

# GUGLIELMO MARCONI

## Inventor of radio

Speaking parts: A narrator, Guglielmo (Gwee-el'-mo), Giuseppe (his father), Annie (his mother), servant, tutor, cousin, technical school teacher.

Non-speaking: servant(s), two people forming the attic, two girlfriends.

Props: a hat and mustache for Giuseppe, a doll to be Annie's newborn, something to simulate a fishing pole, several books with one marked Electrophysics, paper plates strung together with a piece of string, a dunce cap, a small block or box to be the Morse code transmitter, a newspaper, a paper dinner plate.

Production note: Directions are not given for when actors and props are to be on and off the "stage" area (you certainly don't need a stage!). The director can suggest the appropriate comings and goings on and off the stage area as he/she sees fit. You may want the narrator on stage all the time, or on only when lines are being read. It is up to the director's discretion. Feel free to add or subtract little details to make the performance more your own, also!

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NARRATOR: Once upon a time, there was a rich Italian man named Giuseppe Marconi. Giuseppe fell in love with 18-year-old Annie Jameson who had come from Scotland to study singing.

GIUSEPPE: Hello, my name is Guiseppe. What's yours?

ANNIE: Annie Jameson.

GIUSEPPE: Annie, I love your singing. Will you marry me?

ANNIE: Sure, why not!

NARRATOR: Annie's parents were furious about the marriage proposal and would not allow the marriage. So Giuseppe and Annie waited three years until Annie was 21 then married without her parents' permission.

A year later their son Alphonse was born. But since he didn't grow up to be an inventor he's not in this story.

*(For a humorous touch, have Annie just toss the doll aside. Then it can be handed back after the next sentence is read)*

Then nine years later, in 1874, their second son was born. They named him Guglielmo. On the day he was born, or so the family legend goes, the servants came in to admire the baby.

SERVANT: What big ears he has!

ANNIE: With these ears he will be able to hear the still, small voices of the air.

NARRATOR: Annie taught Guglielmo how to speak English and gave him piano lessons. Since the Marconi family was rich, Guglielmo was taught his school lessons by a private tutor. But Guglielmo wasn't very interested in his boring school lessons. Sometimes he would play hooky from his studies and sneak off to do something more interesting, like fishing, or reading in his father's library.

TUTOR: Guglielmo, pay attention to your studies!

GUGLIELMO: Just a minute, I have to go to the bathroom.

*(Guglielmo sneaks out, finds a spot to fish, then takes out a book to read while fishing.)*

NARRATOR: At first, Guglielmo's favorite books were Greek mythology. He would have read about Hercules and his heroic deeds, and the story of the famous wooden horse that the Greeks gave to the city of Troy.

GUGLIELMO: Wow, I love reading these stories!

NARRATOR: As he grew older, Guglielmo began to be interested in science. He read about steam engines and electricity. The problem was that reading was never enough for him. He had to put to the test everything he read about. For instance, once he read about how to construct a mechanical roasting spit. He decided to make one. The only problem was that he took apart his cousin's sewing machine to get the parts to build it!

COUSIN: Guglielmo! How could you?! That was my expensive sewing machine!  
*(Cousin bursts into tears.)*

GUGLIELMO: I'm sorry. I'll put it back together. I promise.

*(Guglielmo puts back together the pretend sewing machine.)* There! It's as good as new!

COUSIN: *(Tries out pretend sewing machine)* I can't believe it! You put it back together, and it works!

NARRATOR: Guglielmo read about Benjamin Franklin's book about his experiments with electricity and decided to put high voltage electricity through a contraption made of string and dinner plates. The result was smashing, needless to say!



GIUSEPPE: Guglielmo! How could you do something like this! You bad boy! You are wasting your young life away with all these stupid tricks. I am going to send you off to school!

NARRATOR: And so Guglielmo went off to high school. He flunked out.

*(Put dunce hat on Guglielmo's head)*

NARRATOR: He also failed the entrance exam to get into the Naval Academy. He also failed to entrance exam to get into the University. Fortunately, he found a technical school that was willing to take him.

TECH. TEACHER: Guglielmo, I think we can help you.

NARRATOR: Guglielmo's teacher at the technical school introduced him to electrophysics. *(Teacher hands Guglielmo a book titled Electrophysics.)* He also learned how to send Morse code, which was a very important method of communication at that time.

TECH. TEACHER: Here, this is a telegraph sender. I will teach you how to send messages in Morse code.

GUGLIELMO: Wow! This is really interesting. I like this school!

NARRATOR: The turning point in Guglielmo's life came when he was on a vacation in the Alps. Tired after a day of mountain climbing, he slumped into a lounge chair at the hotel. He picked up a newspaper. There was an article about a German physicist who had discovered that magnetic waves of electricity could travel through space at a speed equal to several times around the Earth in a single second. Guglielmo was excited. As soon as he got home he ran up to his workshop, which was in the attic of his parents' house, and began experimenting.

*(Two actors form the attic by standing with fingertips touching.)*

NARRATOR: He rigged up a little transmitter and tried to send a spark from one end of the table to the other, through the air. Eventually he succeeded.

GUGLIELMO: Yes! I did it! I'll be a famous inventor some day! I'll win a prize and have my picture in the paper and pretty girls will flock me and say 'Oh, Guglielmo, you're so smart. I just adore you.' And maybe I'll end up being even richer than my father.

NARRATOR: Delighted by his success, and his head full of hopes for the future, he designed another experiment. He tried to send an electronic signal through the air that would ring a bell. He stayed in his workshop all day and night. His mother began leaving his meals out side the door.

ANNIE: Guglielmo, here's your supper. Please don't stay up to late. I worry about you.

GUGLIELMO: Thanks, mom.

NARRATOR: Four months later Guglielmo had succeeded. He went down to his mother's room and woke her up.

GUGLIELMO: Mom! Wake up! I've done it! It works!

NARRATOR: He led his mother up to his attic workshop and showed her what he had done. He tapped on a telegraph key at one end of the attic and at the other end of the attic, a bell tinkled. Between the telegraph key and the bell there was no wire, just air! Guglielmo had discovered how to transmit radio waves!

GUGLIELMO: See, Mom, I press this button here and the signal flies through the air and hits here and causes this bell to ring.

ANNIE: Guglielmo, you're brilliant! This is an amazing invention!

NARRATOR: He began experimenting with how far he could send these waves. He kept building more powerful transmitters and eventually succeeded in sending a Morse code message from Cornwall, England, to Newfoundland in Canada!

In 1901 Guglielmo Marconi accepted the Nobel in physics. He turned into a businessman, and formed companies to begin operating as transcontinental message transmitters. He became very rich( *stuff play money in his pockets*) and very famous and had lots of girlfriends (*have two girls stand close so he can drape his arms around them*) and a 220 foot yacht ( *have Marconi and his girlfriends sit on a boat made of three chairs*) that served both as a floating laboratory and a place to have big fancy parties.

And so Guglielmo Marconi finally was able to prove to his father that he was worth something after all.

GIUSEPPE: Well, Guglielmo, I have to admit, you turned out okay after all.

GUGLIELMO: Thanks, Dad.