

**The Rules of Civility:
Life Lessons from Young George**
By Levi Shrader

Cast of Characters

Narrator
First Actor
Second Actor

Props

One chair
Handkerchief
Paper and Quill Feather

*Enter a **Narrator** and two **Actors**, each in simple colonial garb. During the **Narrator's** discourse, the two **Actors** demonstrate what is being said, hopefully in a comical manner.*

Narrator

How many people today do you think take time to notice and be considerate of other people around them, even if they are complete strangers? (*Allow response.*)

What can you do to show that you're considerate and thoughtful of other people around you? (*Allow response.*)

We call some of these things -- like holding the door open for someone and saying "bless you" when someone sneezes -- common courtesy. Many times, we learn to do them just by seeing other people do them. In the 18th century, proper manners were important to being a gentleman and being a man of manners and proper behavior was important to George Washington.

When George Washington was a young boy, his teacher introduced him to the *Rules of Civility and Decent Behavior*. There were 110 rules and young George copied all of them down in a notebook, did his best to learn them, and to follow these rules even when he became an adult. He considered these rules very important to know.

Now, we're not going to go over all 110 rules -- only a few of them.

Narrator

Now, the very first rule is: Every action done in the company of others ought to be done with some sign of respect to those who are present. This means, always think about how you act in public.

*Two **Actors** join the **Narrator** on stage. The **Actors** face one another and bow. Then, they face the audience and bow.*

Narrator

When in the presence of others, don't sing or hum to yourself.

*The **First Actor** begins to quietly hum but quickly gets louder and more off key. The **Second Actor** lunges towards the **First Actor** and quickly places a hand over the **First Actor**'s mouth to stop the singing. The actor holds their hand there.*

Narrator

If you cough, sneeze, yawn, or sigh, do not do it loudly, but turn aside and do it into your handkerchief.

*The **First Actor** sneezes right into the hand of the **Second Actor**, who, now shocked, pulls their hand away and looks at the palm with disgust. The **Second Actor** pulls a handkerchief from their pocket and offers it to the **First Actor**. The **Second Actor** takes it, blows their nose noisily, and gives it back to the **First Actor**, who gingerly takes it with their fingertips and tosses it away.*

Narrator

When you sit down, keep your feet firm and even on the floor, without putting one foot on top of the other or crossing them.

*The **First Actor** pushes the **Second Actor** backwards into a chair. The **Second Actor** tries to arrange their legs and their feet into various positions, but the **First Actor** moves them back to flat on the floor each time.*

Narrator

Also, do not fidget around or shift too much...

*The **Second Actor** begins fidgeting and adjusting positions in the chair. The **First Actor** grabs them by their shoulders to get them to stay still. The **Second Actor** begins to nervously bite their nails.*

Narrator

*(To **Second Actor**)* ...and don't bite your nails.

*The **Second Actor** starts to blow raspberries and make faces behind the **Narrator**'s back.*

Narrator

*(To **Second Actor**)* Do not puff out your cheeks or stick out your tongue.

*The **Second Actor** stops and looks sheepish. The **First Actor** laughs at the **Second Actor** for getting caught.*

Narrator

*(To **First Actor**)* Another rule is, not to enjoy the misfortune of others, even if they are your enemy.

*The **First Actor** immediately stops laughing and also looks sheepish.*

Narrator

Do not play the peacock trying not to show off.

*The **First Actor** begins to strut around smugly. The **Second Actor** turns away, pulls out quill and parchment, and begins to “write” a letter. The **First Actor** tries to peer over their shoulder.*

Narrator

Be not curious to know the affairs of others ...

*The **First Actor** doesn't react.*

Narrator

... In other words: Don't be nosy!

*Narrator grabs the **First Actor's** ear and drags them away from their snooping. The **Second Actor** smiles at this.*

Narrator

But, it is rude to read or write in the company of others.

*The **Second Actor** puts away their letter.*

Same thing goes for texting!

*The two **Actors** look confused.*

Narrator

And the last rule of civility is: Work to keep alive that little spark of celestial life in your heart called conscience.

*The two **Actors** look at each other, bow deeply, and then shake hands.*

Narrator

Despite all the problems that George Washington faced as a boy, a teenager, and a man, he did his very best to abide by these rules, be considerate of others, and to always be well behaved!

End.