

College Guild
PO Box 6448 Brunswick, Maine 04011

Drama Club I

Unit 7 of 8

Mary Chase is an American playwright who received the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1945 for her play Harvey. The play centers around Elwood P. Dowd who claims to have an unseen friend, a six-foot tall, white rabbit called Harvey. This play is an award-winning example of how a playwright handles an imaginary character. Notice how Elwood speaks to Harvey and the humor that develops around this interplay between Elwood and his friend that no one else can see.

Below is a scene where Elwood's sister, Veta and his niece, Myrtle are entertaining Mrs. Chauvenet, a very prestigious woman they are hoping to impress. The plan was to entertain Mrs. Chauvenet when Elwood (and Harvey) wouldn't be at home to cause them embarrassment.



<http://i.ytimg.com/vi/ZKD8zsCIBmQ/maxresdefault.jpg>

Through door U.L. enters ELWOOD P. DOWD. He is a man about 47 years old with a dignified bearing, and yet a dreamy expression in his eyes. His expression is benign, yet serious to the point of gravity. He wears an overcoat and a battered old hat. This hat, reminiscent of the Joe College era, sits on the top of his head. Over his arm he carries another hat and coat. As he enters, although he is alone, he seems to be ushering and bowing someone else in with him. He bows the invisible person over to a chair. His step is light, his movements quiet and his voice low-pitched)

ELWOOD (*to invisible person*): Excuse me a moment. I have to answer that phone. Make yourself comfortable, Harvey. (*Phone rings.*) Hello. Oh, you've got the wrong number. But how are you, anyway? This is Elwood P. Dowd speaking. Well, thank you. And what is your name, my dear? Miss Elsie Greenawalt? (*To chair.*) Harvey, it's a Miss Elsie Greenawalt. How are you today, Miss Greenawalt? That's fine. Yes, my dear. I would be happy to join your club. I belong to several clubs now - - the University Club, the Country Club and the Pinochle Club at the 4th Ave Firehouse. I spend good deal of my time there, or at Charlie's Place, or over at Eddie's Bar. And what is your club, miss Greenawalt? (*He listens -- then turns to empty chair.*) Harvey, I get the Ladies Home Journal, Good Housekeeping and the Open Road for Boys for two years for six twenty - five. (*Back to phone.*) It sounds fine to me. I'll join it. (*To chair.*) How does it sound to you, Harvey? (*Back to phone.*) Harvey says it sounds fine to him also, Miss Greenawalt. He says he will join, too. Yes --two subscriptions. Mail everything to this address...I hope I will have the pleasure of meeting you some time, my dear. Harvey, she says she would like to meet me. When? When would you like to meet me, Miss Greenawalt? Why not right now? My sister seems to be having a few friends in and we would consider it an honor if you would come and join us. My sister will be delighted. 343 Temple Drive -- I hope to see you in a very few minutes. Good-bye, my dear. (*Hangs up.*) She's coming right over. (*Moves closer to HARVEY.*) Harvey, don't you think we'd better freshen up? Yes, so do I. (*He takes up hats and coats and exits L.*)...

[...minutes later after Veta, Myrtle, and Mrs. Chauvenet have re-entered...]

MRS. CHAUVENET: Now, what about tea, Veta?

VETA: Certainly -- (*Starts forward to lead the way.*) If you will forgive me, I will precede you -- (*ELWOOD enters. MRS. CHAUVENET turns back to pick up her scarf from chair, and sees him.*)

MRS. CHAUVENET: (*rushing forward*) Elwood! Elwood Dowd! Bless your heart.

ELWOOD: (*coming forward and bowing as he takes her hand*) Aunt Ethel! What a pleasure to come in and find a beautiful woman waiting for me!

MRS. CHAUVENET: (*looking at him fondly*) Elwood -- you haven't changed.

VETA: (*moves forward quickly, takes hold of her*) Come along, Aunt Ethel -- you mustn't miss the party.

MYRTLE: There's punch if you don't like tea.

MRS. CHAUVENET: But I do like tea. Stop pulling at me, you two. Elwood, what night next week can you come to dinner?

ELWOOD: Any night. Any night at all, Aunt Ethel -- I would be delighted.

VETA: Elwood, there's some mail for you today. I took it up to your room.

ELWOOD: Did you, Veta? That was nice of you. Aunt Ethel -- I want you to meet Harvey. As you can see, he's a Pooka.

(*Turns toward air beside him.*) Harvey, you've heard me speak of Ms. Chauvenet? We always called her Aunt Ethel. She is one of my oldest and dearest friends. (*Inclines head toward space and goes "Hmm!" and then listens as though not hearing first time. Nods as though not hearing first time. Nods as though having heard someone next to him speak.*) Yes -- yes -- that's right. She's the one. This is the one. (*To MRS. CHAUVENET.*) He says he would have known you anywhere. (*Then as a confused, bewildered look comes over MRS. CHAUVENET'S face and as she looks to the L. and R. of ELWOOD and cranes her neck to see behind him -- ELWOOD, not seeing her expression, crosses toward VETA and MYRTLE.*) You both look lovely. (*Turns to the air next to him.*) Come in with me, Harvey -- we must say hello to all of our friends -- (*Bows to MRS. CHAUVENET.*) I beg your pardon, Aunt Ethel. If you'll excuse me for one moment -- (*Puts his hand gently on her arm, trying to turn her.*)

MRS. CHAUVENET: What?

ELWOOD: You are standing in his way -- (*SHE gives a little -- her eyes wide on him.*) Come along, Harvey. (*HE watches the invisible Harvey cross to door, then stops him.*) Uh-oh! (*ELWOOD crosses over and pantomimes as he arranges the tie and brushes off the head of the invisible Harvey. Then he does the same thing to his own tie. They are ALL watching him, MRS. CHAUVENET in horrified fascination, the heads of VETA and MYRTLE, bowed in agony.*)

1. What are three examples of how someone might react when they hear Elwood speaking to an imaginary friend? (Remember: some sections of the audience are quite far from the stage, so facial expressions might be hard to read.)
2. What might an actor do on stage to indicate he's talking to an imaginary friend?
3. Write the next few lines of dialogue that might come after Elwood leaves the room.
4. Write a scene (twenty lines or more) with a character that only one other character can see or hear.
5. Is your "invisible" character one that can be seen and heard by the audience, too? When would it be effective to have a character be invisible to the audience, and when would it be effective to have the character played by another actor?

Remember: First names only & please let us know if your address changes