Please Enjoy the Following Sample

• This sample is an *excerpt* from a Samuel French title.

• This sample is for **perusal only** and may not be used for performance purposes.

• You may not download, print, or distribute this excerpt.

• We highly recommend purchasing a copy of the title before considering for performance.

For more information about licensing or purchasing a play or musical, please visit our websites

[www.samuelfrench.com](http://www.samuelfrench.com)
[www.samuelfrench-london.co.uk](http://www.samuelfrench-london.co.uk)
The Skin of Our Teeth

by Thornton Wilder
THE SKIN OF OUR TEETH

24 males; 11 females

STORY OF THE PLAY

Here is a comedy about George Antrobus, his wife and two children, and their general utility maid, Lily Sabina, all of Excelsior, New Jersey. George Antrobus is John Doe or George Spelvin or you—the average American at grips with a destiny, sometimes sour, sometimes sweet. The Antrobuses have survived fire, flood, pestilence, the seven-year locusts, the ice age, the black pox and the double feature, a dozen wars and as many depressions. They run many a gamut, are as durable as radiators, and look upon the future with a disarming optimism. Alternately bewitched, befuddled and becalmed, they are the stuff of which heroes are made—heroes and buffoons. They are true offspring of Adam and Eve, victims of all the ills that flesh is heir to. They have survived a thousand calamities by the skin of their teeth. Here is a tribute to their indigestibility.
Copy of program of the first performance of "THE SKIN OF OUR TEETH" as given at the Plymouth Theatre in New York.

Michael Myerberg presents

Tallulah Bankhead       Fredric March
Florence Eldridge

in

THE SKIN OF OUR TEETH

A New Comedy

By Thornton Wilder

with a company of forty and
Florence Reed

Directed by Elia Kazan    Settings by Albert Johnson
Costumes by Mary Percy Schenck

ANNOUNCER .................... Morton DaCosta
SABINA ........................ Tallulah Bankhead
MR. FITZPATRICK .................. E. G. Marshall
MRS. ANTRUBUS .................. Florence Eldridge
DINOSAUR ........................ Remo Buffano
MAMMOTH ........................ Andrew Ratousheff
TELEGRAPH BOY .................. Dickie Van Patten
GLADYS ........................ Frances Heflin
HENRY .......................... Montgomery Clift
MR. ANTRUBUS .................. Fredric March
DOCTOR ........................ Blair Davies
PROFESSOR ........................ Ralph Kellard
JUDGE .......................... Joseph Smiley
HOMER .......................... Ralph Cullinan
MISS E. MUSE .................. Edith Faversham
MISS T. MUSE .................. Emily Lorraine
MISS M. MUSE .................. Eva Mudge Nelson
USHER .......................... Stanley Prager
USHER .......................... Harry Clark
GIRL}  Drum Majorettes  \{ Elizabeth Scott
GIRL}  \{ Patricia Riordan
FORTUNE TELLER .................... Florence Reed
(Program Continued)

CHAIR PUSHER .......................... Earl Sydnor
CHAIR PUSHER .......................... Carroll Clark
CONVEENER .............................. Stanley Weede
CONVEENER .............................. Seumas Flynn
CONVEENER .............................. Aubrey Fassett
CONVEENER .............................. Stanley Prager
CONVEENER .............................. Harry Clark
BROADCAST OFFICIAL .................. Morton DaCosta
DEFEATED CANDIDATE .................. Joseph Smiley
MR. TREMAYNE .......................... Ralph Kellard
HESTER ................................. Eulabelle Moore
IVY ...................................... Viole Dean
FRED BAILEY ............................ Stanley Prager

Act I. Home, Excelsior, New Jersey.

Act II. Atlantic City Boardwalk.

Act III. Home, Excelsior, New Jersey.
The Skin Of Our Teeth

ACT ONE

#1 Music—Overture, "William Tell Overture"

(SOUND CUE #1.)

A projection screen in the middle of a drop. The first lantern slide:

(#1 SLIDE—"News Events of the World."
An Announcer's voice is heard)

ANNOUNCER:
The management takes pleasure in bringing to you—
the news of the world:

(#2 SLIDE—The sun appearing above the horizon.)

Freeport, Long Island.
The sun rose this morning at 6:32 a.m. This gratifying
event was first reported by

(#3 SLIDE)
Mrs. Dorothy Stetson of Freeport, Long Island, who
promptly telephoned the Mayor.
The Society for Affirming

(#4 SLIDE)
the End of the World at once went into a special session
and postponed the arrival of that event for twenty-four hours.

(#5 SLIDE)
All honor to Mrs. Stetson for her public spirit.

New York City:

(#6 SLIDE of the front doors of the theatre in
which this play is playing)

The Plymouth Theatre. During the daily cleaning of
this theatre a number of lost objects were collected, as usual.

(#7 SLIDE)
by Mesdames Simpson, Pateslewski, and Moriarity. Among these objects found today was

(#8 SLIDE)
a wedding ring, inscribed: To Eva from Adam. Genesis 2-18.
The ring will be restored to the owner or owners, if their credentials are satisfactory.

Tippehatchee, Vermont:

(#9 SLIDE)
The unprecedented cold weather of this summer has produced a condition that has not yet been satisfactorily explained. There is a report that a wall of ice is moving southward across these counties. The disruption of communications by the cold wave now crossing the country has rendered exact information difficult. Little credence is given to the rumor that the ice

(#10 SLIDE)
had pushed the Cathedral of Montreal as far as St. Albans, Vermont.
For further information see your daily papers.

Excelsior, New Jersey:

(#11 SLIDE of a modest suburban home)
The home of Mr. George Antrobus, the inventor of the wheel.
The discovery of the wheel, following so closely on the discovery of the lever, has centered the attention of the country on Mr. Antrobus of this attractive suburban residence district.
This is his home, a commodious seven-room house, conveniently situated near a public school, a Methodist church, and a fire-house; and it is right handy to an A. and P.

(#12 SLIDE of Mr. Antrobus on his front steps, smiling and lifting his straw hat. He holds a wheel)
Mr. Antrobus, himself. He comes of very old stock and has made his way up from next to nothing.
It is reported that he was once a gardener, but left that

ACT I
situation under circumstances that have been variously reported.
Mr. Antrobus is a veteran of foreign wars, and bears a number of scars, front and back.

(#{13 SLIDE of MRS. ANTBUS, holding some roses)
This is Mrs. Antrobus, the charming and gracious president of the Excelsior Mothers' Club.
Mrs. Antrobus is an excellent needlewoman; it is she who invented the apron on which so many interesting changes have been wrung since that time.

(#{14 SLIDE of the FAMILY and SABINA)
Here we see the Antrobuses with their two children, Henry and Gladys, and friend. The friend, in the rear, is Lily Sabina, the maid.
I know we all want to congratulate this typical American family on its enterprise.

(PROJECTION out. FLY CUE #1)
We all wish Mr. Antrobus a successful future. And now the management takes you to the interior of this home for a brief visit.

(LIGHT set up ½. PROPERTY CUE #1)

(Curtain rises. Living room of a commuter's home. There is enough open space between the lower ends of set, Right and Left, and the proscenium to show the fence that surrounds the house. Down Right is a door to the kitchen and back yard; up Right is a pagoda with steps leading through and upstairs; up Center is a window; down Left is the front door. A walnut Hamlet chair is below door Right; a backless bench up Right below pagoda; a sofa up Center below window; a lightweight round mahogany table Center; rocking chair Right of this table with hassock below the chair; armchair Left of table; two side tables above and below door Left; a clothes tree up Left corner; a pair of fire dogs down Center before an imaginary fireplace. SABINA — straw-blonde, over-rouged — enters from Right, crosses to the window back Center, on 6th
chime, a feather duster under her elbow—looks off Left, eyes shaded)

SABINA:
Oh, oh, oh! Six o'clock and the master not home yet. Pray God nothing serious has happened to him crossing the Hudson River.

(To audience)
If anything happened to him, we would certainly be inconsolable and have to move into a less desirable residence district.

(Crossing to door Left)
The fact is I don't know what'll become of us. Here it is the middle of August and the coldest day of the year.

(Looking through door window)
It's simply freezing; the dogs are sticking to the sidewalks;

(To audience)
can anybody explain that? No.

(Crossing to table down Left, dusting it)
But I'm not surprised. The whole world's at sixes and sevens, and

(FLY CUE #2)
why the house hasn't fallen down about our ears long ago is a miracle to me.

(A fragment of the Left wall, flat “A,” leans precariously over the stage. SABINA looks at it nervously, backs away from it and it slowly rights itself)

Every night this same anxiety as to whether the master will get home safely: whether he'll bring home anything to eat.

In the midst of life we are in the midst of death,

(Crosses to flat “A” to dust motto on wall)
a truer word was never said.

(FLY CUE #3)
(The fragment of scenery, flat “B,” flies up into the lofts. SABINA is struck dumb with surprise, shrugs shoulders and crosses to Left Center table and starts dusting Mr. Antrobus's chair, including the under side)
Of course, Mr. Antrobus is a very fine man, an excellent husband and father, a pillar of the church, and has all the best interests of the community at heart. Of course, every muscle goes tight every time he passes a policeman; but what I think is that there are certain charges that ought not to be made, and I think I may add, ought not to be allowed to be made; we’re all human; who isn’t?

(She crosses to chair Right of table, dusts Mrs. Antrobus’s rocking chair, then stops dusting)

Mrs. Antrobus is as fine a woman as you could hope to see. She lives only for her children; and if it would be any benefit to her children she’d see the rest of us stretched out dead at her feet without turning a hair—that’s the truth.

(Dusts back of chair slightly)

If you want to know anything more about Mrs. Antrobus, just go and look at a tigress, and look hard.

As to the children—

(Crosses to above table Center—picks up slingshot from table)

Well, Henry Antrobus is a real, clean-cut American boy. He’ll graduate from High School one of these days, if they make the alphabet any easier—

(Aims the slingshot)

Henry, when he has a stone in his hand, has a perfect aim; he can hit anything from a bird to an older brother—

(Slingshot down on table)

Oh! I didn’t mean to say that!—but it certainly was an unfortunate accident, and it was very hard getting the Police out of the house.

(Crosses down Right Center to above hassock—dusts it)

Mr. and Mrs. Antrobus’ daughter is named Gladys. She’ll make some good man a good wife some day,

(To audience)

if he’ll just come down off the movie screen and ask her.

So here we are!

ACT I
We've managed to survive for some time now, catch as catch can, the fat and the lean, and if the dinosaurs don't trample us to death, and if the grasshoppers don't eat up our garden, we'll all live to see better days, knock on wood.

(Knocks on wood. Crosses to Left fire dog—dusts it)

Each new child that's born to the Antrobuses seems to them to be sufficient reason for the whole universe's being set in motion; and each new child that dies seems to them to have been spared a whole world of sorrow, and what the end of it will be is still very much an open question.

(Crosses Right to dust picture on flat "B" above door Right)

We've rattled along, 

(FLY CUE #4)

hot and cold, for some time now,

(To audience)

and my advice to you is not to inquire into why or whither, but just enjoy your ice cream while it's on your plate; that's my philosophy.

(Crosses down Right to chair—dusts it)

Don't forget that a few years ago we came through the depression by the skin of our teeth!

(Crosses to window)

One more tight squeeze like that and where will we be?

(This is a cue line. SABINA looks angrily at the Right door and repeats:)

—we came through the depression by the skin of our teeth; one more tight squeeze like that and where will we be?

(Flushed, she looks through the opening in the Left wall; then goes to the window and reopens the Act)

Oh, oh, oh! Six o'clock and the master not home yet.

(A quick look at door Right)

Pray God nothing has happened to him crossing the Hudson.
Here it is the middle of August and the coldest day of the year. It's simply freezing; the dogs are sticking—One more tight squeeze like that and where will we be?

FITZPATRICK:

(Off stage down Left)

Make up something! Invent something!

SABINA:

(Crossing down Left Center—polishing her nails with duster)

Well—uh—this certainly is a fine American home—and—uh—everybody's very happy—and—uh—

(Suddenly flings pretense to the winds and coming downstage says with indignation:)

I can't invent any words for this play, and I'm glad I can't.

I hate this play and every word in it. As for me, I don't understand a single word of it, anyway,—all about the troubles the human race has gone through, there's a subject for you. Besides the author hasn't made up his silly mind as to whether we're all living back in caves or in New Jersey, and that's the way it is all the way through. Oh—why can't we have plays like we used to have—Peg O' My Heart, and Smilin' Thru, and The Bat, good entertainment with a message you can take home with you?

(A quick look off Left)

I took this hateful job because I had to. For two years I've sat up in my room living on a sandwich and a cup of tea a day, waiting for better times in the theatre.

(Crosses to chair Left of table Center)

And look at me now: I—I who've played Rain and The Barretts of Wimpole Street and First Lady—God!

FITZPATRICK:

(The stage manager puts his head out from the proscenium down Left—points to door Right)

Miss Somerset!

SABINA:

(Sits chair Left of table)

Oh! Anyway—nothing matters! It'll all be the same in a hundred years.

ACT I
(Loudly)  
Oh, oh, oh. We came through the depression by the skin of our teeth—that’s true!—one more tight squeeze like that and where will we be?

(Enter Mrs. Antrobus, from Right; a majestic matron carrying small watering can. Crosses to bulrushes on table down Left to water them)

Mrs. Antrobus:  
Sabina, you’ve let the fire go out.

Sabina:  
(In a lather—puts duster on table—rises)  
One-thing-and-another; don’t-know-whether-my-wits-are-upside-or-down; might-as-well-be-dead-as-alive-in-a-house-all-sixes-and-sevens—

Mrs. Antrobus:  
(Turn to Sabina)  
You’ve let the fire go out. Here it is the coldest day of the year right in the middle of August, and you’ve let the fire go out. (Turns back to flowers.)

Sabina:  
Mrs. Antrobus, I’d like to give my two weeks’ notice, Mrs. Antrobus. A girl like I can get a situation in a home where they’re rich enough to have a fire in every room, Mrs. Antrobus, and a girl don’t have to carry the responsibility of the whole house on her two shoulders.

(To Right of Mrs. Antrobus)  
And a home without children, Mrs. Antrobus, because children are a thing only a parent can stand, and a truer word was never said; and a home,  

(Mrs. Antrobus puts can under table)  
Mrs. Antrobus, where the master of the house doesn’t pinch decent, self-respecting girls when he meets them in a dark corridor.

(Mrs. Antrobus turns to Sabina)  
I mention no names and make no charges. So you have my notice, Mrs. Antrobus. I hope that’s perfectly clear. Mrs. Antrobus.

(Crossing to table Center)  
You’ve let the fire go out!—

14  
ACT I
(Turns to Sabina)
Have you milked the mammoth?
Sabina:

(To audience)
I don't understand a word of this play.—
(To Mrs. Antrobus)
Yes, I've milked the mammoth.
Mrs. Antrobus:

(Dusting paper scraps from table onto plate, moving to Right of table)
Until Mr. Antrobus comes home we have no food and we have no fire. You'd better go over to the neighbors and borrow some fire.
Sabina:

(Crossing to Mrs. Antrobus)
Mrs. Antrobus! I can't! I'd die on the way, you know I would. It's worse than January. The dogs are sticking to the sidewalks. I'd die.
Mrs. Antrobus:
Very well, I'll go.
Sabina:

(Even more distraught, coming forward and sinking on her knees)
You'd never come back alive; we'd all perish; if you weren't here, we'd just perish. How do we know Mr. Antrobus'll be back? We don't know. If you go out, I'll just kill myself.
Mrs. Antrobus:
Get up, Sabina.
Sabina:

(Straightens up)
Every night it's the same thing. Will he come back safe, or won't he? Will we starve to death, or freeze to death, or boil to death or will we be killed by burglars?

(Sits chair Left of table)
I don't know why we go on living. I don't know why we go on living at all. It's easier being dead.

She bursts into sobs, flings her arms on the arm of chair and buries her head in them. In each of the succeeding speeches she flings her head up—
...and sometimes her hands—then quickly buries her head again.

Mrs. Antrobus:
(Crossing to above chair Right of table)
The same thing! Always throwing up the sponge, Sabina. Always announcing your own death. But give you a new hat—or a plate of ice cream—or a ticket to the movies, and you want to live forever.

Sabina:
(Her head comes up)
You don't care whether we live or die; all you care is about those children. If it would be any benefit to them you'd be glad to see us all stretched out dead.

Mrs. Antrobus:
Well, maybe I would.
(Exits Right with plate of scraps and Sabina's duster.)

Sabina:
(Rising)
And what do they care about? Themselves—that's all they care about.
(Shrilly)
They make fun of you behind your back. Don't tell me: they're ashamed of you. Half the time, they pretend they're someone else's children. Little thanks you get from them.

Mrs. Antrobus:
(Enters from Right carrying candlewick bedspread; crosses to Center)
I'm not asking for any thanks.

Sabina:
And Mr. Antrobus—you don't understand him. All that work he does—trying to discover the alphabet and the multiplication table—whenever he tries to learn anything you fight against it.

Mrs. Antrobus:
Oh, Sabina, I know you.
When Mr. Antrobus raped you home from your Sabine hills, he did it to insult me.
He did it for your pretty face and to insult me.
You were the new wife, weren't you?
For a year or two you lay on your bed all day and polished the nails on your hands and feet:
You made puff-balls of the combings of your hair and you blew them up to the ceiling.
And I washed your underclothes and I made you chicken broths.
I bore children and between my very groans I stirred the cream that you’d put on your face.
But I knew you wouldn’t last.
You didn’t last.

(Hands Sabina one end of spread.)

Sabina:
(They fold spread lengthwise)
But it was I who encouraged Mr. Antrobus to make the alphabet.
I’m sorry to say it, Mrs. Antrobus, but you’re not a beautiful woman,
(They meet face to face—fold spread in half)
and you can never know what a man could do if he tried.

(Fold in quarters)
It’s girls like I who inspire the multiplication table.
I’m sorry to say it, but you’re not a beautiful woman,
(They meet face to face—cover folded)
Mrs. Antrobus, and that’s the God’s truth.

Mrs. Antrobus:
And you didn’t last—you sank to the kitchen. And what do you do there? You let the fire go out!

(Takes cover—pushes Sabina into chair Left of table. Crossing up Center to sofa)
No wonder to you it seems easier being dead.
Reading and writing and counting on your fingers is all very well in their way—but I keep the home going.

(Puts cover on sofa—looks through window off Right)
—There’s that dinosaur on the front lawn again.—Shoo! Go away. Go away.

(The baby Dinosaur puts his head in the window.)

Dinosaur:
It’s cold.

Act I
MRS. ANTR ObUS:
You go around to the back of the house where you belong.

(FLY CUE #5)

(She crosses Right, turns to window, watches the DINOSAUR and MAMMOTH move across stage Left to Right, then turns to audience. She joins their laughter, then speaks to them and exits calmly Right. The central portion of the back wall rises, pauses, and disappears into the loft. SABINA slowly raises her head.)

SABINA:
Now that you audience are listening to this, too, I understand it a little better.
I wish eleven o'clock were here; I don't want to be dragged through this whole play again.
(The TELEGRAPH BOY is seen entering from the Left. She catches sight of him, rises, and calls:)  
(LIGHT CUE #1)

Mrs. Antrobus! Mrs. Antrobus! Help! There's a strange man coming to the house. He's coming up the walk, help!

MRS. ANTR ObUS:
(Enters in alarm, but efficient, from Right. Crosses Left. Gets the clothes tree and places it against door Left)

Help me quick!

(Telegraph Boy knocks at door. Sabina pushes armchair from Left of table against base of clothes tree. They barricade the door by piling the furniture against it. Mrs. Antrobus puts her weight against chair. Sabina supports Mrs. Antrobus from the rear)

Who is it? What do you want?

(DINOSAUR and MAMMOTH cross stage from Right to Left to door Left.)

TELEGRAPH BOY:
A telegram for Mrs. Antrobus from Mr. Antrobus in the city.

18 ACT I
Sabina:
Are you sure, are you sure? Maybe it's just a trap!
Mrs. Antrobus:
(Turns to her)
I know his voice, Sabina. We can open the door.
(Sabina pushes chair up Left and hides behind it.
Mrs. Antrobus places tree up Left in corner, then
opens door. Enter the Telegraph Boy, 12 years
old, in uniform. The Dinosaur and Mammoth
slip by him into the room and cross to fireplace
Center to warm themselves. Sabina and Telegraph
Boy carry on a flirtation.)
I'm sorry we kept you waiting. We have to be careful,
you know.
(Crossing Center to the animals. Dinosaur moves
to Right of fireplace. Mammoth moves to Left of
fireplace.)
Hm!—Will you be quiet?
(They nod)
Have you had your supper?
(They nod)
Are you ready to come in?
(They nod)
Young man, have you any fire with you?
(He nods)
Then light the grate, will you?
(He nods, produces a kitchen match from his
pocket, goes to fireplace and kneels; lights match.
Footlights Center. Pause)
(Light Cue #2)
What are people saying about this cold weather?
(Sabina crosses Center to listen. He makes a
doubtful shrug of his shoulders. Sabina straight-
ens up)
Sabina, take this stick and go and light the stove.
(Mrs. Antrobus hands her a twig, the end of
which is painted red, from fireplace.)
Sabina:
(Takes stick; crossing to door Right)
Like I told you, Mrs. Antrobus; two weeks. That's
the law. I hope that's perfectly clear. (Exits Right.)
Act I
19
MRS. ANTROBUS:
(Sits chair Right of table)
What about this cold weather?

TELEGRAPH BOY:
(Crossing up to Left of table)
Of course, I don't know anything—but they say there's a wall of ice moving down from the North, that's what they say.
We can't get Boston by telegraph, and they're burning pianos in Hartford.
It moves everything in front of it, churches and post offices and city halls.
I live in Brooklyn myself.

MRS. ANTROBUS:
What are people doing about it?

TELEGRAPH BOY:
Well—uh—Talking, mostly.

Or just what you'd do a day in February.
There are some that are trying to go South and the roads are crowded; but you can't take old people and children very far in a cold like this.

MRS. ANTROBUS:
(Pulls hassock to her; takes sewing basket from table; puts it on hassock; damps a red sock)

What's this telegram you have for me?

TELEGRAPH BOY:
(Fingertips to his forehead)
If you wait just a minute; I've got to remember it.

(Steps Left Center, poses, arms folded, one foot extended. The ANIMALS take places on either side of him, leaning against his hips, like heraldic beasts, the DINOSAUR to his Right, MAMMOTH to his Left)

This telegram was flashed from Murray Hill to University Heights! And then by puffs of smoke from University Heights to Staten Island.

ACT I
Hungry for More?

**This is a Sample of the Script**

Buy the **full script** and explore other titles

www.samuelfrench.com
www.samuelfrench-london.co.uk

Titles are subject to availability depending on your territory.