*aggelos*' which means '**messenger**'.
- Angels have no physical bodies nor a specific gender, but are often depicted in bodily form with wings.

What are 'guardian angels'?



- A guardian angel is a spirit assigned by God that protects and looks after a specific person throughout their life.
- People may not even be aware that they have a guardian angel, but its invisible force shields them from serious harm, including malevolent (evil) spirits.

Questions:

- Do you think angels are real? Why or why not?
- Do you think you might have your own guardian angel?
- Have you ever been "saved" from a very dangerous situation?
- Can people have a guardian angel even if they don't believe in God?

PART 4 – Favorite Moments

It's a Wonderful Life has so many interesting and memorable scenes and heartfelt moments.

1. What is **your favorite moment or scene** in the movie? Why?
