



Study Guide!

NCCT 2012

Plot Synopsis

'Professor' Harold Hill is a con man who sells musical instruments, pretending that he will teach youngsters to play them and form a town band. His plan to carry out the scam at River City, a small town in Iowa, is thwarted when he becomes attracted to Marian Paroo, the local librarian, who immediately recognizes him as the fraud he is.

When some of the town officials become suspicious of him, he forms them into a barbershop quartet. He gets around the ladies of the town by encouraging them to put on a concert and he wins Marian over by his kindness towards her younger brother, Winthrop, who was shy and withdrawn for several years over the death of his father before Hill arrived. Although she recognizes his scheme, Marian falls in love with him and helps him to escape detection. Hill is eventually found out, but decides to stay in town and face the music. Finally, the townspeople realize that even though he lied about the band, he did so much for the town (including the city officials, the ladies of the town and Winthrop) that they forgive him.

A Brief Biography of Meredith Willson

Robert Reiniger Meredith Willson was born in Mason City, Iowa on 18 May 1902. Meredith Willson was educated at Damrosch Institute of Musical Art (now known as The Julliard School). He was a flute and piccolo player. Willson was the solo flautist with John Phillip Sousa's band from 1921 to 1923 and he played flute in the New York Philharmonic under the direction of Arturo Toscanini from 1924 to 1929. Willson was concert director for KFRC in San Francisco and then became the musical director at NBC first in San Francisco and then Hollywood.

As musical director / conductor, Willson is known for his work on the popular radio programs: Carefree Carnival (1933-1936), Maxwell House Coffee Time (1940-19) and The Big Show (1950-1953). He wrote the theme song for Maxwell House Coffee Time - "You and I" which became a number one hit. He also wrote "May the Good Lord Bless You and Keep You" as the show closer for The Big Show.

Willson scored Chaplin's The Great Dictator and Hellman's The Little Foxes. He was a Major in the U.S. Army during World War II and was the Musical Director for the Armed Forces Radio Service.

Meredith Willson's The Music Man opened on Broadway on 19 December 1957 and went on for a 1375 performance run. The cast album won the very first Grammy Award ever presented. The Music Man won eight Tony Awards with Willson winning for Best Musical Author and Best Composer and Lyricist. The movie version won the Academy Award for Best Musical Score.

Willson also wrote The Unsinkable Molly Brown, which opened on Broadway in 1960 and Here's Love (a musical adaptation of Miracle on 34th Street) opened on Broadway in 1963. Willson's song "It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas" written in 1951 and made famous by Perry Como was used in Here's Love.

Meredith Willson died in Santa Monica on 15 June 1984 at the age of 82.

Traveling Salesman

The traveling salesman appeared late in the 19th century both in Europe and in the U.S. The early itinerant peddler carried his goods on his back or on his horse, working his way from a port city through the hinterlands.

With the coming of the railroad and the assurance given to sellers by new credit-reporting systems, salespersons with their sample cases moved across the land. Persuasive skill was less important in those days of unsatisfied demand, and orders were readily forthcoming. By 1900, however, with the increasing supply of manufactured goods, buyers became more discriminating in their purchases. Greater attention was given to training the sales force and to providing buyer incentives. The growth of industrialization and urban living led to the development of merchandising as a major business endeavor. The use of sales promotion practices has experienced steady growth in the 20th century.

Daily life back then was very different from the daily life we have today. Did you know that today's supermarket food selection was considered luxurious even for rich families back then?

Here is a sample menu. Compare the food types and prices to 2012!

APPETIZERS

Half of a
Cantaloupe 10¢
Sliced Orange 10¢
Young Onions 5¢
Sliced Tomatoes 10¢
New Radishes 5¢
Sliced Cucumbers 10¢

Soup

Old Fashion Navy Bean 10¢

CLOTHES:

Back then most of the clothes for families were made by the family mom. Soon they were fitted and made by tailors, though. By the end of the decade almost everyone was buying already made clothes. The kinds of clothes that a woman would wear were usually skirts that came down to the ground. Even if she was doing "unladylike" things, such as farming or bicycling. Another thing that they wore were high, buttoned shoes. The men's suits were almost always dark and heavy. In the summer, out in the country a man might wear white flannel, but back then there was no such thing as a "summer weight suit". Almost every man wore a hat. Farmers wore straw hats, rich people wore silk hats, and middle-class men wore derbies. So, as you can see the dress code back then was strict.

ENTERTAINMENT:

Back in mid 1900's, entertainment wasn't very graphic. They mostly had books and the radio for entertainment. Songs were printed on sheets of paper, so if you had the certain instruments you could play it. Most families had a few members (if not the entire family) who could play one or more musical instruments. Popular song titles in 1912 were: *When It's Apple Blossom Time in Normandy*, *Waiting for the Robert E. Lee*, *Be My Little Bumble Bee*, *It's a Long, Long Way to Tipperary*, *My Melancholy Baby*

Glossary of Terms:

One reason Meredith Willson's great American musical *The Music Man* is appealing is because of the fast paced and witty dialogue. However, there are a few terms and expressions used in the show that cause most of us to run to dictionaries and encyclopedias. Below are words from the dialogue in the show.

Notions: Small lightweight items for household use, such as needles, buttons, and thread. Salesman 1: "Credit is no good for a notions salesman."

Anvil: A heavy block of iron or steel with a smooth, flat top on which metals are shaped by hammering. Salesman 1: "Charlie, you're an anvil salesman.."

billiards vs. pool

Billiards: Also known as carom (or carom) billiards, played with three balls (one cue ball and two object balls) on a pocketless table
Pool: Developed much later than billiards. Also known as pocket billiards, using a cue ball and 15 object balls on a table with six pockets. Marcellus: "Nothin'- except the billiard parlor's just put in a new pool table."

Balzac: (1799-1850) Honoré de Balzac was a French writer of realist novels. Marian: "You'll find it in Balzac."

masher: a man who is aggressive in making amorous advances to women. Marian; "Do you think that I'd allow a common masher?"

Gilmore: (1829-1892) Patrick Sarsfield Gilmore was regarded by John Philip Sousa as the "Father of The American Band." . He wrote "When Johnny Comes Marching Home." It was Patrick Gilmore and his band who started the tradition of greeting the New Year in Times Square.

Jeely Kly: This is a regional phrase used as a more acceptable version of "Jesus Christ". Similar substitutes listed in slang dictionaries include Jeazle Peats, Jeezly, jeasley, jeasly, Jee!, Gee! Jee whizz! Tommy: "Jeely Kly, lemee go."

Liberatti: (1847-1927) Alessandro Liberati, . Born in Italy, played in the Cacciatori Band of Rome. 1872 came to U.S., became a U.S. citizen, and directed his own band that toured the U.S. from 1889-1919 and 1921-23.
Pat Conway: Patrick Conway, 1865-1929. 1900-08, Director of the Ithaca N.Y. Municipal Band, which later became famous as the Conway Band. Toured and performed around the U.S. at the same time as Sousa's band.

The Great Creator: Giuseppe C. Creatore 1871-1952. Directed the Naples Municipal Band in Naples Italy. Came to the U.S. in 1899. Organized his own band, Creatore's Orchestra, which toured and performed around the U.S. at the same time as Sousa's band, and continued performing until 1947.

W.C. Handy: 1873-1958, African-American songwriter and bandleader; b. Florence, Ala. He was among the first to set down the blues and became famous with Memphis Blues and St. Louis Blues.

John Philip Sousa: 1854-1932, band leader and a composer. Sousa was the director of the U.S. Marine Corps Band from 1880 to 1892. After being discharged from the Marine Corps he formed his own band and gave concerts worldwide. His marches include "El Capitan," and "Stars and Stripes Forever."

Harold to Marian: "What does the Poet say? The coward dies a thousand deaths – the brave man only 500": The correct quote is "Cowards die many times before their deaths; / The valiant never taste of death but once" -- William Shakespeare, from *Julius Caesar*.

pianola: a trademark kind of player piano; Pianola. a mechanically operated piano that uses a roll of perforated paper to activate the keys. syn: player piano. Ethel: "I'm Ethel Toffelmier. The pianola girl?"

Del Sarte: (1811–71) Francois Del Sarte, French teacher of acting and singing. Delsarte formulated certain principles of aesthetics that he applied to the teaching of dramatic expression. He set up rules coordinating the voice with the gestures of all parts of the body. Harold: "Every move you make, Mrs. Shinn, bespeaks Del Sarte."

Chaucer: Geoffrey Chaucer, c.1340-1400. English poet regarded as the greatest literary figure of medieval England. His best know work is The Canterbury Tales.

Rabelais: (1494?-1553) Francois Rabelais a French humanist, is one of the comic geniuses of literature. He was a Benedictine monk and became a physician. Beneath the often ribald humor of the book are serious discussions of education, religion, politics, and philosophy. Alma Ethel and Eulalie sing: "Chaucer! Rabelais! Balzac!"

Steelies: A type of marble. A shooter made out of steel that can be either solid or hollow.

Aggies: A type of marble. A shooter made from the mineral, agate.

PeeWees: A type of marble. A smaller marble that is 1/2" or less in diameter.

Glassies: A type of marble. Glassies are glass marbles, either handmade or

O'Clark, O'Mendez, O'Klein: These three famous musicians were definitely not Irish. Clark was Canadian, Mendez was Mexican, and Klein was Jewish. Harold is just adding an O' in front of their names to make them sound Irish so he can make the sale. Harold: "Well– you see all the really great Coronet players were Irish O'Clark, O'Mendez, O'Klein."

The Wells Fargo Wagon: Since 1852, the Wells Fargo stagecoach has been a symbol of reliable service. Over one hundred years ago, their stages traveled across thousands of miles of desert, prairie, and mountain roads to deliver mail and cash. Gracie: Papa! The Wells Fargo Wagon is just comin' up from the depot!"

Zaneeta to Mayor: "It's Capulets like you make blood in the marketplace": reference to Shakespeare's tragedy Romeo and Juliet (1596). Romeo, the young heir of the Montagues, attends the great ball of the Capulets in disguise and falls in love with Juliet, the daughter of the house. During a street brawl in the marketplace, Romeo's friend Mercutio is killed by Juliet's cousin Tybalt, and Romeo in turn kills Tybalt.

machine-made; and are the most common type of marble used. Harold: "Marbles. Six steelies, eight aggies, a dozen peewees and one big glassie."

Rock Island Glossary

button-hooks: A small hook for fastening a button on shoes or gloves.

noggins: A small mug or cup. Also a unit of liquid measure equal to one quarter of a pint.

piggins: A small wooden pail or tub with an upright stave for a handle, often used as a dipper.

firkins: A small wooden barrel or covered vessel -- used for butter, lard, etc.

hogshead: a very large barrel or cask with varying capacity to hold liquid. In the US a hogshead is 63 gallons.

cask: A barrel-shaped vessel. It may be larger or smaller than a barrel.

demijohn: a very large bottle, sometimes up to 10 gallons in capacity. Most were hand blown bottoms. They were used as containers to hold wine, molasses, and other liquids.

Model T Ford: The first widely available automobile powered by a gasoline engine; mass-produced by Henry Ford from 1908 to 1927.

two-by-four kinda store: putdown - small or petty of its kind, as in "this house and its two-by-four garden" – Philip Barry

Uneeda Biscuit: Up to the 1880s, crackers were unbranded and typically sold loose in cracker barrels. But Adolphus Green, who had created the National Biscuit Company, decided to develop a distinctive, nationally branded product. Green settled on the name Uneeda Biscuit ("biscuit," Green decided, was more elegant than "cracker"). The product would be manufactured in a distinctive octagonal shape and sold in a waterproof wax paper-lined box.

sanitary package: first used to describe packaging to keep items like crackers from spoiling. From Encarta: "In 1899 the National Biscuit Company introduced its successful Uneeda Biscuit package. This package is generally considered to have signaled the end of the bulk-merchandising procedures of the country-store era."

cracker barrel: A large, cylindrical container, holding crackers. People supposedly would gather round cracker barrels for conversation in old-time general stores.

Mail Pouch cut plug: a popular brand of chewing tobacco, sold in hard plugs that would be cut with a knife. The grocery store owner would use a mechanical device to cut the plug into flakes to sell or make hand-made cigarettes to sell.

tierce: A cask holding the old unit of liquid measure of the same name equal to 42 US gallons. which salt provisions, rice, etc., are packed for shipment.

line– the product the salesman sells.

Jews-harp: A lyre-shaped instrument of music, which, when placed between the teeth, gives, by means of a bent metal tongue struck by the finger, a sound which is modulated by the breath. Also called also jaw harp and Jew's-trump.

when the man dances the piper pays him: To pay the piper means "to bear the consequences of something". This twist means Harold Hill never has had to pay for his actions – as a matter of fact, he even profits from them without consequences.

balkline: A line parallel to one end of a billiard table, from behind which opening shots with the cue ball are made.

Jasper: any male fellow or chum, usually a stranger

Dan Patch: (1897-1916) Most famous trotting horse ever, from Indiana.

cistern: A receptacle for holding water or other liquid, especially a tank for catching and storing rainwater.

knickerbockers: Full breeches gathered and banded just below the knee (which is why moving them above the knee is such a shocking thing to do)

shirt-tail young ones: Very young: shirttail kids.

Bevo: From Anheuser-Busch. A nonalcoholic drink that tasted like beer.

Cubebs: the dried unripe berry of a tropical shrub (Piper cubeba) of the pepper family that is crushed and smoked in cigarettes.

Tailor Mades: A tailor-made cigarette referred to any cigarette made in a factory on a cigarette making machine.

Sen Sen: was to the 19th century what breath mints are to our time. Any country store worth its salt, prominently displayed a box of the handy little packets within easy reach of its customers.

Rag-time: A style of jazz characterized by elaborately syncopated rhythm in the melody and a steadily accented accompaniment.

Captain Billy's Whiz Bang: Captain Billy's was the most prominent comic magazine in America with its mix of racy poetry and naughty jokes and puns, aimed at a small-town audience with pretensions of 'sophistication' so's your old man: catch phrase from 1900. An exclamation, used as a retort to an insult or slur.

The Maine: U.S. battleship sunk (Feb. 15, 1898) in Havana harbor, killing 260, in an incident that helped precipitate the Spanish-American War. "Remember the Maine" became the rallying cry of the war.

Plymouth Rock: Plymouth, Massachusetts, is the oldest settlement in New England, founded in 1620. Plymouth Rock is on the beach where the Mayflower landed.

The Golden Rule: saying of Jesus, from the Bible --Evolved into modern saying – Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

