# Crossing to Safety by Wallace Stegner

## Synopsis

A novel of the friendships and woes of two couples, which tells the story of their lives in lyrical, evocative prose by one of the finest American writers of the late 20th century.

When two young couples meet for the first time during the Great Depression, they quickly find they have much in common: Charity Lang and Sally Morgan are both pregnant, while their husbands Sid and Larry both have jobs in the English department at the University of Wisconsin.

Immediately a lifelong friendship is born, which becomes increasingly complex as they share decades of love, loyalty, vulnerability and conflict. Written from the perspective of the aging Larry Morgan,*Crossing to Safety*is a beautiful and deeply moving exploration of the struggle of four people to come to terms with the trials and tragedies of everyday life.

## Discussion questions

1. 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?
2. Talk about the nature of the two marriages, how they differ. The Langs' marriage seems to be the one most under the microscope here, the most complicated of the two marriages.
3. Then there's Charity—clearly the most complex character of the four. Do you like her, despise her? What drives her?
4. 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?
5. 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?
6. Stegner is very much a nature writer, using the natural beauty of Vermont as a sort of back drop to his human drama. In what way might he be making a comparison between the immutable natural world and mutable human world?

*Discussion questions from https://www.litlovers.com/reading-guides/13-reading-guides/fiction/230-crossing-to-safety-stegner?showall=1*