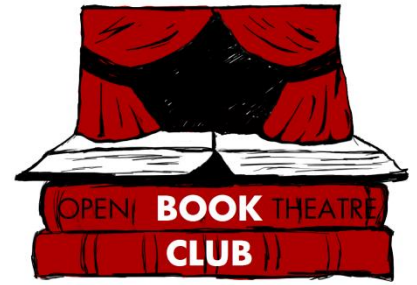


# Sylvia

by A.R Gurney

Sept 26, 27, 28 and Oct 2, 3, 4



- 1) What do you think about the playwright's choice to have the dog, Sylvia, played by a woman? What issues does this raise? How does it add humor to the show? How does it add to the drama?
- 2) Sylvia and Kate are often shown in contrast to each other, as at the top of Act 2 when Greg talks about knowing all about Kate but knowing nothing about Sylvia. How do these opposite pulls work on Greg? Are there any ways Sylvia and Kate are alike?
- 3) How is hyperbole (obvious and intentional exaggeration) used in Sylvia. For what purpose? Is it effective?
- 4) Tom kept suggesting books for Greg to read, such as "Play now, Spay later" and "Your pooch, Your Partner." What book (real or your own invention) would you suggest TOM read? Do you have any recommendations for other characters?
- 5) In the first act Tom warns Greg against giving a dog a woman's name, saying "Give a dog a woman's name, you begin to think of her as a woman." In Act 2 the counselor Leslie says "We project our needs onto the world, Greg. Life is shapeless and absurd. We use words, names and categories to give us a sense of shape. We need that sense of shape to get through the day... You wanted your dog to be a woman..." Do you agree that Greg was projecting his needs onto Sylvia? Do you agree that we project our needs on the world around us? If so, how?
- 6) Greg says: "I just think you should pat her, maybe play with her a little, possibly take her for a short walk. Because then you'll see, Leslie... that Sylvia is more than just a name, or a gene, or psychological symptom, or anything else that tries to pin her down. Any dog owner knows this. If you don't, Leslie, you should get one immediately. We should all have dogs. It should be in the Constitution. It's not just a right, it's an obligation. When you register to vote, you pick up your dog license. The world would be a far better place, Leslie. Why just think: you and I and Nelson Mandela and Yassir Arafat and Meryl Streep could all meet at Club Med or someplace, and what would we talk about? Our dogs, Leslie! Our dogs." Do you agree? Does Sylvia make Greg's world a better place?
- 7) Kate's love of Shakespeare stands in juxtaposition to Sylvia and Greg's use of course language. How does Kate's saying "Oh hell. As Shakespeare once said, "What the fuck" indicate a turning point? What do you think brings about Kate's change of heart?
- 8). How do the characters change through the course of the story? Who has the most dramatic change?
- 9) With a novel, the author paints the scenery and draws the character with his or her words, which are enhanced by the reader's imagination. A playwright must trust various directors, designers and actors to reinterpret the story with each production. How did the theatrical choices (set, costume, lighting, acting choices, movement, etc.) enhance or detract from the story?
- 10) If you read the play before seeing the production, how did it differ from what you imagined when you read it? What surprised you? Was anything clearer?

**Looking for a companion book?** We suggest *The Art of Racing in the Rain* by Garth Stein or *Marley & Me* by John Grogan

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All performances are held at Penelope's Venue, 12219 Dix Toledo Road in Southgate, MI