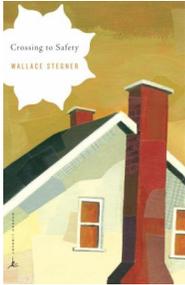


Books by the Stack



Crossing to Safety by Wallace Stegner

Two young couples, Sid and Charity and Larry and Sally, from different backgrounds—East and West, rich and poor—befriend each other in 1937 Madison, Wisconsin.

Why you'll like it: *Domestic fiction. Leisurely paced. Nostalgic. Reflective*

About the Author: In 1972, Wallace Earle Stegner won a Pulitzer Prize for *Angle of Repose* (1971), a novel about a wheelchair-bound man's recreation of his New England grandmother's experience in a late nineteenth-century frontier town. He was an American novelist, short story writer, environmentalist, and historian; he has been called "The Dean of Western Writers". He taught at Stanford University, where he initiated the creative writing program. The Stegner Fellowship program at Stanford University is a two-year creative writing fellowship. The house Stegner lived in from age 7 to 12 in Eastend, Saskatchewan, Canada, was restored by the Eastend Arts Council in 1990 and established as a Residence for Artists; the Wallace Stegner Grant For The Arts offers a grant of \$500 and free residency at the house for the month of October for published Canadian writers. Stegner died in 1993. (Bowker Author Biography)

Questions for Discussion

1. Have you ever had friends as generous as Sid and Charity Lang? How did Stegner write the pairs of characters so that we would believe Larry and Sally could accept the Langs repeated gifts without inducing shame and guilt?
2. Given the difference between their upbringings (social class), what is the basis of friendship between these two couples? What does each couple gain from the friendship? Is it an equal or unequal relationship?
3. Discuss the roles of wives in the book. Have wives, especially faculty wives, changed since the 1930s?
4. How do the two marriages differ? The Langs' marriage seems to be the one most under the microscope here, the most complicated of the two marriages.
5. Larry ruminates on the basis of their friendship with the Langs when they flatter him on his writing, asking on page 18: "Do we respond only to people who seem to find us interesting?" and "Can I think of anyone in my whole life whom I have liked without his first showing signs of liking me?" How do you respond to Larry's questions?
6. How did you react to Charity's personality? Did you see her as controlling? Did you like her? What drives her?
7. What are Charity's expectations of Sid? Does she desire academic status? Does she want him to realize his full potential or live up to his best self? What does she want from him?
8. Compare the ways each of the women deal with their illness. Did either Charity or Sally change their personal style as a result of their illness? Is that as you would've expected?

9. Why does Sid stay with Charity? What do you think will happen to him after she dies? Will he choose to go on without her?

10. Stenger is a known environmentalist. Did his descriptions of Battell Pond and its environs show that? What feeling were evoked by his descriptions of their summers there? In using the natural beauty of Vermont, what way might he be making a comparison between the immutable natural world and mutable human world?

(Questions provided by Madison Public Library and Litlovers)



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