

Lost in Yonkers
STUDY GUIDE

Motifs

SURVIVAL
THE IMPORTANCE OF ONE'S FAMILY
ACCEPTANCE

Lost in Yonkers is considered a tragedy and a comedy. Below, list the events and ideas of the story that fall under the categories of tragedy and comedy. You will decide for yourself at the end of the play.

TRAGEDY	COMEDY

Characters

ACT ONE

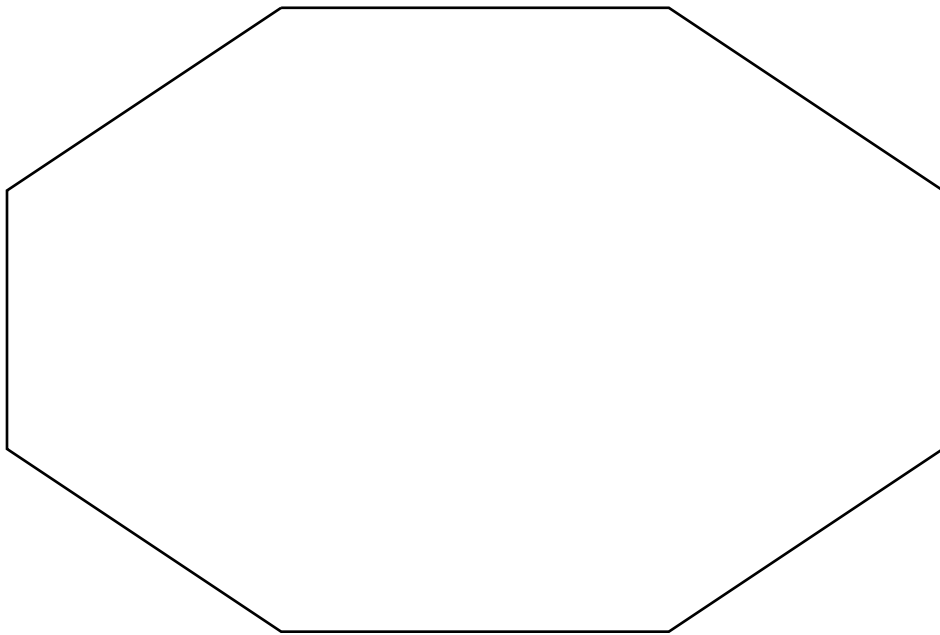
AGES/ RELATIONSHIPS TO EACH OTHER/ DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS: INDIRECT AND DIRECT CHARACTERIZATION

Grandma Kurnitz	
Bella Kurnitz	
Eddie Kurnitz	
Jay Kurnitz	
Arty Kurnitz	
Louie Kurnitz	

ACT ONE - Scene One

1. What is the time period? What is the historical context?

2. Based on what the boys say about their grandmother, draw a picture of how you envision her. Write the descriptions of her around the outside of the drawing.



3. Why do the boys think that the grandmother is exceptionally cold?

4. What do you think that Jay means when he describes their Aunt Bella as “closed for repairs”?

5. What's wrong with Aunt Gert?

6. What is it that Grandma never allowed her own children to do? What do you think of this?

7. Why is Aunt Bella a comical character? What does she say and do to deserve this description?

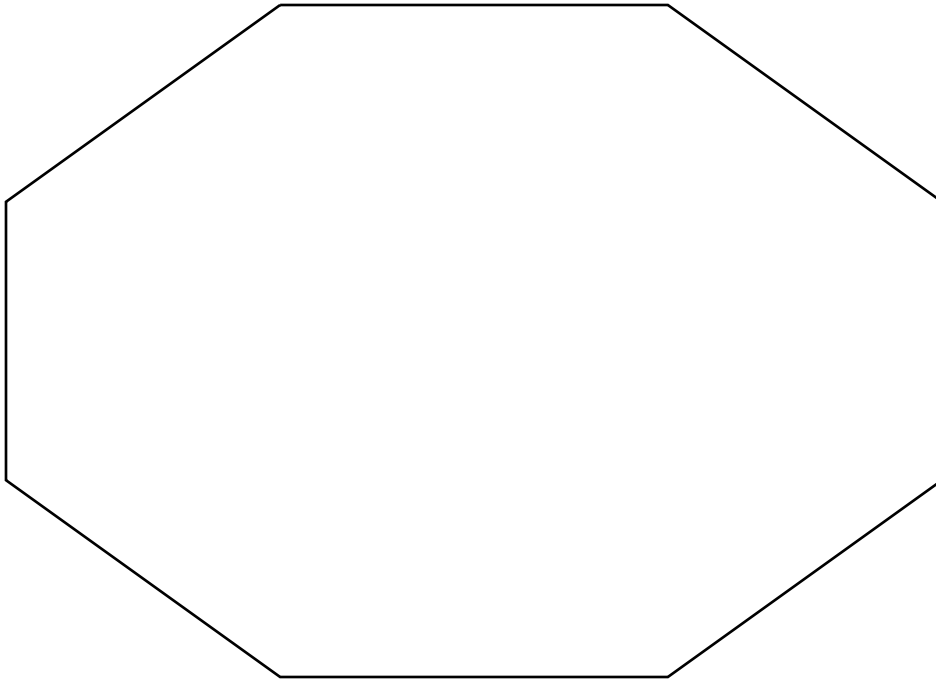
8. What do you learn about Jay and Arty's mother?

9. What tragedy has Grandma had in her lifetime?

10. What does Eddie think of America?

11. Why does Eddie have to leave the boys?

12. On page seven, there is a description of the Grandmother. Draw the Grandmother again, using the new description.



13. Why is Grandma bitter towards Eddie?

14. Why does Grandma think that Eddie isn't a man? Do you agree with her ideas about manhood?

15. What reason does Eddie give for not visiting Grandma?

16. How does Bella convince Grandma to let the boys stay?

Journal:

“Never take because you’ll always be obligated.”

Do you agree with this statement that Eddies taught his sons? Why or why not? Apply it to your own life. How is this true for Eddie?

SCENE TWO

1. Where is Bella spending much of her time?

2. Why do the boys wish that they could make money?

SCENE THREE

1. What does Bella know about her fiancé? Do you think she knows him well enough to marry him? Why or why not?

4. What hints does Bella give that shows that she doesn’t know much about Johnny?

5. Do you think Bella and Johnny would be successful restaurant owners? Why or why not?
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6. What is Grandma hiding in the house? What do Jay and Arty consider doing? Do you think they should?

Scene Four

1. How is Louie different than Eddie?

2. List the lies that come from Louie.

3. How are Jay and Artie different?

4. What's ironic about what Eddie says at the end of the scene, "knowing you're with family..."?

ACT TWO - SCENE ONE

1. Do you think Grandma doesn't like Arty and Jay? Why or why not?

2. What does Grandma say about being hated?

3. What happened when Louie ran away? What did he learn from the experience?

4. Why does Grandma accuse Jay of letting the pretzels be stolen if she knows it was Bella who ate them?

5. Why does Louie think that Jay has moxie?

SCENE TWO

1. What story is it that Bella tells the entire family? How does Grandma react?

2. How does Bella show that she's smarter than she seems?

SCENE THREE

Writer's Notebook Entry: in this scene, Bella says to Grandma “But I am smart, Momma. Maybe only as smart as a child, but some children are smarter than grown-ups.” In what way do you think Bella thinks children are smarter than grown ups? Do you agree?

1. Why can't Bella stay a child?

2. Where does Bella get five thousand dollars?

3. What do you learn is the reason for Grandma's cruelty all these years?

SCENE THREE

1. Why does Grandma finally approve of Eddie?

Journal: Predict how life will be different for Bella and Grandma?