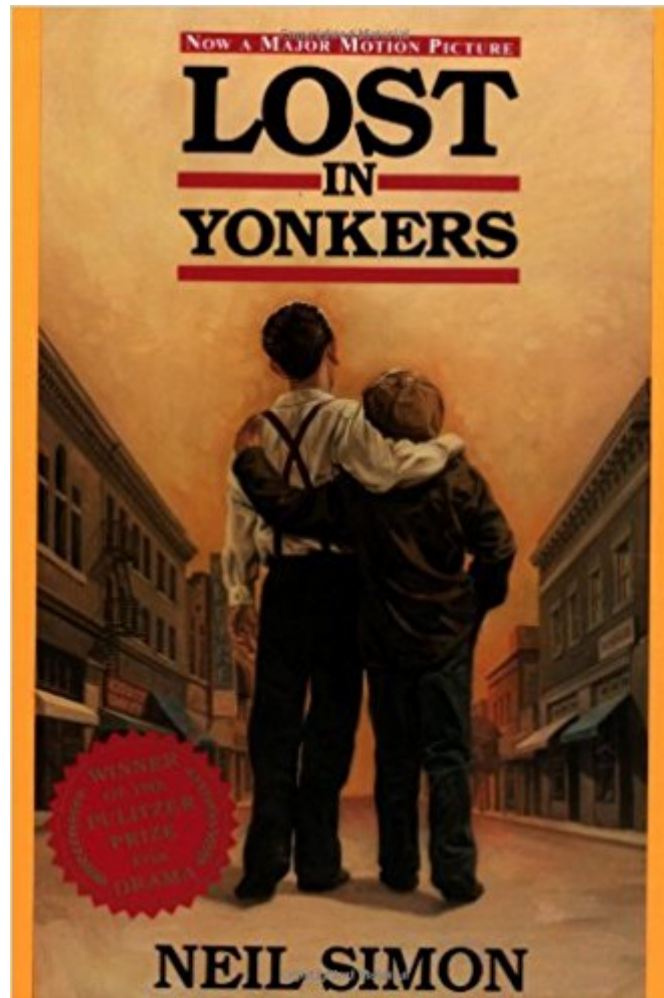




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# Lost In Yonkers (Drama, Plume)



## Synopsis

Neil Simon's inimitable play about the trials and tribulations that test family ties is a "winner of the 1991 Pulitzer Prize for Drama." What happens to children in the absence of love? That is the question that lies at the heart of this funny and heartrending play by one of America's most acclaimed and beloved playwrights. Debuting at the Richard Rodgers Theatre in 1990, *Lost in Yonkers* went on to win four Tony Awards, including Best Play, as well as the Pulitzer Prize, and tells the moving drama about the cruelties and painful memories that scar a family. It is New York, 1942. After the death of their mother, two young brothers are sent to stay with their formidable grandmother for the longest ten months of their lives. Grandmother Kurnitz is a one-woman German front: a refugee and a widow who has steeled her heart against the world. Her coldness and intolerance have crippled her own children: the boys' father has no self-esteem . . . their Aunt Gert has an embarrassing speech impediment . . . their Uncle Louie is a small-time gangster . . . and their Aunt Bella has the mentality of a child. But it is Bella's hunger for affection and her refusal to be denied love that saves the boys—and that leads to an unforgettable, wrenching confrontation with her mother. Filled with laughter, tears, and insight, *Lost in Yonkers* is yet another heartwarming testament to Neil Simon's talent.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Simon's 1991 Pulitzer Prize- and Tony Award-winning play about two young boys who are forced to

live for a year with their domineering, ill-tempered grandmother while their father takes a job in another state is beautifully realized by the L.A. Theatre Works cast. Like most of Simon's works, this one features an eccentric cast of characters. Listeners meet Aunt Gert (played by Gia Carides), whose voice frequently switches into a wheeze midsentence, and Uncle Louie (played by Dan Castellaneta), a Bogart-like gangster. This production realizes Simon's trademark mix of comedy and drama: the one-liners are hilarious, but the characters' sad, dysfunctional relationships are poignant. The compassionate, three-dimensional performances, combined with Simon's nuanced writing and authentic rendering of 1940s speech, make the listener fully believe in these realistic, complex characters. Standout performers include Roxanne Hart as the boys' kindhearted but nervous Aunt Bella and Barbara Bain as Grandma Kurnitz, whose tough, coldhearted exterior is a reaction to a lifetime of devastating pain and loss. Also excellent are Ben Diskin and Kenneth Schmidt as the young boys. At first lonely and miserable, fearing and hating their stern grandmother, they gradually come to respect and understand her. Based on the Random House hardcover. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Preloaded Digital Audio Player edition.

YA-- An insightful drama about one woman's drive and its emotional toll on her and her family. Grandma Kurnitz has endured many crises, ranging from a harsh childhood in Germany to being a young widow with six children in a foreign country. From her life she learned to be strong, hard, and cold, and this is the lesson she tries to instill in her four remaining children. While her two teenage grandsons are in her care, the three learn the importance of being loved and loving, and the difference between living and surviving. The themes of family ties and the search for love should strike a responsive chord with many young adults. Patricia A. Long, R.E. Lee High School, Springfield Copyright 1992 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Preloaded Digital Audio Player edition.

The Skinny Jay and Arty come to live with Grandma and Aunt Bella after their mother dies. Their father, Eddie, cannot serve in the military, so he is a traveling salesman throughout the south. He sells metals "steel, mostly " to benefit the military and contribute to the war. They learn interesting things about their Aunt Bella and Uncle Louie, both who have their own struggles, while trying to please their hard-nosed German grandmother. The Players Jay " called Yakob by Grandma Arty " called Artur by Grandma Eddie " Jay and Arty's father, he is a traveling salesman selling metals for the military, known to be sickly Grandma " a hard, cold

German woman, escaped Berlin, owns a candy store  
Aunt Bella “ Jay and Arty’s aunt, she lives with Grandma and works in the candy store, has the mindset of a child  
Uncle Louie “ Jay and Arty’s uncle, he is rarely around and seems to take part in nefarious activities  
Aunt Gert “ Jay and Arty’s aunt, she has a speech impediment  
The Highs and Lows Jay and Arty. The two are wide-eyed coming to live with Grandma. They know virtually nothing about their relatives, since they’ve never really visited. They are a quiet, cute duo who are piecing together and learning the history of Grandma, Bella, Louie and Gert.  
Grandma. She is a hard, cold, steeled woman who does not believe in showing any emotion. A display that could be interpreted as weakness disgusts her. She suffered in her escape from Berlin, and although she has buried her husband and even some of her own children at young ages, she does not cry. In this, she has pushed the rest of her children away. She keeps a tight reign on the candy store and knows when even a pretzel has gone missing. It is rumored that Grandma has thousands of dollars stashed away somewhere in the house.  
Bella. She is a grown woman, in her mid-thirties, but has the mind of a child. She will be that way always, and she should be in the Home. Grandma has threatened her many times to go into the Home, but Bella knows she does not want to be alone. She uses this to her advantage. That is Grandma’s weakness. Bella is a strange mix of child and adult, having her own hopes and dreams. She believes she is going to marry Johnny, an usher at the movie theatre. They’re getting married because they’ve gone to four movies together. He is like Bella, but he cannot read. Bella wants to help him open up a restaurant but needs five thousand dollars to do so.  
Louie. He’s a little gangster! Really, he is. Or, as Arty calls him, a henchman. He’s a real jokester. He carries a black bag, a gun, and has men in a black Studebaker following him. He comes into town spur of the moment and is very antsy. He hires Jay and Arty to keep a lookout for him, and to tell anyone that he’s not around. He teaches the boys what “moxie” is and the boys learn Louie was a rough kid. He ran away from home several times and got in with the wrong crowd to survive.  
The Take-Away I love this story. I read it in my high school drama class, and I had my sixth grader creative writing class read it this past year. It is a funny story. Everyone fears Grandma. Bella has grown-up dreams without a grown-up mentality. She sees the world in a different light, and it’s a beautiful and sad thing. Louie cracks me up. He’s just hilarious, and he scares the boys, keeps them on their toes.  
Recommendation “ Buy, Borrow or Skip? Buy it. If you don’t want to read the play, but the film version with Richard Dreyfuss. It stays pretty true to the script and brings to life the humor “ and the embodiment of Grandma “ to life.

"I don't think I could write a serious play that didn't have its share of humor," playwright Neil Simon has said. "Nor would I want to write a comedy that didn't reveal its dark side. If it didn't have something to say about truth and revelations, audiences would walk out with that bland sense of nothing known as cute. There is no art in cute." Simon's Pulitzer Prize winning "Lost In Yonkers" is not cute. Set in 1942 during World War II, it is not a nostalgic valentine to the era. Labeling it a "coming of age" story is much too simplistic. It is much more a story about the consequences of surviving at all costs. The play is very funny at times, but Simon is more concerned with bittersweet realities and pathos than comical punchlines here. The outstanding L.A. Theatre Works Audio Production (on two CDS) , directed by Joel Rubenstein with an excellent cast, brings Simon's very flawed and human characters to life. Due to a combination of economic and family crisis, brothers Arty and Jay (Kenneth Schmidt and Ben Diskin) are forced to live with their formidable, tough as nails Grandma (Barbara Bain) and child-like Aunt Bella (Roxanne Hart) while their father Eddie (Arye Gross) sells scrap iron across the country. This arrangement is far from ideal, as Grandma's "tough-to-no-love" approach has left her family with serious issues. Eddie is too sensitive and "weak", Bella (endearingly portrayed by Roxanne Hart) has a cognitive disability, and Aunt Gert (Gia Carides) is so terrified she can't speak properly. By the time colorful Uncle Louie (Dan Castelloneta) arrives, Jay is so frustrated he wants to join Louie on the road. Louie is hiding from the Mob and, therefore, not a good role model. "A good week for you is a bad week for somebody else," Grandma tells him. Louie, who has learned her "survive at all costs" techniques too well, replies, "Whatever I've done in this life, you've been my partner." The play reaches its emotional apex when Bella, more smart and self-aware than her family thinks, asserts herself by expressing her life aspirations. Unlike Grandma, Bella wants to be "soft and warm" and truly loved before she dies. Simon's humanity consistently shines through the complex emotional situations. He understands that humans are imperfect; and he respects his very human characters for doing the best they can with the hand that life has dealt them. Highly recommended!

Along with Brighton Beach Memoirs and Broadway Bound, I believe Lost in Yonkers is Simon's best play--addressing the issue of non-conformity. The protagonist, Bella is a beat or three off but has a good heart and a lot of guts. I love script but alas not the LA TheatreWorks production, which is too antiseptic. Instead, watch the movie. Mercedes Ruehl gives an Oscar-nominated, fabulous performance as Bella.

We enjoyed reading the play as a group and saw why it was such a hit.

Such a classic! Wonderfully written!

Good book

Item arrived with timeframe provided and in great condition. I will be audition for the show early next year and hope having the script will help me win a role.

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