“Our Town” Essay Topics

***Themes we’ve established in class:***

* Life is fleeting: catch every moment while you can
* Circle of life is universal--no matter where or when
* The power of simplicity (versus sophistication)

3rd Person TIQA

1. “No curtain, no scenery.” This is the opening line of the play. From the lack of props to the Stage Manager’s conversing with members of the audience, this play transgresses the most basic rule of drama: never break the four walls. Why does Thorton Wilder do this? How does this tactic enhance or detract from the themes?
2. Thornton Wilder called this play “Our Town,” not “Their Town” or “A Town.” Why? ***Is***this anything like your town of Chicago? In what ways does this story resonate for you in your time period, in your life? Do you think Wilder was accurate in his assumptions that this story is basically universal?
3. This play is an anomaly, because Wilder enables the reader to feel very deeply about certain characters—even though he hasn’t given us that much character development. Why doesn’t Wilder let us get too attached to any one character? Why does he constantly retreat back to the “big picture” of life in Grovers Corners, rather than stick with one person the whole time? How does this tactic enhance or detract from the play’s themes?

1st Person Reflection

1. “It goes so fast. We don’t have time to look at one another… Oh, earth, you’re too wonderful for anybody to realize you. Do any human beings ever realize life while they live it?—every, every minute?” This lament by Emily in the third act is essentially the climax of the play because it’s the moment when the primary theme is revealed. Reflect on an experience in your life that revealed for you, even briefly, how much you appreciated something. This essay option is very personal, so please only choose it if you feel prepared to share this with me in detail. This is a reflection essay, not a TIQA essay. It should describe a specific vignette in your life and show some epiphany—or moment of clarity.