

TEACHER'S GUIDE

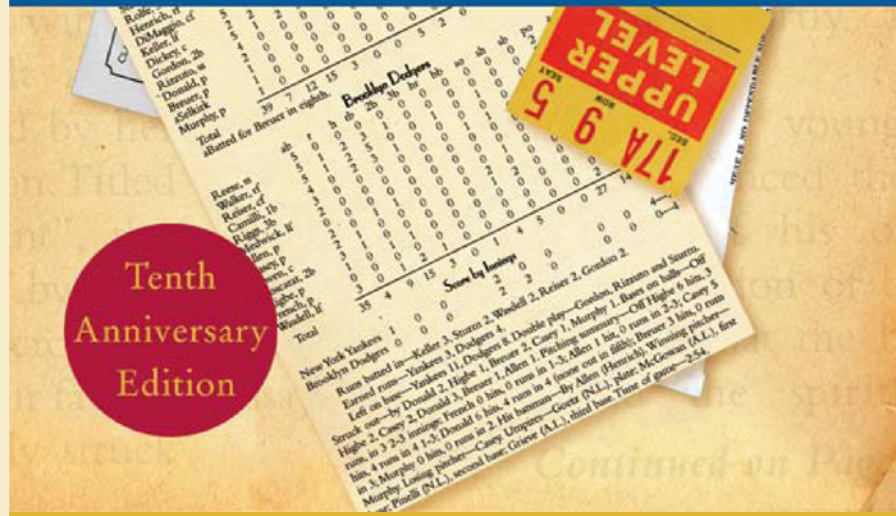


Last Days of Summer

A Novel

STEVE KLUGER

"Wonderful. . . A modern-day Catcher in the Rye." —Portland Press Herald



Tenth
Anniversary
Edition

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Questions for Discussion

1. Steve Kluger has stated: "Baseball is the heart and soul of the way we live. Or at least the way we're supposed to. . . . Baseball reflects our culture and our society the same way a rearview mirror lets you know what's sneaking up behind you." To what extent, and in what ways, has baseball—as popular game, organized sport, business, and entertainment—reflected American society, culture, and history? In what ways does it do so today?
2. What similarities and what differences might there be in a novel about a young *girl's* reaching out to a professional sports figure? What concerns might be shared by Joey and a girl his own age in the early 1940s—and today—and what concerns might be unique to each gender?
3. What is the importance of trust in the relationship between Joey and Charlie, and in relationships in general? Why do we sometimes find it difficult to trust another person?
4. What do the letters from the White House, obviously in response to letters from Joey, tell us about Joey's awareness of current events, his reactions to them, and his readiness to attempt to influence government policy? How might you engage in the same kind of awareness and involvement? What might be the importance of your being as aware today as Joey was in the early 1940s?
5. Charlie writes to Joey, "You could not tell the truth unless you thought you were prevaricating." (p. 41) How accurate is that judgment? To what extent do Joey's prevarications, in fact, reveal the truth?
6. What might be the significance of the fact that Joey's best friend, The Green Hornet (aka Craig Nakamura), is Japanese American? What might be the further significance of the fact that the two of them seem to be the repeated beat-up victims of Lenny Bierman and others?
7. In one of his more risible sentences, Charlie advises Joey that "batting averages and etc. are only the gravy on the tip of the iceberg. There are other things that count for alot more." (p. 55) In Charlie's opinion, what are some of those other things? Why do you agree or disagree with his assessments? What "things" does Joey eventually come to hold as counting for much more than "batting averages and etc."?
8. In his letter to Joey following his final-game four strike-outs, Charlie sets out a series of rules and regulations that he insists will govern their relationship (pp. 87-90). How helpful might those rules and regulations be for any relationship? Which of them do you consider of primary importance? Why?
9. Between Charlie Banks and Herbert Demarest, the principal of Alexander Hamilton Junior High School, which of the two do you think has the clearer sense of the needs and motivations of a twelve-year-old-boy? Why do you think so?
10. In his letters to Joey, "Rabby" Lieberman, and others, how does Charlie—in his singular way—manage to bridge the gaps between religions, between generations, and between genders?
11. What role do anti-Semitism and its manifestations play in Joe's life? How might they affect his view of the world, current events, and other people? What manifestations of anti-Semitism and other bigotries do you observe today?
12. What are some of Charlie's unusual interpretations of Old Testament stories and individuals and of Judaism, Christianity, and religion in general? To what extent does he prompt Joey to view his religion from different perspectives, and with what consequences? To what extent does Joey prompt Charlie to view religion and faith from different perspectives, and with what consequences? To what extent have the two of them prompted new perspectives on religion, faith, and belief on your part?

13. One of Charlie's messages of "wisdom" to Joey, in response to Joey's letter regarding Rachel, is: "Which came first, the chicken or the road? Think about it." (p. 185) What might Charlie have meant or intended by this message?
14. In response to the third of Joey's "big questions" ("Why won't God let us see Him?"), (p. 190) Charlie responds: "God lets us see Him all the time. He looks like Hazel and Rachel and Harlan and babies and etc." (p. 191) Why do you agree or disagree with Charlie's statement?
15. On Joey's report card for the fall semester, 1941, Janet Hicks writes: "Joseph has a mind of his own—but he will need to learn that he cannot expect to amount to much unless he does what he is told." (p. 203) Which is the more attractive: following one's own mind and inclinations or doing what one is told? When might doing what one is told be the wrong thing to do? How might the two be balanced for optimal advancement in life? What kind of balance does Joey achieve?
16. How does Kluger create the illusion that Charlie Banks and Hazel MacKay were actual historical figures? What techniques does he use to give them historical presence?
17. What circumstances led to FDR's Executive Order 9066, which authorized the removal of all Japanese Americans from the West Coast and their ultimate internment in camps in the interior? What are the possibilities of something similar occurring today?
18. How sound is Charlie's advice to Joey regarding girls, how best to approach them and talk with them, and how to win them over? Why—or why not—does Joey need Charlie's advice?
19. In his letter of condolence to Joey, Rabbi Lieberman writes that Kaddish will be said for Charlie and explains: "... since we've already broken all of our remaining rules for Charlie Banks, we felt that this should be no exception." (p. 340) What importance does breaking rules have in the book? When might rules be broken and when not, and for what reasons?
20. After Charlie's death on Guadalcanal, Stuke writes to Joey: "You had it figured right when you called him a hero." (p. 342) In addition to his actions on Guadalcanal, what other evidence supports the judgment that Charlie was always a hero? What makes Charles L. Banks a hero?
21. Hazel writes to Joey after Charlie's funeral, recalling especially Aunt Carrie's reading from St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians: "So now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death." (p. 344) Putting aside the wonder of Aunt Carrie reading from the Christian New Testament, in what ways was Christ magnified in Charlie Banks?
22. Could events like those in *Last Days of Summer* occur today? How might events be similar and how different?
23. How would you define "family" as viewed by the characters in Kluger's novel, as viewed by you and your classmates, and as posited by today's politicians?
24. How might we all enrich our lives by persistently reaching out to those whom we admire?

Class Activities

1. Have your students write letters to well-known or especially admired professional athletes, politicians, and other celebrities, expressing their opinions on relevant contemporary events and issues and asking for advice or information. The letters should actually be mailed. The students should then collect all responses in a display for the classroom or the school bulletin board.
2. Construct a display showing contemporary or historic sports figures whom class members consider to be especially admirable or interesting. Photographs of the athletes should be accompanied by brief career biographies and brief lists of accomplishments and the reasons for their selection.
3. Charlie counsels Joey that “the *real* problem is that nobody knows how to say what is on their mind anymore.” (p. 63) Conduct a “Saying What’s on My Mind” game with the entire class. Each class member stands and, within guidelines and strictures established beforehand, says what is on her or his mind. Then, within an established time frame, allow the other students to respond.
4. Joey tells Charlie that he has donated “my old radio and some bubblegum and sweaters without holes in them to Bundles for Britain.” (p. 103) Determine what legitimate and reliable charities or organizations today are similar to Bundles for Britain, and—with the class, your school, and your community—organize donations.
5. Invite representatives of the various faiths in your community to present to the class (or to the entire student body, in an assembly) explanations of the coming-of-age rituals and ceremonies observed within those faiths (bar mitzvah, bat mitzvah, and confirmation, for example). Then have the students prepare brief reports on their own experiences of those rituals.
6. In response to Charlie’s suggestion that Joey “think about some more of the big questions,” Joey submits eight “big” questions to Charlie. (pp. 188–190) Have each student submit a list of five “big questions” to which he or she would like to have answers.
 - a. Then have each student approach people in his or her life or community (for example: parents, religious leader, politician, business person) with requests for answers.
 - b. Combine the questions in a single list, not repeating any specific question. (Do reword nearly identical questions, however.) Distribute within school and community, with request for answers. Correlate all the responses and either post as a display or make photocopies to be placed in binders for your students, with a copy for your school library.
7. Individually, or as a class, write a letter to the president of the United States, the governor of your state, your senators or congressman or woman, or others in high governmental office, expressing your concern about issues that are in the forefront today. Display the responses.
8. If possible, invite a child—or children—of Japanese Americans who were interned during World War II to address the class about the circumstances and conditions of enforced removal and internment.
9. Steve Kluger has committed himself to working for the restoration of the baseball diamonds at Manzanar and the other nine World War II Japanese–American internment camps. “The baseball diamonds at Manzanar and the other nine federal ‘relocation camps,’” he has said, “comprised the very heart of the internment experience for most of the surviving internees. Baseball, in fact, was the only aspect of the lives they’d led before their Constitution was taken away that they were allowed to keep with them during their three years behind barbed wire. To rebuild the baseball diamond at Manzanar is to thank them for retaining their faith in this country, even

when they had no reason to do so. . . . I've already begun to lobby members of the House and Senate and am determined to take on both the National Park Service and the Department of the Interior in order to make this particular Field of Dreams a reality. Ideally, I'd like to put together a grass roots movement that would ultimately make it impossible for these people to say no any longer." What might the class do to assist this endeavor?

Assignments

1. Write an essay comparing Joey with Mark Twain's Huck Finn, and Joey's relationship with Charlie with Huck's relationship with Jim. Or: Write an essay comparing Joey with Charles Dickens's David Copperfield, paying particular attention to similarities and differences between the circumstances of the two boys' lives and their respective ways of dealing with events.
2. Write an essay explaining how baseball might provide a way for us to view and understand one of the following conflicts: values versus practices; competition versus cooperation, community versus individualism; anti-intellectualism versus intellectual achievement; exploitation versus independence; spirituality versus materialism; pluralism versus racial prejudice; work versus play.
3. Compile a scrapbook with letters, newspaper and magazine pages and clippings, ticket stubs, and other bits and pieces of memorabilia that you consider of special importance in your life to date. What does this scrapbook tell you about yourself, your relationships with your family and others, and the world in which you live?
4. "Brooklyn is where I grew up," Joey admits. Write a brief essay or presentation identifying where you grew up and how growing up in that location affected your character and your life? Also name a location in which you would like to have grown up and explain why. How might that other location have shaped your personality and life differently?
5. For all his dislike of President Roosevelt, Charlie admits that "Eleanor is okay, I guess." (p. 51) And he mentions Eleanor Roosevelt's forays into the coal mines and into inner-city slums. Prepare a report on Eleanor Roosevelt's activities and public statements involving civil and human rights. (You might want to include her work in establishing the United Nations and the writing of the Declaration of Human Rights.)
6. Joey chastises Charlie for being interested in America First. Research America First and prepare a report on why some Americans were attracted to it and why others found it repugnant. Why might Joey call Charlie "Traitor" (p. 103) for being interested in America First? Why might Joey take such an adamant stand against America First?
7. Write a brief biographical report on one of the actual historical figures incorporated in *Last Days of Summer* (who include Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Eleanor Roosevelt, Ethel Merman, Walter Winchell, Charles A. Lindbergh, Father Coughlin, Leo Durocher, Mel Ott, Louis Armstrong, Pearl Bailey, Jean Harlowe, Veronica Lake . . . to name only a few). What was this person's significance or importance in the early 1940s and later, and what importance does Joey Margolis attach to this person? How is this person regarded today?
8. Select one of Joey's escapades or triumphs that you think is especially amusing, daring, foolhardy, exceptional, or audacious and write a brief explaining why you think so?
9. Describe a member of your family who reminds you of one of the characters in *Last Days of Summer*, identifying specific similarities and, when important, differences. What role does this person play in your family and how do other members of the family react to her or him?

10. Research and report on the German-American Bund and its activities in the late 1930s and early 1940s. What was its contribution, if any, to the German war effort; and what measures did the United States government take to counter the Bund's activities?
11. Using Joey's essay, "If Charlie Banks Were President," as a model, write a 500-word essay on the theme: "If _____ Were President"—filling in the blank with the name of an important person in your life?
12. In an early-1942 letter to Charlie, Joey identifies the "five things I hate more than anything else in the world" as Hirohito, Brooklyn, Pearl Harbor, Hitler, and Emily Brontë. (p. 235) List the five things that you hate more than anything else and, for each, explain why?
13. Research and report on President Roosevelt's Executive Order 6099 and the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. How historically accurate are Craig Nakamura's descriptions of his and his family's experiences preceding and during internment at Manzanar? Stephen T. Early writes to Joey that "only history can judge whether we have made a fitting choice or a regrettable mistake." (p. 274) Explain your reasons for judging which of these Executive Order 6099 was?
14. In the Epilogue, Joey reiterates that "some things hurt a little too much to bring up again;" (p. 351) but he does bring back up his memories of Charlie. Write an essay on your memories of someone close to you or to a member of your family who has died. Keep in mind Craig Nakamura's advice: "So think about the happy times and whey you start to cry anyway it's because you should." (p. 339)
15. How many references to movies of the 1930s and early 1940s can you find in the novel?—for example: "The Street, see? That's where I grew up. The Street. Now they're gunna make me swing for it." and "I am a fugitive from a chain gang." Use such resources as [Internet Movie Database](#) to research sources and contexts. What do these references tell us about Joey?

Additional Resources

Your school and public librarians will be able to assist students in finding appropriate books and Websites—in addition to those listed here—and other materials dealing with baseball and baseball players, the role of baseball in the lives of American youngsters and adolescents, and other topics and issues of note in [Last Days of Summer](#). Among the numerous books and Websites available, the following are among the most informative and interesting. Students may, of course, perform appropriate Web searches to discover sites related to baseball, adolescence, parental desertion, World War II, Japanese American internment, and other relevant topics. (*Neither HarperCollins nor any other individual or organization involved in the production of this teacher's guide is responsible for the content of the books listed here or of Websites that may be accessed by anyone working with this guide.*)

BOOKS

Richard Bradford. [Red Sky at Morning](#). Paperback: Perennial Classics, 1999.

Judith Clarke. *The Heroic Life of Al Capsella*. Holt, 1990.

Michael L. Cooper. *Remembering Manzanar: Life in a Japanese Relocation Camp*. Clarion Books, 2002.

Robert Cormier. *Tunes for Bears to Dance To*. Delacorte, 1992. Paperback: Laurel Leaf, 1994.

Sarah Dessen. *Keeping the Moon*. Viking, 1999. Paperback: Penguin Putnam, 2000.

- Charles Dickens. *David Copperfield*. Various publishers.
- William Durbin. *The Journal of C. J. Jackson*. Scholastic, 2002.
- Eric Rolfe Greenberg. *The Celebrant*. (1983). Paperback: University of Nebraska Press, 1993.
- John Helyar. *Lords of the Realm: The Real History of Baseball*. Random House, 1995. Paperback: Ballantine Books, 1995.
- Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston & James D. Houston. *Farewell to Manzanar*. Houghton Mifflin, 2002 (reissue). Paperback: Laurel Leaf, 1983.
- Roger Kahn. [The Boys of Summer](#). Signet Books, 1973.
- Roger Kahn. *Good Enough to Dream*. Doubleday, 1985. Paperback: Signet Books, 1986. University of Nebraska Press, 2000.
- David M. Kennedy. *The American People in World War II: Freedom from Fear*. (The Oxford History of the United States, Volume 9). Paperback: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- W. P. Kinsella. *Shoeless Joe*. Houghton Mifflin, 1982. Paperback: Mariner Books, 1999.
- David Klass. *California Blue*. Paperback: Scholastic, 1996.
- David Klass. *Home of the Braves*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2002. Paperback: HarperTempest, 2004.
- Ron Koertge. *Tiger, Tiger, Burning Bright*. Scholastic, 1994. Paperback: Camelot, 1995.
- Ring Lardner. *You Know Me, Al*. (1914). Paperback: Touchstone, 1991.
- Ellen Levine. *A Fence Away from Freedom: Japanese Americans and World War II*. Putnam, 1995.
- Bernard Malamud. *The Natural*. (1952). Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1961 (reissue). Paperback: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2003.
- Kyoko Mori. *Shizuko's Daughter*. Holt, 1993. Paperback: Fawcett, 1994.
- Walter Dean Myers. *Hoops*. Delacorte, 1981. Paperback: Laurel Leaf, 1983.
- Buck O'Neil, Steve Wulf, & David Conrads. *I Was Right on Time: My Journey from the Negro Leagues to the Majors*. Paperback: Fireside Books, 1997.
- Gary Paulson. *How Angel Peterson Got His Name*. (2003). Paperback: Viking Yearling, 2004.
- J. D. Salinger. *The Catcher in the Rye*. Little, Brown, 1951. Paperback: Bantam Books.
- Harold Seymour. *The People's Game*. Oxford University Press, 1990. Paperback: 1991.
- Betty Smith. [A Tree Grows in Brooklyn](#). HarperCollins, 2001 (Reissue). Paperback: Perennial Classics, 2005.
- Mark Twain. *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Various publishers.
- Will Weaver. *Farm Team*. HarperCollins, 1995. Paperback: HarperTrophy, 1999.
- Ellen Wittlinger. *Razzle*. Simon & Schuster, 2001. Paperback: 2003.
- Virginia Euwer Wol. *Bat 6*. Paperback: Scholastic, 2000.

WEBSITES

aagpbl.org —Official Website of *The All-American Girls' Professional Baseball League* (Includes articles, historical information, photographs, and team rosters.)

www.archives.gov/digital_classroom/index.html —*Digital Classroom*, from the U.S. National Archives & Records Administration (An outstanding site with archival information on nearly every event mentioned in *Last Days of Summer*.)

www.baseball-fever.com —*Baseball Fever*, A Baseball Community. (A discussion forum having to do with all things baseball.)

www.baseballhalloffame.org —*National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum*

www.baseballhistorian.com —*Baseball Historian.com* (Includes an extensive roster of “American Heroes,” including the women who played in the All-American Girls’ Professional Baseball League during World War II.)

www.baseballimmortals.net/index.shtml —*Baseball Immortals*, “An alternate to Cooperstown”

www.thediamondangle.com —*The Diamond Angle*, The Eclectic Baseball Magazine (Includes a June 2004 interview with Steve Kluger.)

www.cms.attleboroschools.com/1940.htm —*The 1940s* (With materials ranging from a timeline and baseball to cultural history and old-time radio.)

www.eteamz.com/hallfame/ —*National Women's Baseball Hall of Fame*

www.pbs.org/kenburns/baseball/ —The PBS site of *Baseball: A Film by Ken Burns* (Includes information about and segments from the film, oral histories, a timeline, curriculum materials, and additional resources. A primary site.)

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