



SciMUNC XVII

CRISIS COMMITTEE

The Truman Show

BACKGROUND GUIDE

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Letter from the Dais

Dear Delegates,

Our names are Nika and Leah, and we will be your Chair and Vice Chair. We are so excited to bring you this new and thrilling crisis committee. Each year, SciMUNC unites students to practice communication, collaboration, and curiosity. Whether you are well experienced or new to Model UN, we hope that the Truman Show committee brings an engaging and interesting debate that everyone can partake in. Model United Nations allows students to develop invaluable skills such as problem solving, public speaking, and persistence in a fun and stimulating environment. Model UN continues to teach us and other students crucial skills that can be applied in real world situations. We look forward to meeting everyone in person and aim for our committee to be as educational, engaging, and exhilarating as possible!

My name is Nika Pekarsky. My Model UN experience started in the tenth grade, where I joined the team with no previous Model United Nations experience. Going into the club, I had always had issues with public speaking, which many students do. But through consistent meetings, practices, and actual conferences, I was able to push myself into becoming a stronger Model UN delegate, as well as a speaker and collaborator as a whole.. From my own experience, the well thought out and unique committees I participated in at different conferences aided my improvement as a speaker, and taught me extremely valuable Model UN skills that I have been able to implement in Model United Nations and outside of it. Being a delegate at a committee can be stressful and difficult at times, but we hope that the creative committee that we have come up with for SCIMUNC will allow all participating delegates to learn in an enjoyable and exciting way, just as I have been. I hope that Leah and I will be able to create just as a great committee for you all!

My name is Leah Allen-Cheng, and I am entering my second year of Model UN. I joined Model UN for two primary reasons: to improve my research ability and to develop my public-speaking skills. Model UN has allowed me to achieve these goals in a creative and engaging environment. Model UN challenges me regularly and encourages me to step out of my comfort zone and grow. In the conferences that I have attended, I have realized that no conflict is too large to conquer when you work collaboratively with your peers. Although it may require some time, effort, and a lot of creative thinking, any obstacle can be overcome. I know that the skills we work together to build in Model UN will change who we are and will benefit everyone immensely in the future. During this committee, Nika and I will work to ensure that we create an environment that is safe, inclusive, and respectful. Thinking back to when I first joined Model UN, I definitely did not foresee myself chairing a committee at the next year's Bronx Science Annual MUN Conference, and I am so grateful for this amazing opportunity. We can't wait to finally meet you all and make this committee a memorable experience!

Sincerely,

Leah Allen-Cheng and Nika Pekarsky.

Committee Description

This committee is based on the movie *The Truman Show*, centered around the main character named Truman Burbank, who was placed into a TV show set right after birth and was recorded during his daily life unknowingly. His family members, friends, and co-workers are all hired actors, and his entire life is basically an illusion created to provide entertainment for the outside world. As time progresses, Truman begins to realize the strange repetitions and familiarities in his life- on top of multiple strange occurrences- that make him question his true surroundings. Throughout the movie, Truman has the choice of pursuing his curiosity or continuing his lie of a life. Another main character worth mentioning is Christof, the executive producer of the Truman Show. He argues that Truman is able to resign from the show at any time and it is completely up to him. But in reality, Truman has no idea of the deception he is living within, and therefore can never really “choose” to leave. In addition, Christof argues that the television show provides much needed amusement and entertainment for the people, and thus defends his very questionable actions of denying Truman his freedom. In contrast to Christof’s ideas,

others believe that it is immoral to strip a human of his natural rights and raise him in such an isolated and fabricated manner. This committee would be a great opportunity for students to debate the social and ethical sides of the Truman Show, and work together to solve different issues that arise within the show, characters, and their actions. The purpose of this committee is to encourage delegates to analyze the political and social commentaries made by the movie.

Background Information

The Truman Show was directed by Peter Lindsay Weir and released in 1998. The unique movie falls under a myriad of genres, including drama, satire, comedy, and science fiction. The movie addresses a variety of social issues and continues to resonate with viewers, even twenty-five years later. In the Truman Show, the premise is that a baby, Truman, was adopted by Christof, the head of a massive television corporation. The new television show centered around Truman's life. Elaborate sets were made to replicate an average town, and actors were hired to play Truman's neighbors, friends, and family. Unbeknownst to Truman, everything in his life was orchestrated by producers for the purpose of profit and audience entertainment. Viewers of the Truman Show quickly became invested in Truman's actions, unconcerned with the fact that his relationships, interactions, and life was completely fabricated. If Christof was confronted with concerns regarding Truman's freedom, Christof's responses have been simply that if Truman is unhappy, he is able to leave the show at any time that he wants. However, drastic measures are taken to prevent

Truman from leaving at all costs, the most important factor being Truman's obliviousness to the truth.

To dive deeper into the plot of the movie, as well as the committee (which takes place around the same time the movie does), Truman Burbank was adopted by the television set from his birth parents. He grows up in a dome shaped set which represents a seaside town- Seahaven Island- with his adoptive/set parents, Angela and Kirk Burbank. With Christof's ability to control almost every aspect of Truman's life through the set, he employs the set's weather controls to shape Truman's story line. One important example of this is Christof's decision to "kill-off" Truman's father in the story line. Christof does so by creating a scene in which Truman and his father go sailing, and in a tragic storm, his father passes away (in the television show), all which Truman witnesses. This traumatic scene instilled fear within Truman, specifically thalassophobia, the fear of deep bodies of water. Such scenarios are designed by Christof to discourage any curiosity or adventurous thoughts Truman may have in order to protect and continue the show.

Continuing, another vital detail in Truman's storyline that builds up to the present moment is his relationship with Sylvia, an extra on the show. Though Truman was originally scripted to have a love interest with the character Meryl, his relationship with Sylvia grew so much that it threatened the show's secret, and the extra was forcefully removed from the show in a very dramatic sense, with her last words urging Truman to figure out the truth of the show. When she is taken away, not without resisting and trying to warn Truman, by another extra who forces her into a car, the extra lies to Truman that they are moving to Fiji in order to explain her disappearance in the coming "storylines", or life in Truman's perspective. Even when Truman gets married to Meryl, his pre-scripted wife, he continues to think of the beautiful and mysterious woman he fell in love with, and the far-off place she resides in. A cardinal point to add is that the actress who played Sylvia went on to join an activist group that lobbies for Truman's rights and in favor of Truman learning the truth.

His wife, Meryl, plays an important role for the show by advertising different products, as well as helping control Truman

as much as she can. Her character allows for the show to regulate and shape Truman's decisions from an inside perspective, greatly aiding Christof's goal to keep Truman unaware and the show to continue running. Another close character to Truman is Marlon, his best friend in the show, who helps tremendously with Christof's goal to keep Truman from finding out the truth about the show. Also, connecting back to the mention of his "parents", his mother Angela also plays a vital role in the development of the story line and the protection of the show's secret, as she is Truman's supposed mother and has a great influence over him.

Furthermore, Truman's day to day life has a very similar and predictable plot line. He wakes up and goes to work, greeting his neighbors with the same line: "Good Morning! Oh, and in case I don't see you: good afternoon, good evening, and goodnight!". Each morning is a sunny day, and he drives to work (not before picking up the same magazine from the same magazine booth) to his office job. At work, he has a strict boss and a boring job, and afterwards goes home to his wife who cooks for him, never forgetting to secretly advertise a product for the show.

Main Committee Topic

As the story progresses, and the timeline comes closer to the start of the movie and the committee (where the show is nearing its 30th anniversary), more unusual things begin to happen to Truman, which make him hesitant with his acquaintances and family, and weary of his surroundings...

The Truman Show urges its audience to contemplate what is “real” or “fake” in the media. In the Truman Show, every aspect of Truman’s life is manipulated in order to increase entertainment value, create profit through advertisement, and portray his life as “perfect.” Although it is to a lesser extent, the media continues to display a variety of content, much of which is manipulated for different reasons. This movie subtly encourages one to be mindful of what entertainment they consume and to be wary of how it affects one’s belief system.

As actors, viewers, and members of society, you must evaluate everything that has happened throughout the course of the Truman Show and decide where moral lines should be drawn. You must also begin to determine what next steps should be taken, and what the future of the Truman Show is.

Question of Ethics

Within the committee, delegates from all different perspectives will come together to discuss the morality of the show. To be more specific, if the show really does

go against ethical codes, and specifically which ones, since Truman is not being directly physically/mentally harmed by the show. Delegates will consider what aspects of the show, or if the show entirely, is unjust, and what they can do to fix the current situation.

Possible Competition

As tensions arise between delegates, it is also important to consider the fact that there are other production companies present, with their own shows, so considering personal motives is also a vital action for this debate. To argue about morality and ethics, it is important to also note what others may gain from the rise or fall of the Truman Show.

The Drawbacks Revealing the Truth

With the ongoing debate, it is also crucial to consider the negative effects of revealing the truth to Truman, and what it would do to the show. If Truman does find out, and decides to stay in the show, what would that do to the realistic aspect of the entertainment that people seem to really enjoy? If he leaves, where does that leave

him in the real world, with no actual connections or life of his own? Would Truman be able to actually continue on his own life after living in such a sheltered make-believe one, and would he truly be able to have privacy? On top of that, he is also able to sue the show, which would cause many legal issues for the Truman Show production company. Furthermore, what will those who watched the show for support, or depended on it as it was around the clock surveillance, do with it being removed suddenly?

Questions to Consider

1. Is it fair to keep Truman in the dark about the truth of his entire life? Furthermore, does Truman even have a life of his own, or is it just a show?
 2. By broadcasting Truman's every move, is that an invasion of privacy?
 3. Will revealing the truth to Truman harm him or help him? Or both?
 4. Are any of his connections with the actors real? If so, how does that aid him with finding out the truth about the Truman Show?
 5. Is Truman being manipulated or does he have free will?
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6. Do all the actors agree with and understand what they are a part of?
 7. Does the audience truly understand Truman's situation, or are they being deceived by the production company in order to keep the Truman Show running?
 8. How dependent is the show on manipulation of not just the audience, but actors, and Truman?
 9. How can we regulate what is produced?
 10. What would the process of rehabilitating Truman into the real world be like if the show was to end? Would he ever have privacy?
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Bloc Positions

Meryl Burbank (Hannah Gill)

The actress Hannah Gill plays Truman's wife and scripted love interest in the show. Meryl Burbank is known to be a perky and energetic wife who is also an emergency nurse. The character constantly advertises different kitchen products, helping the show immensely with their revenue. Also, the character's proximity to Truman allows for the show to better control Truman. The actress, Hannah, is known to be very persistent with her salary, and is constantly negotiating raises and bonuses. Viewing her role as Truman's wife as a job, Hannah Gill is determined to do anything to maintain her occupation, even if that requires keeping Truman in the dark about the truth (since there is no actual connection between the two).

Marlon (Louis Coltrane)

Marlon, played by the actor Louis Coltrane, is Truman's childhood best friend. Marlon is a vending machine repair man who is always there for Truman. During times of conflict, Christof directs Louis

Coltrane to be there for Truman, and to help ensure the safety of the show and to squash any suspicions/misdirections Truman may have. Though Louis has known Truman for many years, his support remains with the Truman show, as he is not actually a friend of Truman and wants to keep his job, and his fame.

Christof

The creator of the Truman Show and its elaborate setting, Christof, has dedicated his life's work to creating a show for both the people and Truman. With his reputation in the film industry and his career (as well as others that work for him), Christof orchestrates detailed and thought-out scenes to ensure that the show runs smoothly. For years, he has manipulated the audience of the show to think that Truman chose to partake in the show, as well as consistently lied to Truman about the truth. Christof will go to any means necessary to protect his creation.

Lauren Garland (Sylvia)

Actress Sylvia, who played an extra role in the Truman show (Lauren Garland)

had an unscripted romance with Truman while playing her part, and was pushed off the show in order to follow the script that Christof and the production team had created. Before being removed from the show, Sylvia is able to begin to tell Truman the truth about his life, before being forcefully taken by a set worker claiming to be the character's father, who tries to convince Truman that Lauren is crazy and is moving to Fiji (chosen by Christof in order to suppress any attempts for Truman to find her). Even as time goes on, Truman thinks about his connection with Lauren/Sylvia, and longs to go to Hawaii one day. After being fired from the show, Sylvia joins a "Free Truman" activist group, and constantly speaks against Christof and his team, as she believes that what the show is doing is unethical.

Angela Burbank (Alanis Montclair)

Angela Burbank is Truman's mother on the show, and is known to be formal and prim. The actress that plays her is Alanis Montclair, a reputable actress that has gained her film success through featuring on the Truman show, especially in the earlier years when her role was still more prominent.

Good friends with Christof, and grateful for what the show has brought her, Alanis uses her role as Truman's mother to further help the Truman Show production company maintain control over Truman, as she is someone he frequently visits for advice. As she has seen Truman grow up over the years, Alanis' side on the debate about the Truman show is unclear, but her appreciation for the fame it has brought her is.

Kirk Burbank (Walter Moore)

The actor Walter Moore who plays Kirk Burbank, Truman's father, has a more unique storyline than that of the other characters. In order to control Truman, Christof orchestrates a scene in which Kirk tragically dies in a storm when out sailing with Truman. By allowing Truman to survive but see his father survive, Christof instills a fear of the ocean in Truman, thus further allowing Truman's curiosity to be controlled. However, Walter recently snuck back onto the set and was spotted by Truman, forcing Christof to write Kirk Burbank back into the script, who explains to Truman that he had amnesia. Walter's reappearance may have something to do

with some communication he has been having with the “Free Truman” movement.

Laurence

Laurence, Truman’s boss on the show, is played by Bob Smith. A typically “annoying” boss, Laurence is scripted by Christof in an effort to continue to control Truman by making sure he is never able to travel to Fiji, something he wishes to do after being told his love interest moved there, using his job. Laurence himself does not like his job too much, but is not very prevalent in Truman’s life on a connection level, so he does not really see anything wrong with the show itself.

Simeon

Simeon is the control room director for the Truman Show, and works closely with Christof in creating the show. Simeon himself is an emotional and caring person, and has experienced very unpleasant working conditions due to Christof’s management style. After years of experience, Simeon knows a lot about the ins and outs of the show, its scripts, and controls: having as much power as Christof,

but never using it. As an empathetic person, Simeon also sympathizes with Truman, and longs to do something about the show, without being caught.

Chloe

As another member of the production team, Chloe is the control room assistant. Chloe has helped Christof create his elaborate ideas for the set and show, and has consistently shown her dedication to her work. For years, Christof has promised Chloe a promotion, but she is yet to receive any reward for her rigorous work. Chloe wishes that she would be able to run a show on her own, even the Truman Show.

Mike Michaelson

Mike Michaelson is the host of the online talk show “TruTalk”, where details of the most recent Truman Show updates are discussed. Mike Michaelson also holds interviews with Christof asking him about the show. Mike’s career is due to this television talk show, which is a spin off to the Truman Show. Though he is uncertain about how just the Truman Show is, this does not stop Mike from continuing to

support the production of it through his own segment.

Sarah Andrews

One of the set workers at the Truman Show, Sarah Andrews has been able to witness firsthand how the Truman Show is actually created, and has secretly been helping the “Free Truman” activist group using her insider access. However, after recent bonuses from the production team, Sarah is unsure if she wants to continue to help the activist group, or build herself up in the Truman Show production company.

Tobias Brown

Tobias Brown, son of Henry Brown, is one of the main investors in the Truman Show. His father, a friend of Christof, has backed the production of the Truman Show from the start, and Tobias continues on the legacy in the present. Even though he is not a producer, he still has potential say in some of the actions taken by the production team. Moreover, due to some recent trouble in the show, Tobias is considering redirecting his financial backing to another show, and his

stance on the Truman show remains unknown.

Carlene Rich

As a member of the audience of the Truman Show, Carlene Rich has shown her admiration for the show through her constant support: hosting her famous viewing parties. Growing up watching the Truman Show, Carlene has expressed how connected she feels to Truman, and how much she enjoys watching Truman progress through the different chapters in his life. She loves the show so much that Carlene has created her own line of merchandise. With both her social and financial connection to the Truman show, Carlene does not see any issue with the Truman Show itself.

Michael Davenport

Michael Davenport is the producer of another very popular show that competes for screen time with the Truman Show. Since the Truman Show runs all day every day, other shows find it very difficult to gain success in the entertainment industry due to the overwhelming support the Truman Show receives from the public. After many years,

Michael has finally built up his show to a similar level of success to the Truman Show, and wants to cancel the show for using unethical means (in Michael's opinion) to achieve the success it has.

Nettie Fox

A famous actress that has been acting on Davenport's show, Nettie Fox has displayed disapproval with the Truman Show. It may stem from the fact that Nettie was rejected after applying to play the role of Meryl (Truman's wife), but no matter the reason Nettie Fox has recently very publicly supported the "Free Truman" group through sizable donations and protesting.

Ellie Golds

Truman's birth mother, Ellie Golds, has recently come forward to the public about her relations to Truman. As she explained to the public, Ellie was in difficult financial times and was forced to put her son up for adoption. She was not informed about the fact that a production company had adopted him, and had fought them for many years to help free her son. However, after so many years have passed, Ellie now thinks

that it is best to let Truman continue to live his life in the show: partially because she does not want him to despise her, and partly because she is afraid of how he will be able to handle the shocking truth. One thing to note is that she had never received compensation for any of the success the Truman Show has achieved.

Lily Golds

Lily Golds is Truman's biological older sister, who has watched her mother battle for Truman's freedom, and give up in the end. Her mother's journey inspired Lily to join the "Free Truman" activist group, and she is actively working towards shutting down the show and finally being able to reconnect with her brother.

Carolyn Lewis

Carolyn Lewis is the founder of the "Free Truman" activist group. Though she had no connection to the Golds family, after watching the Truman Show develop in her younger years, Carolyn knew that she had to do something. Through the "Free Truman" group, Carolyn has been able to connect many others who agree with her about

abolishing the Truman Show, including the actresses Lauren Garland (who played Sylvia) and Nettie Fox, as well as Lily Golds (Truman's biological sister). Carolyn Lewis has been able to draw attention to issues she sees within the Truman Show, and will continue to petition to remove it.

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