Our town, your town

from the Esri GeoInquiries™ collection for American Literature

Target audience – American literature learners   **Time required – 15 minutes**

Activity	Explore the essential services in a small American town in the early 1900s and compare the services that are offered in a community today. Book: *Our Town* by Thornton Wilder.
Standards	**CCSS: ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1**. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly, as well as inferences drawn from the text. **CCSS: ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.5**. Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (for example, parallel plots), and manipulate time create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.
Learning Outcomes	• Students will be able to identify essential services in a turn-of-the-century small American town and in their own community today. • Students will be able to see the relationship between services offered in a small community and the modes of transportation through time.

Map URL: http://esriurl.com/litGeoInquiry7

❓ Ask

Where is *Our Town*?

→ Click the URL above to launch the map.
→ Read aloud, "In the opening dialogue, the stagehand in Our Town gives geographic coordinates for Grover's Corner, New Hampshire as 42 degrees 40 minutes North, 70 degrees 37 minutes West. "
→ Click the button, Bookmarks. Select Lat/Long Grover's Corners.
→ Click the purple star (at 42° 40" N, 70° 37" W).
? What town and state do the coordinates indicate? *[Rockport, Massachusetts]*
– Wilder modeled the fictitious Grover's Corners on Peterborough, New Hampshire.
→ Click the red star, indicating Peterborough, NH..
→ Click the Measure button. Set it to Distance and select Miles.
? How far "as the crow flies" is Grover's Corners from Peterborough, New Hampshire? *[~70 miles]*

⬇ Acquire

Where are the essential services in Peterborough in 1901?

→ Click the button, Bookmarks. Select Peterborough 1900.
→ With the Details button depressed, click the (Show) Content button.
→ Turn on the layer, Peterborough 1892
→ Turn on the layer, Peterborough's Landmarks 1900.
? The stage manager describes Grover's Corners in spatial terms like "row of stores" and "back there is the railroad station". Can you locate on the map some of the features mentioned in the play?
? What are some of the essential services in Peterborough? *[Schools, town hall, churches, shops, offices, and banks]*

🔍 Explore

What are the distances between homes and services in 1901?

→ Click the Measure tool. Select Distance and set it to Miles.
→ Measure distances between homes and services in 1900.
? What is the average distance along roads, between a residence and services? *[Approximately a quarter to half a mile.]*
? What modes of transportation were commonly used to access goods and services? *[Walking, buggies, wagons, and railroad.]*
? What was the role of mail-order services like Sears, Roebuck & Co. catalogues? *[Consumers could access goods without leaving their homes.]*

more ▶

📋 Analyze

How has Peterborough changed since 1892?

→ Point to the Peterborough 1892 layer, click the three dots below the layer name, choose Transparency, and then move the transparency slider to 50%. *(Note: historical layers may not line up precisely.)*

? How has the landscape changed (highways, bridges, dams, railroads)? *[Train tracks removed, Nubansuit Brook is dammed]*

→ Pan to the periphery of the town.

? Where is there growth in Peterborough? *[Highways, large buildings with parking lots]*

✅ Act

How far do you have to travel to access goods and services?

→ In the search field, type the name of your community and zoom to it.

→ Locate your home.

? What goods and services exist within half a mile of your home?

? What mode of transportation do you use to access goods and services?

? How has modern transportation changed the way we access goods and services? [*With motorized vehicles, distances between homes and services have increased.*]

? How has the Internet changed how we access goods and services? *[Consumers can access goods and services from home.]*

MEASURE TOOL

- Click Measure, select the Distance button, and from the drop-down list, choose a unit of measurement.
- On the map, click once to start the measurement, click
- again to change direction, and double-click to stop measuring.
- Hint: Position the area of interest on the map so that it is not obscured by the Measure window.

LAYER TRANSPARENCY

- From the Details pane, click the Show Contents Of Map button.
- Point to a layer, click the three blue dots below the layer name, and choose Transparency.
- Modify the layer transparency to see an active layer below the top layer.

Next Steps

DID YOU KNOW? ArcGIS Online is a mapping platform freely available to public, private, and home schools. A school subscription provides additional security, privacy, and content features. Learn more about ArcGIS Online and how to get a school subscription at http://www.esri.com/schools.

THEN TRY THIS...
• Create a community map of your town, showcasing unique aspects.
• Explore the Discovering Small Towns In Southwest Missouri story map: http://esriurl.com/Geo230.

📰 TEXT REFERENCES

This GIS map has been cross-referenced to material in sections of chapters from the following play.

- *Our Town*, Thornton Wilder

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