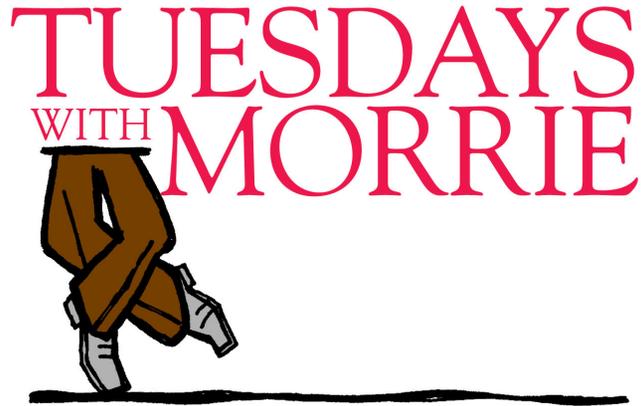


A Playgoer's Guide



by Jeffrey Hatcher and Mitch Albom

"Making the language of the book crisper, cleverer and more palatable...aphoristic wisdom, expressed with gallows wit." — *New York Times*

"This is a play that might – incredibly, just might – change your life." - John Simon, *New York Magazine*

"A touching, life-affirming, deeply emotional drama with a generous dose of humor." —*New York Daily News*.

The Authors



Mitch Albom is the author of six books, including *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*. A nationally syndicated columnist for the *Detroit Free Press* and a nationally syndicated radio host for ABC and WJR-AM, Albom has regularly been named top sports columnist in the nation by the Sports Editors of America, the highest honor in the field. A panelist on ESPN's *Sports Reporters*, Albom also regularly serves as a commentator for that network. He serves on numerous charitable boards and has founded two charities in metropolitan Detroit: The Dream Fund, which helps underprivileged youth study the arts, and A Time to Help, a monthly volunteer program. He was instrumental in founding S.A.Y. Detroit, which distributes money to projects for helping those in need, especially the homeless. He lives with his wife, Janine, in Michigan. [from Albom's Web site]

Jeffrey Hatcher is a prolific playwright and script writer. Scores of theaters have produced his work, including Manhattan Theatre Club, Primary Stages, The Old Globe, Yale Rep, and The Guthrie, among many others in the U.S. and abroad. His film adaptation of *Compleat Female Stage Beauty*, directed by Richard Eyre and starring Billy Crudup and Claire Danes, opened in October 2004. He wrote the screenplay for the 2005 *Casanova*, directed by Lasse Halstrom. He has written for the Peter Falk TV series *Columbo* and has won grants and awards from the National Endowment for the Arts, Theatre Communications Group, Lila Wallace Fund, Rosenthal New Play Prize, Frankel Award, and others. *A Picasso* won Philadelphia's 2003 Barrymore Award for Best New Play. His play *Armada*, a theatrical version of William Wilkie Collins' novel of the same name, opened at the Milwaukee Repertory Theater last spring. [adapted from Playscripts, Inc. and wikipedia]



The book, the movie, the play

Originally published in 1997, *Tuesdays with Morrie* sold nearly 10 million copies in the U.S. alone, and there are more than 14 million copies in print worldwide. A perennial *New York Times* best-seller, the book has been sold in forty international territories and translated into forty-one languages.

In America, the book has become a fixture on university and high school curricula, has been taught to entire incoming freshmen classes, and read by entire cities. It has been mentioned in countless sermons and eulogies, funerals and weddings, as well as on television shows such as *Jeopardy* and the *Gilmore Girls*.

The Oprah-inspired made-for-television movie version of *Tuesdays with Morrie* garnered four Emmy Awards in 1999, including Outstanding Made for Television Movie, Outstanding Supporting Actor (Hank Azaria), and Outstanding Actor for Jack Lemmon, who called his portrayal of Morrie Schwartz “the most satisfying role of my life.”

Originally an off-Broadway production in New York, the play adaptation has been licensed for over seventy productions ranging from professional to amateur theaters and has been staged in Canada, Europe, and Asia. [from the Mouth: Public Relations Web site]

The Inspiration

Morris "Morrie" Schwartz was born on December 20, 1916 and grew up in the Jewish tenements in New York City. Schwartz earned his undergraduate degree from City College of New York, and won a scholarship to the University of Chicago, earning a sociology master's degree and Ph.D. He wrote three books on sociology in the 1950s and 1960s. From 1959, he was a renowned professor of sociology at Brandeis University. He continued teaching classes after he was diagnosed with ALS at the age of seventy-six, incorporating what he was



learning about the meaning of life as he faced impending death. When ABC-TV's *Nightline* producer heard of his classes, Ted Koppel flew to Boston for the first of three interviews with Morrie. These shows were among the highest rated ever for *Nightline*. [from the Random House Web site for Mitch Albom's memoir of Morrie]

ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease)

Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) is a progressive, usually fatal, neurodegenerative disease caused by the degeneration of motor neurons, the nerve cells in the central nervous system that control voluntary muscle movement. The disorder causes muscle weakness and atrophy throughout the body as both the upper and lower motor neurons degenerate, ceasing to send messages to muscles. Unable to function, the muscles gradually weaken, develop fasciculations (twitches) because of denervation, and eventually atrophy because of that denervation. The patient may ultimately lose the ability to initiate and control all voluntary movement; the muscles responsible for eye movement are usually (but not always) spared. Although ventilation support can ease problems with breathing and prolong survival, it does not affect the progression of ALS. Most people with ALS die from respiratory failure, usually within 3 to 5 years from the onset of symptoms. However, about 10 percent of those individuals with ALS survive for 10 or more years. [adapted from wikipedia]

This guide was researched by
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