

# THE FOREIGNER

Written by **Larry Shue** | Directed by **Laura Gordon**  
**November 15 - December 18, 2016 | Quadracci Powerhouse**

## TEACHER'S GUIDE

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## SUGGESTED TEACHING & LEARNING TOPICS

*Classroom activity topics include:*

- 1.) Identity in Place
- 2.) Family and Relationships
- 3.) Bigotry

This Teacher's Guide is designed to be used in the classroom along with The Rep's Play Guide for *The Foreigner*. These are some suggested activities for your classroom. The Play Guide is available online at <https://www.milwaukeeep.com/Tickets--Events/201617-Season/The-Foreigner/The-Foreigner-PlayGuide/>

## IDENTITY IN PLACE

See page 3 of the Play Guide for *The Foreigner* synopsis

### DISCUSS: Pre-Show Questions

- How do you define personality? How do family, school or community influence personality? Is it possible for someone to be personality-less?
- Hypothesize how Charlie might feel about being a foreigner in rural Georgia during the 1950s. Have you ever felt like a foreigner or outsider? What challenges do foreigners face?

### DISCUSS: Post-Show Questions

- When does it become apparent that Charlie has developed a personality? How does his silence contribute to his development as a character? Overall, does Charlie's assumed identity have a positive or negative impact on the farm and its residents?
- How and why do you believe David manages to hide his true self from everyone except Charlie? Have you ever met someone who can easily hide their sense of self from others? Why might they hide?



Mark Corkins and Lee E. Ernst in Milwaukee Repertory Theater's 2003/04 Quadracci Powerhouse Theater production of *The Foreigner*. Photo by Jay Westhauser.

## WARM-UP: DO YOU KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOR?

Have students get out a sheet of paper and a pencil. Their goal is to find and record the names of five peers who share a hidden similarity (such as the ones listed below). The caveat: students must use pantomime to communicate; no speaking! Once all students have found their five peers, invite them to map out all interests by names on the board and connect the dots: Where is there crossover? On average, how many "degrees of separation" exist between all students? Reflect on how acknowledging similarities can help people overcome their differences.

- Find someone who has:
  - o Has the same shoe size
  - o Has the same favorite season
  - o Has the same favorite sense
  - o Has the same phobia
  - o Has the same dream job

## FAMILY AND RELATIONSHIPS

### DISCUSS: Pre-Show Questions

- How do you define family? What kind of exceptions, considerations, or accommodations might you make for your family that you would not make for others?
- Family can extend beyond one's blood relatives. What positive "influencer" or relationship have you adopted as family? What kinds of circumstances and character or relationship traits create this type of familial dynamic?

## DISCUSS: Post-Show Questions

- Catherine comments that David should be at home with her instead of out helping the poor. What does this say about her relationship with David? How does their relationship develop over the course of the play, and how does it affect the rest of the characters?
- What do you think Charlie's life would have been like if he had not traveled to the lodge with Froggy? What might have happened to Betty, Catherine, and the rest of the characters?

## DESIGN: A Family Portrait Poster

Break students into small groups. Their goal is to design a poster representing a "traditional family unit" that also incorporates other thematic elements from *The Foreigner*, such as immigration, trust, isolation, love, betrayal, and friendship, etc. Remind students that this poster should not summarize the play, but tell the story of their collective interpretation of the piece: What story does your poster tell, and how can this story impact others?



Milwaukee Repertory Theater's 1993 Production of *The Foreigner*.  
From left: Tom Blair as Owen and James Pickering as Charlie.  
Photo Credit: Avery Mark Photography, UW-Milwaukee Libraries.

## BIGOTRY

See pages 7-10 of the Play Guide for Social-Historical Context

## DISCUSS: Pre-Show Questions

- Think about who and who would not be welcome in small-town, rural Georgia in the 1950s. What impact does living in an isolated community have on the morals or belief systems of its citizens? How might isolation affect one's ability to accept foreign ideas or others who think differently from them?

## DISCUSS: Post-Show Questions

- How does Owen treat Charlie when he is told that Charlie does not speak English? Why does Owen think that he can treat Charlie that way? What does this say about Owen's character as a person?
- How does Pastor David treat others? How does this change throughout the play? Do his actions represent or coincide with his faith? Why or why not?

## WRITE: Write for Understanding

Hate is birthed by fear of the unknown or out of the belief that certain groups are better than others. David and Owen's hate lead them to make choices that hurt others. Assume the identity of a character in the play and write a letter to David or Owen explaining the effects of their actions on others. How might one take the time to understand others change one's mindset of who they are and what they stand for? What would that mean for Owen and David? How can these questions and your response influence your school, home, and community?



### MILWAUKEE REP EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

The Education Department offers backstage tours, pre- and post-show workshops and classroom residencies.

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### Common Core State Standards: English Language Arts

**RL.6-10.1** LITERACY COMPREHENSION  
**RL.6-12.3** ANALYZE DIALOGUE  
**SL.8-12.1** COLLABORATIVE DISCUSSIONS  
**SL.8-12.3** POINT OF VIEW  
**SL.6-12.4** PRESENTATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND IDEAS  
**L.8-12.5** FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

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