

Coffee at Luke's

*An Unauthorized
Gilmore Girls Gabfest*

EDITED BY

 Jennifer Crusie 

WITH Leah Wilson



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Introduction



Speaking of the *Gilmore Girls* . . .

WELCOME TO *COFFEE AT LUKE'S*, a collection of people talking about *Gilmore Girls*, which is so appropriate. The success of *Gilmore Girls* can be attributed to many things: the beauty and charm of its protagonists, Lorelai the mother we all wish we'd had (or been), and Rory the daughter we all wish we'd been (or had); the warm and quirky charm of Stars Hollow, the community where nobody is ever lost or alone; the slow-burn sizzle of the romance between Lorelai and Luke, now gone horribly awry but still a winner for six long seasons; the parade of Rory's boyfriends, each more attractive and impossible than the last; the anyone-can-relate Friday night disasters of dinner with Emily and Richard; and the crackle of the supporting cast, especially the acerbic Paris (who takes antisocial disorder to new heights), Kirk (who makes cluelessness an art form), and Miss Patty (who embraces life to the point of smothering it in her bosom). Even Paul Anka the dog has his own dysfunctional charm. Yes, all of these aspects contribute to making *Gilmore Girls* a TiVo staple, but the real draw that's kept viewers coming back season after season? Oh, that's the talk.

Yep, it's the whip-fast, quip-smart, sassy patter that Lorelai dishes out and Rory bats back like some kind of party game for smarty pants, the Cool Girls verbal Twister, pitched right at us so we all can play. All teleplays have dialogue but very few of them use it well, and none of them rely on it the way that *Gilmore Girls* does: almost to the point of being a talking heads show, with very little physical comedy

and fairy tale sets that function as a backdrop for beautiful people adept at delivering complex speech at the speed of light. Crafting that speech is a tightrope act the writers walk every week, and they walk it pretty damn well, in part, I think, because they keep in mind the basic rules for great dialogue:

Keep it moving.

Boy, do they. Well, they have to. On a typical television show, one page of script equals one minute of show and the average television script is about fifty to fifty-five pages (leaving room to cut the filmed results to forty-eight minutes of running time), but the *Gilmore Girls* scripts run seventy-seven to seventy-eight pages. That means no dawdling, so the characters rattle off the line like escapees from *His Girl Friday*. Call it *Our Girls Tuesday*, the screwball fastball of comic repartee that's not only swift but complex, often overlapping not only conversations but also conflicts:

RORY: Hey. My mom's not wearing any underwear.

LORELAI: Oh!

RORY: Well you aren't.

TAYLOR: You're just being selfish, Luke.

LORELAI: Still they don't notice. I can't take it anymore.

TAYLOR: We're talking about the spirit of fall.

LORELAI: (gets the coffee herself and lifts the cover off the muffins)

What kind of muffin do you want?

RORY: Blueberry.

LUKE: You know where you can stick the spirit of fall? (hands Lorelai a utensil to pick up the muffins) Here, don't use your hands.

TAYLOR: I don't think you're taking me seriously.

LUKE: What gave you that idea? (to Lorelai, who is leaving) No tip?

LORELAI: Oh, yeah, here's a tip... serve your customers.

LUKE: Here's another... don't sit on any cold benches. ("Kiss and Tell," 1-7)

It takes very good writers to put dialogue like that on the page and keep it not only clear but entertaining while moving the story along. If you took the character tags off those lines and read it, you'd still know

what show it came from because dialogue like that only happens in Stars Hollow.

Give everybody the best lines.

How can the writers do that? When characters are so distinct that they can't possibly talk alike, the best lines for them can only be theirs. There are several television writers who are well-known for their dialogue, but too many of them fall into the trap of everybody-sounds-the-same. This rarely happens on *Gilmore Girls* where you can pretty much tell without tags who says, "This festival is commemorating the founding of our town, young lady" ("Star-Crossed Lovers and Other Strangers," 1-16). Or who says, "You know, it's times like these that you realize what is truly important in your life. I'm so glad I had all that sex" ("Say Goodnight, Gracie," 3-20). Or who says, "Look, I've had my peace with the fact that everyone who calls here is a notch above brain dead, and that the pennies I am thrown each week are in exchange for me dealing with these people in a nonviolent manner, and usually that is fine, but today, sorry lady, I have ennui" ("Love, Daisies, and Troubadours," 1-21). Or, God help him, who says, "Well, ladies and gentlemen, much like the Israelites of Yore, the Stars Hollow Minutemen languished in the desert for forty years. But tonight, there was no Promised Land, no New Canaan, only a humiliating five to one defeat at the merciless hands of the West Hartford Wildcats. So it's back to the desert for the Minutemen, perhaps for another forty years. Of course, by then, I'll be seventy years old. A lot of the rest of you will probably be dead. Taylor, you'll be dead. Babette, Miss Patty... that man there in the hat" ("Face-Off," 3-15). Even the walk-on parts are worth listening to because even they have places they've been and places they're going to, full and fascinating lives, pieces of which they let drop into the story like seasoning. Everybody gets the best lines.

Talk up to your viewer.

I don't know when "dumbing down" began to seem like a good idea on TV, but it's a mistake and the writers on *Gilmore Girls* know it.

Their mantra is “Everybody’s smart and so are you.” So what if some of the allusions go over some viewers’ heads? The rest of them won’t. I know this because I’m a complete music illiterate, but I never feel lost when Rory and Lane talk about groups or CDs. That takes some very careful writing and I’m appreciative. It’s conversation where everybody knows the game, and you feel as though you could play, too, if only you were there. But what’s really impressive is the breadth: allusions to film, television, literature, music, society, and politics, spanning decades, are just dropped into the conversation and then trampled on as the characters rush on to the next crisis, never slowing to complain or explain:

LORELAI (to Rory): We’re not gonna have this fight in a flowery bedroom with dentists singing “Gypsies, Tramps and Thieves” in the background. It’s too David Lynch! (“The Road Trip to Harvard,” 2-4)

PARIS: Wow, you’re always so Desmond Tutu-y. This is refreshing. (“We’ve Got Magic To Do,” 6-5)

BABETTE: Now don’t you freak out. Morey hates being the first anywhere. He thinks it hurts his street credibility.

MOREY: Charlie Parker was late to everything.

BABETTE: Charlie Parker had more drugs in him than a Rite-Aid. Forget Charlie Parker. (“The Bracebridge Dinner,” 2-10)

LORELAI: You will say nothing, you will do nothing, you will sit in the corner and offer no opinions and pull a full-on Clarence Thomas. (“Secrets and Loans,” 2-11)

EMILY: What do you think of the Romanovs?

LUKE: They probably had it coming. (“Dead Uncles and Vegetables,” 2-17)

And my personal favorite:

LUKE: Very romantic.

LORELAI: Says the man who yelled “Finally!” at the end of *Love Story*. (“Let the Games Begin,” 3-8)

Dumb dialogue is boring dialogue; the writers on *Gilmore Girls* never make that mistake.

Remember that the best dialogue is the stuff you can't hear.

I'm a dialogue junkie in my own work, so believe me when I tell you that the most important thing about dialogue is what isn't said. On-the-nose talk is another form of dumbing down, leaving the viewer no chance to make the connections; worse than that, it's not real. People in real life do not tell it like is, they tell it slant, and that's why the good stuff isn't in the words, it's all around them.

It's in the spaces between the beautifully parallel non-sequiturs, like this exchange of afflictions:

MADLINE: My brother has measles.

LOUISE: My mom's having an affair. ("Concert Interruptus," 1-13)

It's in the rhythms of the you-know-damn-well-what-I-mean rapid fire exchanges that read like poetry:

LORELAI: She's not going on your motorcycle.

DEAN: I don't have a motorcycle.

LORELAI: She's not going on your motorcycle.

DEAN: Fine, she won't go on my motorcycle. ("Kiss and Tell," 1-7)

It's in the exasperated missed connections that make conversations look like performances by trapeze artists with sweaty hands:

EMILY: So what exactly is going on between the two of you?

LUKE: Nothing. Really. We're friends, that's it.

EMILY: You're idiots, the both of you. ("Forgiveness and Stuff," 1-10)

And it's the dialogue that plays on the viewer's knowledge of the world of the show, written with haiku-like economy:

LORELAI: The world changes when it snows. It's quiet. Everything softens.

MICHEL: It's your mother.

LORELAI: And then the rain comes. ("Love and War and Snow," 1-8)

It takes a great deal of trust in and respect for your audience to leave the best part unsaid, and the writers of *Gilmore Girls* clearly have a lot

of both; it's not that surprising, then, that viewers have repaid them with the same.

Given that it's such a showcase of dialogue, it's not surprising that *Gilmore Girls* is one of the most quoted series in the history of TV or that, when I read the essays for this collection, so many of them cited such terrific exchanges from past seasons. They were having so much fun, I wanted to play, too, so I went back and found quotes that evoked the spirit of their essays, recalling how the people of Stars Hollow spoke about personal relationships (they're terrible at them), parenting (still trying to get it right), the town (quirky doesn't begin to describe it), the good things in life (food, books, and sex, not necessarily in that order), and reality (always optional). The opinions here are many and varied but the essayists all share a love of the show and the fast-talking people in and behind it, and they're all here to, well, talk about it. Because in the world of *Gilmore Girls*, that's what you do. . . .

RORY: Well, you know, I guess we don't have to talk about . . . stuff.

Yeah . . .

LORELAI: Who say we always have to be talking? We can not talk!

RORY: Of course we can.

(The two pause for a moment.)

LORELAI: Okay, we should probably talk about how we're not gonna talk . . . ("The Long Morrow," 7-1)

So welcome to the *Gilmore Girls* anthology. I hope you find something terrific on every page. And when you're done, I'll be at Luke's if you want to, you know, discuss it.

Talk to you soon,

Jenny



Heather Swain



Whimsy Goes with Everything

KIRK: Well, first I read the sign and then I tried the door in case it was some sort of elaborate ruse.

LORELAI: Designed to keep only you out?

KIRK: There's precedent. ("Help Wanted," 2-20)

There are those who feel that the population of Stars Hollow is a little eccentric, but Heather Swain understands them all, every one of them, including Kirk. *Especially* Kirk.

I'VE DECIDED TO MOVE to Stars Hollow. I've had enough of New York City with all its hubbub and rigmarole. Who needs fifty-nine dollar, truffle-topped, wagyu beef burgers? Who wants to wait six months for a table at one of Mario Batali's forty-seven new Italian restaurants? I certainly never need to see Hugh Jackman run around Broadway in a white leisure suit again. Or stand beside the next Bernard Goetz on my morning subway commute. It's enough to drive a sane person completely *Taxi Driver*. I don't want to wake up one day, shave my head into a Mohawk, and start yelling "You talking to me?" in the mirror. What I need is a nice, quiet little town, full of fine folks, where I can be me. Besides, there's someone in Stars Hollow I find quite enchanting.

Anyway, what's New York got that Stars Hollow can't offer? Restaurants? What about Luke's? Now that's a damn fine diner with good coffee, and I hear the meatloaf is excellent. Bakeries? Weston's has twenty-seven kinds of pie and thirty-four flavors of ice cream. Mince-meat with praline pecan? Shoofly with butter brickle? You could probably get it there. And the gourmet market, Doose's, sells everything from Easy Mac to aged Camembert. (Although, personally I prefer a nice soy

cheese, what with my lactose intolerance and all.) Plus entertainment! You wouldn't believe the festivals, parades, celebrations, and cultural events such a little burg puts on. I'll take the Stars Hollow Firelight Festival over Shakespeare in Central Park any day, because what's more romantic, celebrating two star-crossed lovers drawn together by random astrological events or watching Meryl Streep and Christopher Walken belt out show tunes in the musical adaptation of Bertolt Brecht's *Mother Courage and Her Children*? I think we all know the answer.

Won't I miss all the characters—the loudmouths, eccentrics, artists, and nut jobs—in New York City, you might want to ask. The Julian Schnabels, the Bella Abzugs, the Koches, the Clintons, the Hiltons, the Trumps. The buskers, the beggars, and those guys in wheelchairs who sell funny little knit finger puppets outside subway stations. That's what gives the city its edge. Its panache. Its vroom, vroom, hum-min-na, hum-min-na! Well, let me tell you, if there is one thing Stars Hollow has, it's character, baby, pure character. Character is what makes that town work, and there's one character in particular who keeps me coming back for more.

Sure, sure, things happen in Stars Hollow. People date. Fall in love. Fall out of love. Plan weddings, get married, or skip out on weddings. Go to college, drop out of college, go back to college. Get sick, get well, get over it, get arrested. Have fights, make up. Start businesses, start families, start fires. The usual things that make up life happen there, but those kinds of things happen wherever you go—Beverly Hills, Capeside Mass., the O.C. It's the people those things happen to that make it all the more interesting in Stars Hollow. That's why I'm moving there. I think I could fit in. Make friends. Become a part of the community. Maybe even fall in love with someone special. You know who I'm talking about, don't you? Because, admit it. You feel it, too. I'm blushing. Seriously. It's Kirk.

Kirk Gleason: entrepreneur, artiste, town docent. I love him. But not in the way that you might think. I'm not talking in the pedestrian, over-used trite way that the word *love* is tossed about in reference to haircuts, new shoe fashions, and extremely rich desserts. When I say I love Kirk, I mean that I'm *in love* with Kirk and Lulu better watch her back. He's the reason I keep showing up in Stars Hollow for my weekly fix of quirk and whimsy, and he's the reason I'm chucking the Big Apple to move to the Nutmeg State.

 *Stephanie Whiteside* 

When Paris Met Rory

PARIS: We're friends?

RORY: I'm not sure if there is an exact definition for what we are, but I do think it falls somewhere in the bizarro friends-ish realm. Come on, stay.

PARIS: Okay. But if you're doing all this so you can freeze my bra, I'll kill you. ("There's the Rub," 2-16)

They fight, they bicker, they banter, they break up and get back together again, they're a great couple, says Stephanie Whiteside. Lorelai and Luke? Nope, Rory and Paris, one of the most problematical relationships ever to grace a television series.

FOR A SMALL, PEACEFUL TOWN in New England, there sure are a lot of complicated relationships in Stars Hollow. Luke and Lorelai. Rory and Dean. Rory and Jess. And those are just the romantic relationships. Let's not forget the strained peace between Lorelai and her parents. Or Lane and Mrs. Kim. Not to mention how Lorelai and Rory's mother-daughter bond, while occasionally idyllic, is anything but traditional. Yet none of those quite live up to the fascinating dynamic of the often uneasy and always entertaining relationship between Paris Gellar and Rory Gilmore.

At first glance, Paris and Rory appear to be an unlikely pair. From their first meeting at Chilton to their rocky roommate relationship, they spend almost as much time fighting as they do friends. But in many ways, Rory and Paris are two sides of the same coin. Both are extremely intelligent, motivated girls with big dreams. While they excel in the academic areas of life, and are very mature for their ages, neither one has the greatest social skills. Paris's caustic wit and com-

petitive nature offend nearly everyone she comes in contact with and Rory prefers the company of her books to that of her classmates. And while both girls do have relationships, they seem to stumble into them more than actively pursue them, at least in the earlier seasons. Dean was the one to approach Rory, who was clearly astonished by the move, and Paris didn't even realize that Jamie had asked her out until Rory pointed it out to her. The similarities, however, end there—Rory comes across as being well-adjusted, if somewhat quirky, and is the perfect image of the girl next door. Paris, on the other hand, is often rude, mean, and more than a little bit neurotic. She is, in fact, what Rory could easily have become, had she been raised in Hartford, in the way her grandparents would have approved of. But Paris Gellar is more than a cautionary tale. Rory might not see it, but Paris may be the best thing that's ever happened to her.

PARIS vs. RORY

But let's start at the beginning: Chilton. Paris and Rory's first meeting was filled with unexpected mishaps—and it was far from love at first sight. Paris immediately identified Rory as someone to be intimidated; Paris was number one at Chilton and she wasn't going to take the risk of anyone jeopardizing that. Rory's reaction was to be expected—after Paris's welcome, she wanted nothing more than to avoid her. But fate clearly wasn't going to let that happen. The two girls were thrown together in almost every class, and when Rory accidentally destroyed Paris's history project, the stage was set for major competition.

What Paris found when she met Rory was something unexpected—an equal adversary. Paris may have been low on Chilton's social hierarchy, but she was at the top of the academic world, and she knew it. Most of the other students already knew to steer clear of her temper, and from their first meeting she clearly expected Rory to crumble in the face of intimidation. Rory was also used to being number one—but she wasn't used to being challenged on it. Given what we've seen of Stars Hollow, it's easy to assume that Rory didn't have much in the way of academic competition at Stars Hollow High. Intimidation isn't Rory's style, but she was clearly thrown at being faced with someone whose drive and intelligence rivaled her own, and she didn't handle it much better than Paris.

 Janine Hiddlestone 

Mothers, Daughters, and Gilmore Girls

LORELAI: It's from my mother.

RORY: What is it?

LORELAI: It's heavy. Must be her hopes and dreams for me.

RORY: I thought she discarded those years ago. ("Dear Emily and Richard," 3-13)

The bond between mother and daughter is a strong one, and no show has ever explored it in so many ways through so many generations and so many traditions as *Gilmore Girls*. Janine Hiddlestone looks at them all as she analyzes the fears, disappointments, and triumphs of mothering in Stars Hollow.

“**Y**OUR FIRST COP-RAIDED PARTY. I am just so proud!” gushes Lorelai Gilmore to her daughter, Rory. Upon discovering just moments later that a fight between two boys over Rory is what resulted in the arrival of the police, Lorelai breaks into the chorus of *The Wind Beneath My Wings* (“Did you ever know that you’re my hero, everything I longed to be . . .”). Rory stalks off in embarrassment and annoyance (“Say Goodnight, Gracie,” 3-20).

It was an amusing scene, particularly since Lorelai continued to sing as she followed her daughter down the street—the fun sort of scene viewers of *Gilmore Girls* have come to expect. However, for the uninitiated, the scene had a few peculiarities. In most family/teen dramas or sitcoms (and in real life), the parent or parents would have been furious at their teenage daughter for attending a “parents

out of town” keg party that ended when the police broke up a fight and dispersed the intoxicated party-goers. The fact that Rory was sober and ashamed would not have swayed most parents. There would have been lectures, exhortations of disappointment, and very likely a grounding. But this is *Gilmore Girls*, and the usual logic about parent-child interactions does not apply.

When Amy Sherman-Palladino created *Gilmore Girls*, which debuted in 2000, most dismissed it as another teen drama with family-friendly overtones—racier than 7th *Heaven*, but more “value oriented” than *Dawson’s Creek*. Its popularity, currently holding strong in the show’s seventh season, belied the naysayers, as *Gilmore Girls* proved to be more than the paint-by-numbers show it appeared to be on the surface (Haberman). Behind the impossibly gorgeous leads, the teen angst, the romances, the breakups, the small town, and the family dramas was a surprisingly subversive undertone. The small town, though beloved, is portrayed satirically, poking fun at the stereotypes of small town characters and idealized life. There are the interfering locals and their inevitable gossiping, the white picket fences, and the too-good-to-be-true square with its picturesque pavilion, but everything also has a little twist. The hardware store is actually a diner run by a cantankerous softie, the mechanic is an unapologetically eccentric woman, the requisite antique store is owned by fundamentalist Christian Koreans, and festivals and town events seem to occur on almost a weekly basis: “Well, this is a town that likes the celebrating. Last year we had a month long carnival when we finally got off the septic tank system” Rory told Dean as the town prepared for the Stars Hollow Firelight Festival (“Star-Crossed Lovers and Other Strangers,” 1-16). Dialogue is conducted largely through clever witticisms and fast-paced banter that incorporates everything from popular culture and literature to politics and social commentary. But the most refreshingly subversive element of all is the show’s treatment of and focus on family dynamics. However, more than anything else, it is the relationship between the three (and sometimes four) generations of Gilmores—particularly the women—around which the stories and characters develop, and which comprises the real heart of the show.

Ostensibly, Lorelai is the quintessential unwed (and still single) mother made good. Since she ran away from home, pregnant, at sixteen, she has made it her purpose to prevent her daughter from

 Stephanie Lehmann 

The Best-Friend Mom

Rory: Oh my God, I hate her.

Lorelai: Ah, me too.

Rory: You have no idea who I'm talking about.

Lorelai: Solidarity, sister. ("Nick & Nora/Sid & Nancy," 2-5)

One of the biggest fantasies *Gilmore Girls* ever spun was that a mother and daughter could be best friends first, parent and child second, and it's one Stephanie Lehmann pays tribute to at the start of her essay. But sooner or later, she points out, no matter how hard you try to put it off, it's Mommy & Me time, even if you're Lorelai and Rory Gilmore.

THE SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP between young, hip mom Lorelai and her preternaturally mature teenage daughter Rory is one of the big reasons I love watching *Gilmore Girls*. In the mornings they breakfast together at Luke's diner, where they gorge on huge meals like blueberry pancakes with bacon and eggs, sip oversized cups of coffee, and yak in fast-clipped language riddled with pop culture references. In the evenings there's take-out food in front of the TV and more yakking. In between, there's as little housework as humanly possible. Week after week, it's just the two of them enjoying the quirky charms of small-town life.

Perhaps I'm flattering myself, but I like to think my daughter and I share a similar bond. Okay, maybe I was well past high school when I gave birth to her, but I can still be marginally hip, right? I have a blog. I work out listening to an iPod. I allowed her to go on the pill at seventeen even though I would've preferred to lock her up in a chastity belt.

Perhaps the most fascinating aspect of the show has been the

chance to see Rory grow from an innocent fourteen-year-old virgin to a sophisticated, sexually active twenty-one-year-old woman. And it's always intriguing to see how Lorelai, the coolest of moms, handles the inevitable complications. Lorelai's relationship with her own mother is fraught with conflict. Pregnant at sixteen, she left home and raised Rory on her own. Lorelai needed distance from her parents' uptight, ostentatious lifestyle and their Mayflower-descended values. Rejecting all their Eastern Establishment power and money, she supported herself as a maid. Rory became the most important relationship in her life.

But the idyllic mother-daughter bubble pops—and the premise of the show is established—when Lorelai finds herself drawn back into the family fold. Rory wants to go to Chilton, a private high school that will help pave the way to the Ivy League. Lorelai can't afford the tuition. She reluctantly turns to her parents for financial help. Emily begins to take full advantage of her financial power to get closer to Lorelai.

In one particularly revealing episode, Emily, in her typically manipulative way, offers Lorelai a trip to a spa. After Lorelai accepts, Emily invites herself along. Once there, Emily won't leave Lorelai alone. She even arranges for them to have a "couples' massage." Lorelai pretty much wards off that overture by pointing out that couples massages are for "couples," not "a couple of people," and the couple usually has sex together afterwards. By the end of the day, Emily's attempt to bond with Lorelai has failed miserably. Emily, on the verge of tears, asks in a rather heartbreaking, childlike way, "Why can't we have what you and Rory have?" ("There's the Rub," 2-16). Lorelai answers that she and Rory are "best friends first and mother and daughter second." Emily responds that she wasn't taught to be best friends with her daughter; she was taught to be a "role model." Being a role model means setting an example for someone else to follow. Considering that Lorelai tries as hard as she can to be different from her mother, we'd have to say Emily has botched that one.

But is it possible to be your daughter's best friend? It's easy to see the appeal. These days, boomer parents—in our quest to ward off old age—are very into the idea of being close to our kids. We don't want to be stuffy disciplinarians full of rules and old-fashioned ideas; we want to be cool, understanding, and fun to hang out with. Plus, it's

 Charlotte Fullerton 

In Defense of Emily Gilmore

EMILY (to Lorelai): You're muttering under your breath. Years of experience have taught me that when you do that, it's usually about me. ("There's the Rub," 2-16)

Emily Gilmore is the third Gilmore Girl and as such, Charlotte Fullerton argues, much maligned. A woman who's doing the best she can playing by the rules of her generation and her social class, Emily has much more in common with Lorelai than she or her daughter—or the viewers—may realize.

*Hear ye, hear ye! Court is now in session!
The defense will now present its evidence in the case of the
Viewers vs. Emily Gilmore. All rise.*

IT'S NOT HARD to find ways to attack the eldest of the three Gilmore Girls. Emily is an easy target. If I had a nickel for every time I read a rant in an online fan forum about what a "bitca" Emily is, I'd have... a whole lot of nickels. She's a judgmental, overly critical, impossible-to-please, perfectionist, control-freak snob, who takes a sadistic pleasure in belittling those she considers beneath her in social standing, and particularly enjoys making her only offspring, Lorelai, miserable. And those are her good qualities! Okay, seriously. Taking pot shots at Emily Gilmore and her laundry list of faults may be cathartic, but it hardly scratches the surface of this complicated and therefore highly compelling character.

I do not intend to make excuses for Emily's often petty and vindictive behaviors and attitudes. But I do want to explore her *reasons*. Every real, live human being has his or her own personal internal logic

that lies behind the choices he or she makes. Well-rounded, well-grounded, fictional characters like Emily Gilmore do as well. This is what engages us, convincing us to care about them as if they were more than just words on a page and actors on a stage. Now, whether a person's internal logic is ever obvious to those around them—or even to him- or herself—is entirely up for grabs. A blind spot for self-awareness can make for an interesting fictional character, if a frustrating acquaintance in real life. When actors ask, “What’s my motivation?” it is a critically important question, not just the clichéd one-liner it’s become. *Why* does this character think this way? *Why* does this character say the things she says and do the things she does? The Wicked Witch of the West is, well, just plain wicked and a witch . . . and presumably from the west. Emily Gilmore has a more complex character profile.

Exhibit A: The Definition of Success

Emily went to college at a time when earning an “MRS” degree (going to college mainly to find a husband) was considered a viable—even expected—pursuit, and not the post-feminism joke it is today. She is a graduate of Smith College, one of the five remaining, private, women’s liberal arts colleges in the northeast still known as the Seven Sisters, all now considered in some circles to be competitive with the Ivy League. Among notable real-life Smith alumnae are Barbara Bush, Nancy Reagan, and even feminist icon Gloria Steinem! So Grandma Gilmore is an educated, capable woman in her own right, as well as one who did very well for herself—or at least as expected—marrying young to trust fund Yalie Richard Gilmore. By today’s standards, however, Emily would be considered to have completely squandered her potential, wasting her own talent, education, skills, and opportunities to play supportive wife to her high-achieving executive husband: a glorified secretary keeping track of their social engagements and busying herself arranging fundraisers and tea parties with various high-society charitable organizations in between hair appointments and managing their household staff with an iron fist. Imagine—if Emily had concentrated all that effort, energy, no-nonsense leadership, strict attention to detail, and my-way-or-the-high-way attitude on something that actually *mattered* in the greater world