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Johnston Public Library Book Discussion Questions

I'll Never Be French by Mark Greenside

Summary

When a native New Yorker living in California is dragged by his girlfriend to a tiny Celtic village in Brittany at the westernmost edge of France, in Finistère, "the end of the world," his life begins to change. Greenside tells how he makes a life for himself in a country where he doesn't speak the language or know how things are done. Against his personal inclinations and better judgments, he places his trust in the villagers he encounters -- neighbors, workers, acquaintances -- and is consistently won over and surprised as he manages and survives day-to-day trials: from opening a bank account and buying a house to removing a beehive from the chimney -- in other words, learning the cultural ropes, living with neighbors, and making new friends. It is a memoir about fitting in, not standing out; being part of something larger, not being separate from it; following, not leading. It explores the joys and adventures of living a double life.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the central idea of the book? What are the issues that the author explores?
2. What is different about Mark Greenside's life in France versus his life in the U.S.?
3. Have you ever lived in a foreign country? What about the experience was positive or negative? If you haven't lived in another country, would you ever consider it? What are the pros and cons of moving to another land?
4. Were there specific passages that struck you as significant – or interesting, profound, illuminating, amusing, disturbing or sad? What was memorable about the book?
5. Did you like the structure of the book? What difference did its structure make in how you read or understood the book?
6. How did you experience the book? Were you engaged immediately or did it take you a while to "get into it"? How did you feel while you were reading it – amused, sad, disturbed, confused, bored ...?

7. What have you learned after reading this book? Did it change your perspective about day-to-day life in France?
8. If you could ask the author a question, what would you ask?
9. Was the ending of the book satisfying? If so, why? If not, why not ... and how would you change it?

Discussion Questions from LitLovers.com