Show Synopsis:

The story of *The Man Who Came to Dinner* is set in a small town in Ohio in December of 1940. A famous, outlandish radio wit, lecturer, theater & literary critic named Sheridan Whiteside (based on the real-life personality Alexander Wollcott who was one of the most famous people of the 1920’s-1940’s) has been invited to dine at the home of the wealthy owner of a factory, Mr. Ernest Stanley and his family. However, before Whiteside enters the house, he slips on a patch of ice outside the front door and injures his hip. Whiteside intimidates the Stanley’s with threats of legal prosecution, and they are forced to allow him to stay while he recovers. He is attended by Dr. Bradley, the town physician, and Miss Preen, the nurse.

Whiteside proceeds to terrorize the Stanley’s, taking over their home and interfering with almost every aspect of their lives. But Whiteside's life is about to change for the worse when his secretary of 10 years, Miss Maggie Cutler, falls in love with the local newspaper editor, Bert Jefferson, who had dropped by to interview Whiteside. Maggie informs Whiteside that Bert has written a great play, which she is confident would be a Broadway hit. She gives the play to Whiteside asking him to send the play to Katherine Cornell, a famous actress of the time. Whiteside refuses to believe that Maggie is in love and also doesn't want to lose a very valuable secretary so he plots to break up the romance. He invites the provocative star actress Lorraine Sheldon to visit, promising her that he has a great play for her. All she has to do is convince the author to let her have the leading part. Lorraine is excited and says she will come at once.

Meanwhile, the doctor returns with the news that he had misread Whiteside's X-ray, and that he is in fact perfectly fine! Whiteside, attached to his scheme to separate Maggie and Bert, bribes the doctor to hide the "good" news by promising to help edit the Doctor's novel, “Forty Years an Ohio Doctor”. Lorraine shows up and starts working on Bert. Maggie suspects Whiteside has arranged this. When their friend and famous playwright/songwriter/actor Beverly Carlton (based on Noel Coward) arrives, Maggie asks him to phone Lorraine and impersonate Lord Bottomley who Lorraine has been trying to marry, in an attempt to get her to leave town and forget about Bert. However, Lorraine and Whiteside discover that the real Lord Bottomley did not call and Lorraine is so furious with Maggie that she vows to stop at nothing to break up her relationship with Bert.

Maggie quits her job which causes Whiteside to realize that she really is in love with Bert, but he cannot call off Lorraine. With the help of his Hollywood friend Banjo (based on Groucho Marx), he tricks Lorraine into stepping into a mummy case, locks her in and ships the case to Nova Scotia. Everything is fine again. The play ends with Whiteside walking out of the house, only to fall on ice again.

-This is the basic plot. Along the way, there are many funny subplots that involve Dr. Bradley, the Stanley’s son Richard, the Stanley’s daughter June and her boyfriend, the Stanley’s cook and butler, the odd Aunt Harriet and the strange Professor Metz.
CAST OF CHARACTERS:

Sheridan Whiteside - Male, 50-60 - Based upon Alexander Wollcott, he is an obnoxious, self-centered celebrity. He travels the country as a literary critic, theater critic, radio personality, writer and lecturer. He has multitudes of famous friends and depends upon Maggie to keep his life in order, just the way he likes it. He is quick-witted, often difficult, bigger than life. He is in a wheelchair for most of the play.

Maggie Cutler - Female, 30's - Whiteside's executive assistant, very businesslike most of the time, but also a romantic who falls in love with Bert Jefferson. Whiteside's private secretary and chief interference runner for the past ten years. In her thirties, she is smart, sarcastic and somewhat cynical, but after she meets Bert Jefferson and begins to date him, she decides that the fast lane with Whiteside is infinitely less preferable than conventional delights of domesticity.

Mr. Earnest W. Stanley - Male, 40-50 Wealthy factory owner, uptight and put out by the audacity of his guest.

Mrs. Stanley (Daisy) - Female, 40's Always trying to play the hostess, and keep her husband from flying off the handle. She is a sweet but high-strung woman.

Richard Stanley - Male, 18-25 Grown son of Earnest and Daisy, photographer, wishes he could travel and take pictures.

June Stanley - Female, 18-25 Grown daughter of Earnest and Daisy, wants to get married to Sandy who is starting union trouble at the factory.

Harriet Stanley - Female, 50+ Earnest Stanley's eerie sister, floats in and out when Whiteside is alone. She is very odd.

Miss Preen - Female, 25+ Frantic Nurse attending to Whiteside, not enjoying the task of taking care of him. She becomes the constant butt of his insults and name-calling, to which she reacts with routine indignation.

John - Male, 40+ The Stanley's butler who has been around awhile. A very nice person, efficient and star-struck.
Sarah - Female, 40+  Stanley’s cook and housekeeper, who has been around awhile. She is very sweet, a great cook and star struck.

Mrs. Dexter - Female, 30+  Visiting society friend of Mrs Stanley. (Small Role).

Mrs. McCutcheon - Female, 30+  Visiting society friend of Mrs Stanley. (Small Role.)

Dr. Bradley - Male, 50+  Whiteside's doctor while Whiteside is in Mesalia. He diagnosed Whiteside's injuries in error by looking at the wrong X-rays. He is also a late-blooming author who tries to get Whiteside to read his book, “Forty Years an Ohio Doctor.”

Bert Jefferson - Male, 30s - The owner and editor of the Mesalia Journal.  He is smart and a genuinely nice-guy. He naively allows himself to be lured by Lorraine, not realizing the consequences, only excited that his play might get produced. He is genuinely in love with Maggie.

Professor Metz - Male, 30+ "a strange-looking man," an entomologist. He is the first of three eccentrics to visit Whiteside during his convalescence. He brings the great man a present of a colony of ten thousand roaches.

Sandy - Male, 20s  a labor-organizer in Mr. Stanley's factory. In love with Mr. Stanley’s daughter, June.

Lorraine Sheldon - Female, 30s-40s  a snobby, beautiful actress. Based on Gertrude Lawrence. She is the vicious epitome of the glamorous, acid-tongued, superficial superstar. She is busy trying to get Lord Cedric Bottomly to marry her (she wants to be high society). She is always dramatic.

Beverley Carlton - Male, 30s-50s  English playwright, actor, songwriter, musician. A Noël Cowardish character who dashes around the world composing and writing plays and being devastatingly charming. He breezes in to visit Whiteside and wish him a "Merry Christmas. He sings a number from his most recent show. Maggie enlists him in an attempt to lure Jefferson away from Lorraine Sheldon, trying to counter Whiteside's attempt to break up her romance. Actor must sing a song, and must be able to do a very upper-class British accent. Ability to play piano is preferred, but not required.

Banjo - Male - 30s-50s  a famous Hollywood comedian, a grown-up adolescent. He is as loony off-screen as on-the Marx brothers all wrapped into one—but he good-heartedly allows himself to be the means by which Maggie can retrieve her happiness. Need to be comfortable with physical comedy.
Other Roles/notes: Convicts, Walcott, Radio Technicians, Mr. Baker, local choir (McCutcheon & Dexter will be in choir), Delivery men and Deputies are small roles that will be cast. Some of these roles will be doubled - particularly the male roles. Banjo, Metz, Sandy and Beverly may also be doubled up, with one actor playing multiple characters.

NOTE on style: The language in the 40’s was more formal than dialogue is today, and the show is a farce, so actors must get a feel for handling the rhythm and pace of the show. This play runs on witty dialogue and proper people dealing with ridiculous situations and misunderstandings. It’s also a bit of a romance.

Audition Scenes & Monologues:

These are the monologues and scenes that will be used for the audition. You do not need to memorize. You should choose one scene or monologue for your initial audition, and then you may be asked to do another scene or monologue. Depending on time, you may also be given a chance to do other scenes/monologues at the audition.

MAGGIE CUTLER (female) – At this point, she is fed-up with Whiteside.

Maggie: Now listen to me, Whiteside. I know you. Lay off. I know what a devil you can be. I've seen you do it to other people, but don't you dare do it to me. Don't drug yourself into the idea that all you're thinking of is my happiness. You're thinking of yourself a little bit, too, and all those months of breaking in somebody new. I've seen you throw a fit when your life has been disrupted. Well that's too bad, but there it is. I'm going to marry Bert if he'll have me, so don't you dare try any of your tricks. I'm on to every one of them. Lay off. That's my message to you, Big Lord Fauntleroy.

BERT JEFFERSON (male) – small-town newspaperman in love with Maggie Cutler. This monologue should not be played “drunk”, but should convey the delirious excitement he feels.

Bert: Maggie, why’d you run away last night? Miss Sheldon thinks the play’s wonderful! I read her the play and she thinks it’s wonderful! Isn’t that wonderful? I know I’m a little drunk, but this is a big day. We’ve been sitting over in Billy’s Tavern all night. Never even realized it was daylight until it was... daylight. Listen Maggie – Miss Sheldon says the play needs just a little bit of fixing – do it in three weeks. She’s going to take me to a little place on Lake Placid – just for three weeks. Isn’t it wonderful? Why don’t you say something, Maggie?
MISS PREEN (female) - Nurse who has been taking much verbal abuse from Mr. Whiteside during the 4-week confinement. This monologue is near the end of the show when she has finally had it with him.

Nurse Preen: Mr. Whiteside, I am leaving. My address is on the desk inside, you can send me a check. I realize this is completely unprofessional, but I am not only walking out on this case. I am leaving the nursing profession. I became a nurse because all my life, ever since I was a little girl, I was filled with the idea of serving a suffering humanity. After one month with you, Mr. Whiteside, I am going to work in a munitions factory. From now on anything that I can do to help exterminate the human race will fill me with the greatest of pleasure. If Florence Nightingale had ever nursed you, Mr. Whiteside, she would have married Jack the Ripper instead of founding the Red Cross. Good day.

MR. STANLEY - Mr. Stanley is trying to stay calm, but he has had enough of Whiteside’s interference with the family. .

Mr. Stanley: I am pleased to inform you, sir, that your plans for my daughter seem to have gone a trifle awry. She is not, nor will she ever be, married to that Labor agitator that you so kindly picked out for her. As for my son, he has been apprehended in Toledo, and will be brought home within the hour. Not having your gift for invective, sir, I cannot tell you what I think of your obnoxious interference in my affairs, but I have now arranged that you will interfere no longer. Mr. Whiteside, these gentlemen are deputy sheriffs. They have a warrant by which I am enabled to put you out of this house, and I need hardly add that it will be the greatest moment of my life. You have fifteen minutes, Mr. Whiteside, fifteen minutes – and that means bag, baggage, wheelchair, penguins, octopus, and cockroaches. I am now going upstairs to smash our radio, so that not even accidentally will I ever hear your voice again.
Mrs. McCutcheon: Is he really coming out this morning? I brought him a plant--do you think it's alright if I give it to him?

Mrs. Stanley: Why, I think that would be lovely.

Mrs. McCutcheon: And some calf's-foot jelly.

Mrs. Stanley: Why, how nice! Who do you think was on the phone just a moment ago? H. G. Wells from London. And look at those cablegrams. He's had calls and messages from all over this country and Europe. The New York Times and so many celebrities--I just can't tell you what's been going on, I'm simply exhausted.

Mrs. McCutcheon: There's a big piece about it in this week's *Time*. (shows magazine) Did you see it? Your name's in it too, Daisy! Listen: "Portly Sheridan Whiteside, critic, lecturer, wit, radio orator, intimate friend of the great and near great, last week found his celebrated wit no weapon with which to combat an injured hip. The Falstaffian Mr. Whiteside, trekking across the country on one of his annual lecture tours, met his Waterloo in the shape of a small piece of ice on the doorstep of Mr. and Mrs. Ernest W. Stanley, of Mesalia, Ohio. Result: Cancelled lectures and disappointment to thousands of adoring clubwomen in Omaha, Denver, and points West. Further result: The idol of the air waves rests until further notice in home of surprised Mr. and Mrs. Stanley. Possibility: Christmas may be postponed this year." What's *that* mean?

Mrs. Stanley: (takes magazine and reads) "A small piece of ice on the doorstep of Mr. and Mrs. . . . " Think of it!

Mrs. McCutcheon: Of course if it were my house, Daisy, I'd have a bronze plate put on the step, right where he fell.

Mrs. Stanley: Well, of course, I felt terrible about it. He just never goes to dinners anywhere, and he finally agreed to come here, and then this had to happen. Poor Mr. Whiteside! But it's going to be so wonderful having him with us, even for a little while. Just think of it! We'll sit around in the evening, and discuss books and plays, all the great people he's known. And he'll talk in that wonderful way of his. He may even read to us!
Maggie: Good evening! Really, Sherry, you’ve got this room looking like an old parrot cage. Did you have a nap while I was out? What’s the matter, dear? Cat got your tongue?

Sheridan: Don’t look at me with those great cow eyes, you simpering school girl. Where have you been all afternoon? Playing house with Bert Jefferson?

M: Sherry, Bert read me his play this afternoon. It’s superb. It’s not just a play by a newspaperman. It’s really superb. I want you to read it tonight. It just cries out for Cornell. Will you send it to her? Will you read it tonight?

S: No, I will not read it tonight or any other time. And while we’re on the subject of Mr. Jefferson, you might ask him if he wouldn’t like to pay your salary since he takes up all your time.

M: Oh, Sherry, it’s not as bad as all that.

S: I haven’t even been able to reach you, not knowing what ice-cream parlors you frequent.

M: Oh, stop behaving like a spoiled child, Sherry.

S: Don’t take that patronizing tone with me, you flea-bitten Cleopatra. I’m sick and tired of you sneaking around like some lovesick high school girl every time my back is turned.

M: I’m afraid you’ve hit the nail on the head. I’m in love.

S: Nonsense. This is merely delayed puberty.

M: No, Sherry, I’m afraid this is it. You’re going to lose a very excellent secretary.

S: You’re out of your mind.

M: Yes, I think I am a little. I’m a girl who’s waited a long time for this to happen. Now is has. Mr. Jefferson doesn’t know it yet, but I’m going to try my darnedest to marry him.

S: Is that all?

M: Well, yes, except that, well I suppose this is my resignation as soon as you can find someone else.

S: Now, listen to me, Maggie. We’ve been together a long time. You are indispensable to me, but I think that I’m unselfish enough not to let that stand in the way where your happiness is concerned. Because, whether you know it or not, I have a deep affection for you.

M: I know that, Sherry.

S: That being the case, I will not stand by and allow you make a fool of yourself.

M: I’m not, Sherry.

S: You are, my dear. You’re behaving like Scarlett O’Hara. It’s – it’s incredible. I cannot believe that a girl who for the past ten years has had the great of the world served up on a platter before her, I cannot believe it is anything but a temporary insanity when you are swept off your feet in seven days by a second-rate, small-town newspaper man.

M: Sherry, I can’t explain what’s happened. I can only tell you that it has. It’s hard for me to believe myself. Here I am, a hard-bitten old cynic behaving like a teenage Shirley Temple and liking it.
Discovering the moonlight, and ice-skating and – I keep laughing to myself all the time, but there it is. What can I do about it, Sherry? I’m in love.

S: Oh, it’s completely unbelievable. Can you see yourself, the wife of the editor of the Mesalia Journal? Having an evening at home for Mr. And Mrs. Stanley, Mr. And Mrs. Poop face and the members of the Book of the Month club?

M: Sherry, I’ve had ten years of the great figures of our time. And don’t think I’m not grateful to you for it. I’ve loved every minute of it. But a girl can’t laugh all the time, Sherry. There comes a time when she wants…Bert Jefferson. You don’t know Bert, Sherry. He’s gentle and he’s unassuming and he’s…well, I love him. That’s all.

S: I see. Well, I remain completely unconvinced. You are drugging yourself into this Joan Crawford fantasy, and before you become completely anesthetized I shall do everything in my power to bring you to your senses.
Sheridan and Beverly Scene:

(Sheridan is in the room, Beverly enters)

Sheridan: Beverly!

Beverly: Sherry!

Sheridan: Now, you Piccadilly pen-pusher, get over here and gaze upon a soul in agony.

B: Don’t tell me how you are, Sherry dear. I want none of the tiresome details. I have only a little time, so the conversation will be entirely about me, and I shall love it. I shall tell you how I glittered through the South Seas and then frolicked through Zambesia, courting the General’s daughter while finishing a three-act play. Now then. Sherry dear, without going into mountainous waves of self-pity, how are you?

S: I’m fine, you presumptuous Cockney. Now how was your trip, wonderful?

B: Fabulous. I did a fantastic amount of work. By the way, did I glimpse that little boudoir butterfly, La Lorraine Sheldon in a motor-car driving away as I arrived?

S: You did indeed. She is paying us a Christmas visit.

B: Dear girl! They do say she set fire to her mother, but I don’t believe it.

S: Now, now. Lorraine is a charming person who has gallantly given up her own Christmas to spend it with me.

B: Well I have a bit of dirt for us. It is the latest report from London on the maneuvers of Lorraine Sheldon against the left flank - in fact, all flanks - of Lord Cedric Bottomley. Listen: “Since September, Lorraine has chased his Lordship from castle to castle, till he finally took refuge, for several weekends, in the men’s lavatory. She is sailing for the States tomorrow on the Normandie, but would return to England on the Atlantic Clipper if Lord Bottomley so much as belches in her direction.” Oh, my, Lord Bottomley. (He goes immediately into an impersonation of His Lordship. Very British, very full of teeth and stuttering:) “Not v-v-v-very good shooting today, blast it. Only s-s-s-six partridges, f-f-four grouse and the D-D-Duke of Sutherland. Haw, ha. R-r-r-ripping debate in the House today. Old Basil spoke for th-th-three hours. D-d-dropped dead at the end of it. Ripping. Ha!”

S: (Laughing) That’s Bottomley to his very bottom,...It’s so good, it’s uncanny. Damn it, Beverly, why must you race right out of here? I never see enough of you, you ungrateful cad.

B: Sherry, I can only tell you that my love for you is so great that I changed trains in Chicago to spend ten minutes with you and wish you a Merry Christmas. And now I have just enough time for one magnificent number, to give you a taste of how brilliant my new show is.

S: I’m sure it’s superb. The best thing you ever written.

B: Please. Let me say that.
Lorraine, Sheridan, Maggie Scene:

Lorraine is on the phone. Lorraine believes this is an honest proposal from the man she has been chasing. Then enter Sheridan - he is completely annoyed by this, as he wants Lorraine to take Bert away and get rid of him so Maggie won't leave her job. Maggie knows this is a fake call from Beverly - she has asked him to play the prank to get rid of Lorraine and protect her relationship with Bert!

Lorraine: Cedric! Cedric, is this you?...Why Cedric, you darling! How’d you know I was here? What? Darling, don't talk so fast and you won't stutter so...that's better...yes, now I can hear you. Yes, my dearest, now tell me. . .Cedric, please don't stutter so. Don't be nervous. (she listens) Oh, my darling. Oh, my sweet. You don't know how I’ve prayed for this, every night on the boat! Darling, yes! YES, a thousand times YES! You’ve made me the happiest girl in the world. Goodbye, darling. Goodbye. (hangs up) Sherry! Sherry, Sherry! (He is entering to her squeals) Do you know what just happened? Cedric just called from London---he’s asked me to marry him!

Sheridan: (Disturbed) What!? (He sulks and builds in frustration during the next dialogue)

Lorraine: Sherry, think of it! At last! I’ve got to get right out of here and catch the next boat.

Maggie: May I come in?

L: Maggie, dear, can I get a plane out of here right away? I’ve simply got to get the next boat to England. When is it---do you know? Is there a newspaper here?

M: (Jumps right in with the information) The Queen Mary sails Friday. What’s happened?

L: Maggie, the most wonderful thing in the world has happened. Lord Bottomley has asked me to marry him!

M: Really? Well, what do you know?

L: Isn’t it wonderful? I’m so excited I can hardly think. Maggie dear, you must help me to get right out of here.

M: I’d be delighted to, Lorraine.

L: Oh, thank you, thank you. Will you look things up right away?

M: Yes, I’ve a time-table right here! And don’t worry, because if there’s no train I’ll drive you to Cleveland and you can catch a plane from there.

L: Maggie, darling, you’re wonderful. (She notices Sherry sulking) Sherry, what’s the matter with you? You haven’t said a word. You haven’t even congratulated me.

S: Let me understand this, Lorraine. Am I to gather from your girlish squeals that you are about to toss your career into the ashcan?

L: Oh, not at all. Of course I may not be able to work this season, but there’ll be other seasons, Sherry.

S: I see. And everything goes into the ashcan with it--is that right?

L: But Sherry...

S: (Icily) Don’t explain, Lorraine. I understand now why Cornell remains the First Actress of our theatre.

M: Oh, this is wonderful! We’re in luck Lorraine. There’s a plane out of Cleveland at ten! It takes about an hour to get there -- why this works out wonderfully, doesn’t it, Sherry?
S: Peachy.

M: Oh, look Sherry! It’s starting to snow. Isn’t that wonderful, Sherry? Oh, I never felt more like Christmas in my life! Don’t you, Sherry dear?

S: Shut your nasty little face.

L: Well! Life is really just full of surprises, isn’t it? Who’d have thought an hour ago that I’d be on my way to London?

M: An hour ago? No, I certainly wouldn’t have thought it an hour ago.

S: (Beside himself with irritation) Will you both stop this female drooling? I have a violent headache!
Banjo and Sheridan Scene:

Sheridan is on stage. Banjo enters (character is based on Groucho Marx/Jimmy Durante)

B: Whiteside, I'm here to spend Christmas with you. Give me a kiss.
S: Get away from me, you reform school fugitive. How did you get here anyway?
B: Santa loaned me his reindeer.
S: Listen you idiot, how long can you stay?
B: Just long enough to take a bath. I'm on my way to Nova Scotia. Where's Maggie?
S: Nova Scotia? What are you going to Nova Scotia for?
B: I'm sick of Hollywood and there's a dame in New York I don't want to see. So I figured I'd go get some smoked salmon. Where the heck is Maggie? I want to see her. What's the matter with you?
S: Banjo, I'm glad you're here. I'm very annoyed at Maggie. Very!
B: What's the matter?
S: She's turned on me like a viper. You know how fond I am of her. Well, after these years she's repaying my affection by behaving like a fishwife.
B: What are you talking about?
S: But I never believed for a moment she was really in love with him.
B: In love with who? I just got here—remember?
S: Great heavens, I'm telling you, you Hollywood nitwit. A young newspaper man here in town.
B: Maggie finally fell—well, what do you know? What kind of guy is he?
S: Oh, shut up and listen, will you?
B: Well, go on.
S: This young fellow, he's written a play. And Lorraine Sheldon happened to come out here to visit...
B: Old hot pants ---here?
S: Well you can guess the rest. He's going away with Lorraine this afternoon to rewrite the play and Maggie's in there crying her eyes out.
B: Gee!.....Say...wait a minute. What do you mean Lorraine Sheldon happened to come out here? I smell a rat. A rat with a beard...
S: Well all right! But I did it for Maggie!
B: Oh, sure. You haven't thought of yourself in years. Anyway I could help? Where's his guy live, Can we get a hold of him?
S: Now wait a minute, Banjo. We don't want any phony warrants or you pretending to be J. Edgar Hoover. I've been through all that with you before. I got Lorraine out here and I've got to get her away.
Man Who Came To Dinner – 2014 Fall Play
AUDITION INFORMATION SHEET
Please complete and turn into Mrs. Mauck

Name___________________________________________ Age/Grade_______

Parents:________________________________________________________________________
Parent E-Mail...........................................................................................................
Parent Cell #(s)_________________________________________________________________

Student E-Mail________________________ Student Cell #___________________________

Texting ok? __________

Stage Experience (List plays and musicals you have been in before, show & role):
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

Acting, vocal or dance training (List your instructor & number of years you have studied):
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

Are you interested in a specific role – if yes, which? _________________________________
If not cast, are you willing to work on one of the tech crews?________________________
Which crew would you prefer: Lights Stage Crew Props Costumes Make-Up

Conflicts:
List ALL conflicts – after school, evening and weekend. (Include sports, showchoir, music lessons, dance lessons, jobs, church activities, etc. Use back of sheet if more space is needed)

Conflict Day(s) Tim________________ Can be missed occasionally?

1. __________________________________________________________________________

2. __________________________________________________________________________

3. __________________________________________________________________________

4. __________________________________________________________________________

5. __________________________________________________________________________

6. __________________________________________________________________________