

# It's A Wonderful Life

(Drama) (1946)

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## Major Characters

**George Bailey**.....James Stewart  
An honest good-hearted guy who has always wanted to travel all over the world, but who is never able to leave his small town of Bedford Falls in New York State because of things that happen beyond his control.

**Mary Hatch**.....Donna Reed  
George's sweet and innocent girlfriend who eventually becomes his wife and the mother of their four children.

**Peter Bailey**.....Samuel S. Hinds  
George's dad, a good and decent man who is not a very good business man. He is the manager of the Bedford Falls Building and Loan, a business which loans money to working people so they can buy houses.

**Mr. Potter**.....Lionel Barrymore  
A very mean, disliked and powerful banker who controls much of the economy of Bedford Falls. He sees the Building and Loan as competition to his own businesses, and wants to eliminate it.

**Harry Bailey**.....Todd Karns  
George's brother, who goes off to college while Harry stays in town to help run the Building and Loan.

**Uncle Billy**.....Thomas Mitchell  
George's Uncle and Peter's brother, who is a kind but nervous man who also works at the Building and Loan.

**Mrs. Bailey**.....Beluah Bondi  
George's sweet and loving mother

**Clarence**.....Henry Travers  
George's "guardian angel," who looks over and protects him when he faces his greatest life crisis. Clarence is an angel who has not yet helped enough people to "earn his wings."

**Mr. Gower**.....H.B. Warner  
The owner of the town drugstore where Harry worked as a young teenager

**Violet Bick**.....Gloria Graham  
A sexy young woman who had very much liked Harry ever since she was a young child

**Sam Wainwright**.....Frank Albertson  
A friend of George and Harry who becomes a successful businessman

**Annie**.....Lillian Randolph  
The Bailey family maid

### **George's friends**

**Ernie the taxi driver**.....Frank Faylen

**Bert the policeman**.....Ward Bond

**Nick the bartender**.....Sheldon Leonard

**Mr. Martini the Italian immigrant**.....William Edmunds

### **George's kids**

**Zuzu**.....Karolyn Grimes

**Ruth**.....Virginia Patton

**Peter**.....Larry Simms

**Tommy**.....Jimmy Hawkins

## **Plot Summary**

This film is considered one of the true classics of American cinema. It is the story of George Bailey, a wonderfully honest and decent young man who has always wanted to leave his small town of New Bedford, New York, in order to travel the world. Unfortunately, George is never able to go, for it seems that whenever he is about to, a new crisis or development keeps him in town. The film follows George from his childhood and teenage years in the 1920s, through the great economic depression of the 1930s, and on through the years of World War II. This movie was made in 1946, just after the war.

The main problem for George is that as a young man, he ends up being responsible for running the family business, the New Bedford Building and Loan. For many working people in town, this company is the only hope that they will be able to buy a house, since the banks and many of the other local businesses are run or controlled by the evil Mr. Potter. Potter is not interested in lending money to poor people, since he prefers that they be stuck renting the horrible apartments that he also owns.

Although George never gets out of town, he does marry a wonderful wife and has a beautiful home with four healthy kids. One day though, crisis strikes when Uncle Billy loses \$8,000 dollars of the company's money, and George suddenly faces "bankruptcy, scandal and prison." The situation gets so bad that George actually

considers committing suicide, but then he meets Clarence, his wonderful “guardian angel.” With great difficulty, Clarence is able to slowly convince George that his life is still worth living, and that in fact, the most valuable things in life have little to do with money.