

ACTIVITY THIRTEEN: DISCUSSION WITH CANADIANS

Objectives:

- To appreciate how dialogue can be a way to learn about other people
- To convey personal experience through dialogue

Materials:

- Reading Six: A TRAVELING DISCUSSION WITH CANADIANS
- Any American newspaper

Procedures:

1. Hand out A TRAVELING DISCUSSION WITH CANADIANS and discuss the tone of the conversation. In what ways do you find the passage convincing that Mrs. Montrosier and Mrs. Forrester were Canadians? WHO could be the man with the blue tooth?
2. Have groups of students write a dialogue between a Canadian and American seated next to each other on an airplane or a bus. Allow students to make the dialogue either humorous or serious. Ask groups to role play their dialogue.
3. Discuss ways in which people of one country develop points of view about other people. Ask students to refer to newspaper articles, books, films or personal experiences. Make a class collection of accounts.

Notes for Teaching:

This activity illustrates how conversation leads to the development of points of view about people of other countries. Discussion, which becomes serious, humorous, or argumentative can result in either greater understanding or misconceptions of others. This humorous dialogue between two Canadian tourists and an American traveler takes place in a European railway coach. The conversation is taken from Ethel Wilson's short story, "We Have to Sit Opposite."

After students have read the account, they should focus on how the writer's style and choice of words develop a vivid sense of conversation. As a follow up to discussion, asks students to write a conclusion to the passage. Student conclusions can be read aloud to compare various ways in which "strangers" conclude conversation.

Writing their own dialogue allows students to use their own experiences with people from other countries. Analysis of accounts or interviews concerning people of other countries in print and media can illustrate how both understanding or stereotyping can occur.

READING SIX: A TRAVELING DISCUSSION WITH CANADIANS

Suddenly the man with the blue tooth spoke, "Are you English?" he said loudly.

"Yes—well—no," said Mrs. Forrester.

"No—well—yes," said Mrs. Montrose, simultaneously.

A derisive look came over the man's face. "You must know what you are," he said, "either you are English or you are not English. Are you, or are you not?"

"No," said Mrs. Montrose and Mrs. Forrester, speaking primly. Their chins were high, their eyes flashed, and they were ready for discreet battle.

"Then you are Americans?" said the man in the same bullying manner.

"No," said Mrs. Montrose and Mrs. Forrester.

"You can't deceive me, you know," said the man with the blue tooth, "I know the English language. You say you are not English. You say you are not American. What, then, may I ask, are you? You must be something."

"We are Canadians," said Mrs. Forrester, furious at this catechism. "Canadians," said the man.

"Yes, Canadians," said Mrs. Montrose.

"This," murmured Mrs. Forrester to Mrs. Montrose, "is more than I can bear!"

"What did you say?" said the man, leaning forward quickly, his hands on his knees.

"I spoke to my friend," said Mrs. Forrester coldly, "I spoke about my bear."

"Yes," said Mrs. Montrose, "she spoke about her bear."

"Your bear? Have you a bear? But you cannot have a bear!" said the man with some surprise.

"In Canada I have a bear. I have two bears," said Mrs. Forrester conceitedly.

"That is true," said Mrs. Montrose nodding, she has two bears. I myself have five bears. My father has seven bears. That is nothing. It is the custom."

"What do you do with your bears?" asked the man.

"We eat them," said Mrs. Forrester.

"Yes," said Mrs. Montrose, "We eat them. It is the custom."

From Ethel Wilson, WE HAVE TO SIT OPPOSITE, pp. 145-146.