

WU?[@]therep

THE FOREIGNER

by Larry Shue

Directed by Edward Stern

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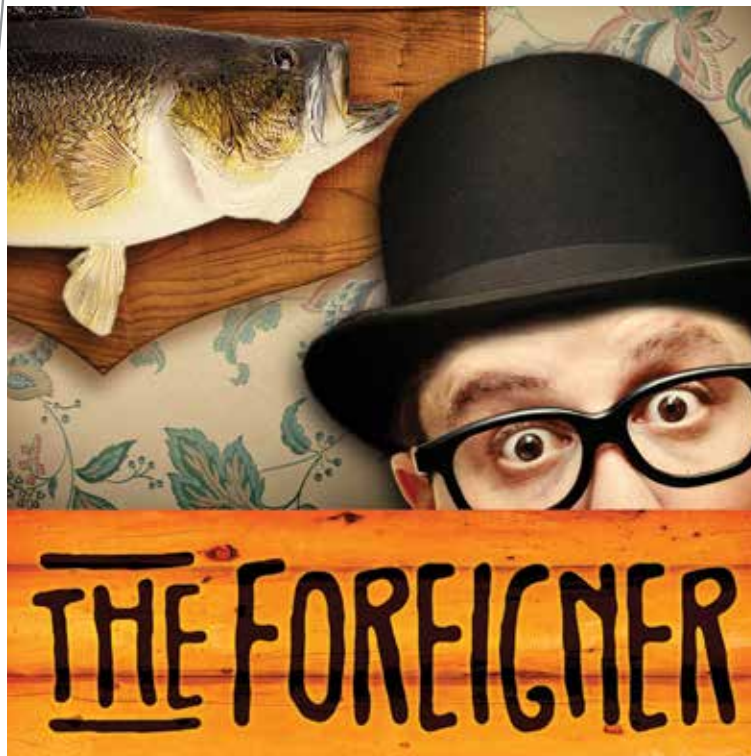
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**THE REPERTORY THEATRE
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At The Rep, we know that life moves fast—okay, really fast. But we also know that some things are worth slowing down

for. We believe that live theatre is one of those pit stops worth making and are excited that you are going to stop by for a show. To help you get the most bang for your buck, we have put together **WU? @ THE REP**—an IM guide that will give you everything you need to know to get at the top of your theatergoing game—fast. You'll find character descriptions (**A/S/L**), a plot summary (**FYI**), biographical information (**F&F**), historical context (**B4U**), and other bits and pieces (**HTH**). Most importantly, we'll have some ideas about what this all means **IRL**, anyway.

CU@therep!



The Teacher's Lounge

In an effort to make our educational materials accessible to students and easy for educators to incorporate into the classroom, our study guide is written in a student-oriented format. We hope that you will circulate this guide among your students in the weeks preceding your visit to The Rep, encouraging them to browse it before and after class and as time allows, using it as a launch point for both pre- and post-performance discussions. You may also want to visit our website, www.repstl.org, for additional information including educational games, activity suggestions and behind-the-scenes information. Any materials, either from this guide or from our website may be reproduced for use in the classroom. As always, we appreciate

your making live theatre a part of your classroom experience and welcome your feedback and questions.

NEATO!

WELCOME!

The desire to learn, insatiable when awakened, can sometimes lie dormant until touched by the right teacher or the right experience. We at The Rep are grateful to have the opportunity to play a role supporting you as you awaken the desire for learning in your students.

Playwright Tony Kushner once said that it is when an audience is open and laughing that a play has the opportunity to slip in important ideas and issues. Larry Shue certainly grabs that opportunity in *The Foreigner*. As your students laugh and enjoy this funny play, they will gain knowledge about human nature—both its positive and negative sides—and perhaps a little about themselves.

It would be a good idea to take a minute on the bus to give your students these quick theatre etiquette reminders:

- This show has an intermission; there will be time for bathroom breaks before the show and partway through.
- The actors can hear the audience and appreciate responses; however, talking, moving around and eating is distracting and can affect the action on stage.
- Pictures, phone calls and texting are not allowed at any time during the performance.

Live theatre won't allow your students to take a passive role—they must work with us to create the experience which takes the learning deeper. Our unique ability to fuse words and images onstage allows your students to explore new ideas as well as excites their imaginations. We will do our part so your students will be stirred to understandings and self-awareness while delving into new and familiar worlds. You are doing your part by using The Rep to extend your intellectual and aesthetic curriculum. Thank you!

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A/S/L

"FROGGY" LESUEUR: An outgoing Englishman who's in the Army and has traveled the world, including many stays at the Betty Meeks Fishing Lodge Resort—which (surprise, surprise) is not the most exotic place he's been to, but certainly has its charm.

CHARLIE BAKER: A friend of Froggy's who has everything going for him except the fact that he's very shy, admittedly boring and stuck in a bad marriage where his wife has cheated on him. Many times. Many, many times.

BETTY MEEKS: An charismatic but aging woman with a big personality who owns the Betty Meeks Fishing Lodge Resort. Obviously.

REVEREND DAVID MARSHALL LEE: A reverend who is engaged to Catherine.

CATHERINE SIMMS: A southern belle who has traded her debutante title for a "soon-to-be preacher's wife" title. She'd be happy about it, but her cynical opinions, cranky attitude and self-loathing tends to get in the way.

ELLARD SIMMS: Catherine's slow but sweet younger brother who just needs a little bit of confidence to realize what he's capable of.

OWEN MUSSER: Property inspector/jerk who's trying to steal Betty's lodge right out from under her. Literally. Owen and his buddies are some pretty shady characters.

H

ABORIGINES: Indigenous people

COMMUNIST: A doctrine based on revolutionary Marxian socialism that was the official ideology of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics; a totalitarian system of government in which a single authoritarian party controls state-owned means of production.

DAFT: Stupid or silly.

HEATHEN: An offensive term used to insult someone who does not believe in or practice Christianity.

ROBERT E. LEE: The leading Confederate general of the American Civil War, famous for his exceptional war tactics and battlefield commanding skills.

PRINCESS DIANA: The late Princess of Wales who was married to Prince Charles of the British royal family; mother of Prince William and Prince Harry.

KLAN: Short for the Ku Klux Klan, an extremist group that uses terror tactics to promote their causes, including white supremacy.

DEBUTANTE: A young woman who is being introduced formally into society by appearing at a public event such as dance or party.

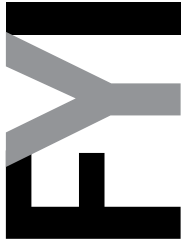
RUGER CARBINE: A rifle-like semi-automatic weapon.

RACONTEUR: Someone who tells stories or anecdotes in an interesting or entertaining way.

"OTHER CHEEK:" From the Christian doctrine that refers to responding to an aggressor without violence.

HOODOO: A form of traditional folk magic, also used to describe bad luck or misfortune.

INVISIBLE EMPIRE: Another name for the Ku Klux Klan.



SPOILER ALERT!

IT'S A STORMY NIGHT when two Army buddies, Froggy and Charlie, arrive at the Betty Meeks' Fishing Lodge Resort in Tilghman County, Georgia. We learn right away they're on a three-day trip, and Charlie needed some time away from the hospital and his wife who only has six months to live. The funny and outgoing Froggy tells Charlie he needs the trip because his wife was worried about him, but Charlie confesses to Froggy that he thinks his wife actually finds him boring and cheats on him regularly. A proofreader for 27 years, Charlie admits he even finds himself boring and is terrified of speaking in even regular conversations. Being sympathetic, Froggy tells Charlie that he'll make sure no one at the lodge speaks to him during his stay.

AFTER SENDING CHARLIE to settle in his room, the owner Betty enters. She and Froggy, who are clearly old friends, catch up. Betty tells him she hasn't been getting enough business lately and might have to sell the resort. When Froggy asks Betty where she would live, she tells him that, at her age, she expects be joining her deceased husband soon. The only regret she has is not seeing more of the world and meeting interesting foreigners. Froggy tells her she's not missing anything. It's hard to even understand each other when you speak different languages. It's this statement that gives Froggy the idea to tell Betty that Charlie is a foreigner and can't speak any English, so she shouldn't bother talking to him. Even with this information, Betty is excited about finally getting to meet a foreigner! Froggy tells his great idea to Charlie who is very uncomfortable with the lie. Froggy tells him if he really doesn't like the idea, then he should just tell Betty it was a joke.



AS FROGGY LEAVES, David, a Reverend who is staying at the resort with his fiancée Catherine and her brother Ellard, walks in. Catherine enters, and not seeing Charlie, tells David that she's pregnant. She's angry because David was supposed to be sterile, and they argue about keeping the baby and ultimately decide to move the wedding up. They don't realize Charlie is in the room until the argument is done. Catherine is furious until Betty comes into the room and tells her he couldn't have heard any of their argument because he doesn't speak English. Extremely uncomfortable and at a loss, Charlie follows along with the ruse.

LATER ON, Owen Mussman, the Tilghman County property inspector, stops by. Betty is terse with him as she knows he's trying to get her lodge condemned. He claims to only be visiting David, who is a friend of his. After everyone goes upstairs for the night besides Charlie, David and Owen, we learn that Owen and David are in cahoots. Owen got Betty's lodge officially condemned so David can buy it cheap. They don't mind spilling these secrets in front of Charlie, since they think he can't understand what they're saying.

THE NEXT MORNING, Charlie calls Froggy and tells him about all the distressing information he's learned, and he begs Froggy to come pick him up. However, Betty gets on the phone with Froggy and tells him how happy she is to have Charlie and how his presence makes her feel 20 years younger. Flattered and a bit guilt-ridden, Charlie decides to stay. Later at breakfast, Charlie engages Catherine's younger, somewhat dim brother Ellard in a mimicry game where Ellard must demonstrate for the "foreigner" on how to use a fork, knife, etc. For once, Ellard appears to have the intellectual upper-hand in an interaction with another person, and he gets so excited, he decides

to teach Charlie about nature by bringing in outdoorsy things. Ellard leaves to collect items for his project.

CATHERINE COMES DOWN and sits at the table with Charlie. At first she's grumpy and making sarcastic comments about the debutante ball she's reading about in the paper. She admits to Charlie that she was a debutante last year, and the fact that she's going to be a mother and preacher's wife soon scares her. Things seemed to have happened so fast, and Catherine's not sure she's ready or even thinks she's a good enough person for it all. She tells Charlie that she's talking to him and not Betty or Ellard because she's afraid she might actually be understood. Ellard comes in and tries to teach Charlie more words. As Charlie learns English, Catherine is impressed that Ellard is showing some uncharacteristic self-confidence.

TWO DAYS LATER, there's a strong camaraderie between Betty, Ellard, Catherine and Charlie. Catherine feels like she can talk to Charlie about all her problems; Ellard feels smart teaching Charlie English; and Betty feels much more spirited by Charlie's fun presence and everyone's improved moods. When David and Owen come to the lodge, everyone thinks it will be fun for Charlie to teach them a few words in his native language. Sensing Owen's bad character, Charlie uses the opportunity to humiliate him. Owen becomes so enraged, he starts yelling to them all about the Klan coming, and then he leaves in a huff with David following him, hoping to salvage the situation.

SOON THE ELECTRICITY goes out, and Klan members arrive at the lodge. Everyone is scared, but Charlie comes up with a plan. When the Klan members (led by Owen) break into the lodge, Catherine and Ellard are able to knock one unconscious and steal

a robe without the others noticing. Then Charlie pretends to go into a kind of trance and starts speaking in phrases that seem eerie and curse-like; Owen describes it as "hoodoo." Charlie then turns on a cloaked Klan member and appears to curse him so that he melts into the floor. The Klan members are so freaked out, they run out of the house. We find out the melting member was really just Ellard in the stolen robe pretending to melt by stepping through a trapdoor to the cellar. Everyone is relieved to be safe.

SUDDENLY, DAVID APPEARS and everyone realizes that he was the Klan member they knocked unconscious! David is so distressed by the turn of events that he confesses to Catherine that though he loved her, the main reason he was marrying her was for her inheritance. He planned to use her money to convert Betty's lodge into an important meeting place for the Klan. Disgusted and hurt, Catherine throws him out. Froggy, who had arrived just minutes earlier, assures everyone that the police are just down the road arresting the Klan members and probably David as well. Although still hurt from being deceived by David, Catherine says she and Ellard are going to stay at the lodge and help Betty maintain it—Ellard starts planning to build a brick porch. Froggy then hands Charlie a telegram from his wife that says she has returned to full health but has decided to run off with a proctologist. Feeling happy in his recent home, Charlie decides to stay at the lodge. Froggy warns Catherine that Charlie isn't exactly what he seems to be. But Catherine tells Charlie, "You stay. And you know what? I bet, if we work real hard, someday you won't be talkin' with any accent at all, anymore." After they exit, Froggy and Betty decide to have a drink after all the strange events.



F

THERE'S NOTHING LIKE a story that can make you laugh. A funny farce like *The Foreigner* is a real treat! In fact, during one of its performances at New York's Astor Place Theater in the '80s, an explosion in the basement forced audience members outside in the freezing rain. One would think they'd go home, unwilling to wait it out in the awful weather. However, they waited a frigid 45 minutes just so they could go back and see the second Act.

ISN'T IT INTERESTING to think about the person who can come up with a story as witty and fun as *The Foreigner*? Think of your classmates. Who's the class jokester? Maybe he or she will write something hilarious one day that you'll get to see at the theatre! After all, that's what *Foreigner* writer Larry Shue was credited as when he was young—a Midwestern nerdy class clown. Born in 1946, Shue first grew up in Eureka, Kansas, where he wrote and staged plays in his family's garage for relatives and school friends. His family eventually moved to Chicago, where Shue got to hone his comedic and acting talents when he played Nick Bottom in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

AFTER GRADUATING from Illinois Wesleyan University's School of Theatre Arts in 1968, Shue entered the Army during the Vietnam War. Although posted to Fort Lee,

Virginia, he never saw combat; instead he got himself into the Army's entertainment division. After being released from service in 1972, Shue began his professional theatre career at the Harlequin Dinner Theater of Washington, DC, and Atlanta. In 1977, Shue joined the Milwaukee Repertory Theater where he performed in many plays and eventually earned the title of "playwright in residence." It was here that he wrote and premiered his two most successful works, both about awkward, socially inept characters, in the early '80s. The first was *The Nerd* about a dinner party turned hilarious romp with an inappropriate and nerdy guest. The second was *The Foreigner*, which won two Obie Awards and two Outer Critics Circle Awards as Best New American Play and Best Off-Broadway Production.

UNFORTUNATELY, the comedy writer's life tragically ended too soon when he was killed in a commuter plane crash in Virginia's Shenandoah National Park. He was 39 years old. Although, it ended prematurely, it was obvious Shue enjoyed a successful life doing what he loved. Like most people involved in theatre, Shue cherished how his work affected an audience. He said in a 1985 *People* magazine interview: "You have tired, neurotic people filing in, and you have kids coming out—giggling and flirting."



RBTL

GIVING UP

Many of the characters in this play are stuck in a rut. Catherine feels unprepared for marriage and a child. Ellard seems to have accepted his role of being slow-witted. Betty is getting consumed by her old age and even feels ready for death. This happens to everybody in real life at one point or another. Either we're feeling overwhelmed like Catherine, weary like Betty or stuck with a label like Ellard. It's interesting how getting a visit from a stranger gets them out of their ruts. What was it about Charlie's persona that causes this? When Charlie speaks his jibberish at one point, Betty says: "Ye what, now? Ye—ye want me t' play the harmonica fer ye? Why! How'd you know I used t' play one o' them things? Why, that was 30 years ago! Wait right here." What do you think that harmonica represents for Betty?

FASCINATION WITH THE EXOTIC/FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN

Catherine, Ellard and Betty are all fascinated with the fact that Charlie's foreign, and they want to learn all about where he's from. Although the new Charlie is interesting, much of their intrigue seems to come from being so bored with their lives and surroundings that anywhere besides Tilghman County seems fascinating. Ellard, Catherine and Betty's reactions strongly contrast with the subplot of the KKK, a group known for hating people different from them. Hatred like this usually comes from fear, which is the root of bigotry. How can you help prevent small-mindedness in people like Owen?

WEARING A MASK

Charlie declares he's boring in the beginning of the play, but by pretending to be someone else, he actually becomes someone else—someone much more interesting and fun. Why do you think doing this was such a positive thing for Charlie? It probably wasn't right for him to lie to everybody, but it seemed to help his shyness tremendously. While it's good to have strong self-awareness, sometimes we're so set in our ways that we never give ourselves opportunities to grow and change for the better. What's something that you've negatively labeled yourself with? What can you do to change it?

SUCCESS OF THE UNDERDOG

Catherine, Betty, Charlie and Ellard are all underdogs in their own ways, and they're the characters we're rooting for. Why are we always sympathizing with the underdog? A lot of it has to do with our own experience feeling like underdogs in some way. What are some of your favorite underdog stories? What was it about them that you like so much? When were you the underdog? How did it feel to come out on top?

COMMUNITY

Charlie says towards the end: "We—all of us, we're becoming—we're making one another complete, and alive, and—oh, I can't explain. But—I shall miss them." Betty, Ellard and Catherine really seem to bond over their shared fascination and friendship with Charlie. They all are definitely becoming better versions of themselves by being around Charlie. Often when we feel good about ourselves, we are better able to connect with others. Not only do Catherine, Ellard, Betty and Charlie feel better about themselves, but they gain even more happiness by becoming their own little circle, which ends up being their saving grace. As Charlie says: "Separately, we are all single people. But together, we are as four!"

AMERICAN EXTREMISTS

The Foreigner is a hilarious comedy, but it does have a dark subplot involving the Ku Klux Klan, an extremist group known for its violent tactics against minorities. It's obvious that Charlie, Betty, Catherine and Ellard are terrified of the Klan invading their home, and you should probably know why if you're not familiar with the group already.

FORMED IN THE 1860S after the Civil War by former Confederate soldiers, the Klan used guerilla warfare tactics aimed mostly at southern Blacks who were benefiting from their new Reconstruction rights. Eventually internal strife caused a great deal of instability in the Klan resulting in many local chapters disbanding, but it experienced a revival around 1915 with the opening of the controversial film *Birth of a Nation*, which featured racist themes. Many remaining Klan members used this film as a form of propaganda to convey their message of white supremacy. This coincided with the time's challenges in dealing with a massive influx of immigrants to the US. Appealing to the middle class, the Klan drew members fast. After working on its public image more in the 1920s, the group, known for its white hood and robe garb, voiced its opposition to Blacks, Catholics, Jews, drugs, nightclubs and more. However, other groups, most notably the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), rose to become a strong opponent of the Klan. To show it would not be intimidated by the Klan's tactics, the NAACP held its 1920 annual conference in Atlanta, which was considered at the time to be one of the most



active Klan areas in America.

THE MORE THE KLAN began to grow, the more its image suffered, as the public became increasingly aware of its hateful intent and abhorrent acts of violence that included lynching. Again, fighting amongst members and a deteriorating public image caused membership to decline dramatically by the Great Depression.

ALTHOUGH SEVERAL LEADERS tried to reunify a Klan movement in the '50s and '60s, most local units remained stubbornly independent for the most part, though membership began to rise during the Civil Rights movement. However, Americans were more vocal than ever in their disgust with the Klan's message and tactics, and the FBI and other law enforcement agencies showed a strong commitment to monitor and break down the Klan.

THERE WAS ANOTHER brief revival in the late '70s and early '80s (around the time *The Foreigner* was written), but most local units remained independent, seemingly unable to unify to return the Klan to its former fame of the early 20th century.





SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT: Were you surprised that something as dark as the Ku Klux Klan was used as a subplot in a comedy? Did it seem inappropriate or in bad taste? If it made you feel uncomfortable, you probably wouldn't be the first. Mel Brooks, one of the funniest directors ever in film, faced criticism when he poked fun at Hitler in his 1968 movie *The Producers*. (You might be more familiar with the recent Broadway musical starring Nathan Lane and Matthew Broderick.) However, Brooks responded

with this poignant statement, which points out another benefit of comedy besides just making us laugh in the moment:

"If you stand on a soapbox and trade rhetoric with a dictator, you never win. That's what they do so well; they seduce people. But if you ridicule them, bring them down with laughter—they can't win. You show how crazy they are."

WHEN YOU MAKE FUN of the bad guys, they don't seem so powerful, do they?

IF YOU LIKED THIS

The Foreigner is not only a story that makes you laugh, but it warms your heart. It's funny how much of an effect one unique stranger can have on a community. If you like that type of tale, check out these other stories with similar themes.

Chocolat: A 1999 novel by Joanne Harris, *Chocolat* tells the story of Vianne Rocher who opens a chocolaterie in a small French village. It appears Vianne's delicious confections are more than yummy treats as their seemingly magical properties and Vianne's charm begin to change the townspeople's lives during Lent, when they're supposed to be focusing on suffering. Vianne's magnetism and strength inspire a fearful wife to leave her abusive husband and lead a confident life of her own. She also helps a crotchety old woman reconnect with her estranged grandson. If you're a Johnny Depp fan, see the 2000 film version starring him and French actress Juliette Binoche as Vianne!

Lars and the Real Girl: If you're not in love with Ryan Gosling already, you will be after watching this sweet film from 2007, in which he plays a socially awkward but kind young man who pretends a life-sized doll in a wheelchair is his girlfriend Bianca. At first his family and the rest of the small town in which he lives are concerned for Lars' mental health, but out of love for him and his gentle nature, they play along and accept Bianca as part of their community. "She" becomes involved in local volunteer programs, starts working as a model in a clothing store and even gets a makeover from the town beautician. By taking to Bianca to all her commitments, the intimacy-averse Lars begins to interact with people more, finding real connection.

Miracle on 34th Street: You very likely might have already seen this 1947 Christmas classic starring a young Natalie Wood or perhaps the 1994 remake starring Mara Wilson, but if you haven't, it's a Netflix must! A kind elderly man named Kris Kringle is hired to be the Macy's Santa during the Christmas season after he does such a spot-on job during that year's parade. Charismatic and warm, Kris inspires everyone who visits him at the store. However, his Macy's boss Dorris becomes concerned for his psychological health when he insists he's the real Santa Claus. She and her daughter Susan don't believe in Santa and don't really enjoy the Christmas season. However, as they get to know Kris and his magical personality better, they begin to question their skepticism and wonder if it really is so silly to believe in Santa Claus.

HAPPY TRAVELS

Betty: Afore you come along, I never even knowed nobody outside Tilghman. Then hearin' all your tales about them A-rabs, 'n' Greekses, 'n' such-like? Laws. I lay awake sometimes, wonderin' what them folks 'd be like. Foreigners. Their different kinds a' lives? How they dress up, 'n' talk, 'n' all?

Some of you might have gotten the chance to travel and meet new people, but many young people don't always get the opportunity. Do you ever feel like Betty? You're probably always learning about the world outside your community, but how much of it have you actually gotten to see with your own eyes? Whether you've trekked the globe or haven't journeyed outside your state, there are many chances for teenagers to travel.

FIRST HERE ARE FIVE REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD VISIT OTHER PARTS OF THE COUNTRY OR WORLD AT SOME POINT:

1. To experience new cultures: Social studies class is a great way to get introduced to how other people live, but there's nothing like seeing it firsthand. Realizing that many people live differently from you is an important lesson. And seeing how they live differently can really help to open your mind.
2. To challenge yourself: Going somewhere different can be intimidating. You might not know customs or even the language, but challenges help build character! Learning how to communicate with different types of people will help you develop better social skills and build confidence. And learning a new language is always fun!
3. To meet new people: Making friends can be a really meaningful experience, and think how much you would learn making friends outside your community? Even though they don't live close by, it's really easy to stay in touch over Facebook or through emails. And maybe you can plan trips to visit each other in the future!
4. To learn more about yourself: Sometimes it takes being out of your comfort zone to grow. Think of the last time you tried something new. Maybe you joined a new club or tried out for a play or started volunteering. Wasn't it invigorating? Being

in surroundings completely different than what you're used to helps you to learn about the you that isn't identified with your environment.

5. To have fun: This one should be obvious!

SO WHAT'S OUT THERE? It's a good idea to explore organizations like Adventures Cross-Country (ARCC) and Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE), which both foster programs specifically for teenagers who want to travel. Here's what they have to offer:

ARCC FEATURES A VARIETY OF SUMMER CAMPS that encourage group adventures lasting two weeks to a month. Each group is composed of 12-18 participants (and two experienced leaders) that include teens who come by themselves or some who come with friends from all over the US and some as far away as Europe and Asia.

- **Multi-sport Adventures** feature classic wilderness activities that let you appreciate natural beauty and learn leadership skills. You can white-water raft on the Colorado River, backpack a Swiss mountain or sea-kayak Italy's Elba Island.
- **Service Adventures** help you to give back and serve those in need. You can meet rural Ecuadorians, Fijian children or even Thai monks. By participating in

teen community service projects, you're ensuring your travels benefit others in addition to you.

- **Language Adventures** are as educational as they are fun! You learn languages by interacting with native speakers, such as when working with Costa Ricans on their family farm, buying a croissant at a Parisian patisserie or exploring unique architecture in Barcelona.

Find out more at AdventuresCrossCountry.com!

CIEE IS A NON-PROFIT, NON-GOVERNMENTAL INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE ORGANIZATION that offers study abroad programs for high school students in countries including Australia, Brazil, Chile, China, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan and Spain.

- **Study Abroad Programs** let you go a semester or full year to live with a host family and attend school, participate in family traditions and get involved in activities involving your own personal interests.
- **Summer Abroad Programs** provide travel, accommodation, most meals and supervision for you to spend three to four weeks in a foreign culture and improve your language skills through intensive and interactive language courses. You'll also go on CIEE excursions in and around your host city, allowing you to explore the culture outside your classroom.
- **Gap Year Abroad** offers college-bound high school graduates the chance to get global perspective while also gaining independence and self-knowledge. You'll get the opportunity to live with a host family, attend classes to learn the language, and participate in volunteer

work in the local community. You'll also go on day and weekend excursions of cultural and historical importance to gain more perspective on your host country.

Find out more at CIEE.org!

OTHER OPTIONS. . .

Programs like those offered by CIEE and ARCC are fantastic ways to explore other places and broaden your horizons; however, if you can't afford them or don't think you can make the commitment they require, that doesn't mean you're without options! Here are some other tips that will get you out there!

- **Talk to your school** about what service or abroad trips they sponsor. They might be more affordable than outside programs or maybe there are scholarships available for you to apply for.
- **Chat with your family** about your next vacation. If you really love your French class, maybe a Parisian vacay will help you learn the language better. Or perhaps you're fascinated with all the Shakespeare you're being exposed to in drama class; you could visit some spots in England where the Bard famously lived or frequented.
- **Explore options for college.** There's no question traveling can be expensive, and your parents might not be able to swing a trip this year, or they might not be comfortable with letting their high school student going so far away without them. But don't fret! College is a great opportunity for traveling. Most universities have great study abroad programs, and it will give you time to save up! Plus, who knows what you'll learn between now and then that will influence your choice of where to go?

SWDY?

CHARLIE: *No, no, I'm boring, all right. I've often wondered—how does one acquire personality? What it must be like, to be able to tell a funny story? To arouse laughter. Anger. Respect. To be thought—wise? How must it be?*

- * Charlie obviously is very shy and has social anxiety. Do you tend to be introverted like Charlie? What makes you shy? Does it come from being nervous around a crowd of people or do you like to listen more than you like to talk? Or are you more like Froggy? Extroverted and outgoing? Why do you think you're very comfortable in a group? Much of our personality depends on how we were brought up and our family dynamic. Do you have a lot of siblings or are you an only child? Are your parents introverted or extroverted? Many of us were introverted when we were younger and then become extroverted—or vice versa. Was it like this with you? What do you think caused the change?

CATHERINE: *Debutante ball! Well—look at the little debutantes! Aren't they pretty? Comin' out. The catch is, girls, you don't get to go back in.*

- * What do you think Catherine means by this? It seems when you're young, you have the world at your feet and can dream as far as your imagination will take you. But then you begin to grow up and enter the real world, which starts happening in your teens. When's a time you had a dose of reality like Catherine—when things didn't turn out exactly as you had expected? How did it feel and how did it change your perspective on things? While it's healthy to gain more realistic expectations, why is it still important to dream and keep some idealism?

CHARLIE: *Froggy, I think I'm acquiring a personality!*

FROGGY: *Oh?*

CHARLIE: *Yes! People here just seem to hand it to me piece by piece as they walk into the room! You see? You just did it too! I—suddenly I'm—a raconteur! And suddenly, I'm Catherine's confessor, and I'm Ellard's prize pupil and Betty's—pet skunk!*

- * Catherine, Betty and Ellard become very comfortable around Charlie when they think he can't understand them. Why do you think that is? Catherine seems to value Charlie much like someone would value a priest on the other side of the screen during confession. She assumes he can't understand her so there's no possibility for judgment. Why else do you think this is helpful for her? Do you ever just want to vent to someone, and you feel better just getting it off your chest? Sometimes we figure things out on our own just by saying our feelings out loud to another person; it's nice to have someone listen even if they don't offer a response—why do you think that is? And why do you think Charlie is "acquiring a personality" from all this? Some might say what he's doing is unhealthy because he's pretending to be something he's not, but maybe he's just growing by not being held down by his own preconceived notions of himself. Have you ever been around a group of people who don't know anything about you? Wasn't it kind of liberating? Why do you think that is?