

STUDY GUIDE



OUTSIDE MULLINGAR

20 GEFFEN
PLAYHOUSE

OUTSIDE MULLINGAR

IN THE GIL CATES THEATER AT THE GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE
NOVEMBER 10 – DECEMBER 20, 2015

SPECIAL THANKS TO

Randall Arney, Amy Levinson, Brian Dunning, Kevin O'Brien, Carolyn Marie Wright,
Ellen Catania, Kristen Smith Eshaya, Scott Kriloff, Clay Dzygun and Jessica Brusilow Rollins

STUDY GUIDE WRITTEN AND COMPILED BY

Jennifer Zakkai

This publication is to be used for educational purposes only.

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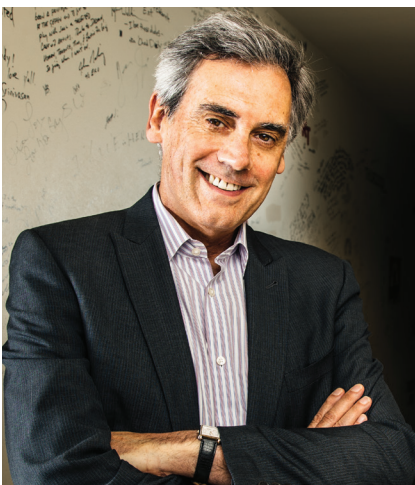
SECTION 1

ABOUT THIS PRODUCTION



ARTISTIC DIRECTOR'S COMMENT

RANDALL ARNEY



TWENTY YEARS AGO, GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE OPENED ITS doors with *Four Dogs and a Bone*, a play by none other than John Patrick Shanley. We are journeying back into our own heritage by bringing you another of John's creations in this anniversary season, and *Outside Mullingar* is also a pilgrimage of sorts for John. He says it is a play that takes him into a rich Irish family history never before explored in his work.

While *Outside Mullingar* is very much rooted in how things get passed down from generation to generation, whether it be land, family feuds or good ol' Irish sarcasm, its story is, in fact, about what changes over time. The cyclical nature of farm life is the perfect backdrop for John to reflect on life's opportunities grasped and those forgone. As two elderly parents seek to leave thriving farms, their adult children discover a need to turn the pages of their lives to something new while maintaining the history so deeply embedded in them and the Irish countryside. This wonderfully quiet story muses both on the passage of time and the great need to embrace it before it's gone.

As always, I have the great good fortune of working with a team of wonderful designers who were tasked with creating not one farm but two. The richness of time and place that this team brings to this production, creating the Ireland that John has written with great detail, allows the setting to be its own character.

As we joyfully welcome John back to the Geffen, we also welcome you. The richness of the Geffen history is based on your participation in it, and we are glad to have you here for *Outside Mullingar*.

SYNOPSIS

In this touching and funny look at how people can get in the way of their own happiness, Anthony Reilly and his father Tony have just returned from the funeral of their neighbor, Christopher Muldoon, whose widow Aoife and daughter Rosemary soon join them for tea. In poor health, Aoife plans to make sure her daughter inherits the family farm, which adjoins the Reilly homestead. Worried that Anthony will not be strong enough to manage their farm successfully once he is gone, Tony shares his intention to sell it to a nephew from America. The sale cannot go through unless Rosemary is willing to sell back a small piece of gated land, which her father bought from Tony 30 years ago, that sits at the entrance of the Reillys' driveway. Rosemary has strong feelings for Anthony, but hesitates to reveal them unless he reaches out to her. Content to simply live side-by-side on their farms, she refuses to give back the land and insists that Tony allow Anthony to inherit the property.

SETTING Killucan, Ireland, 2008 – 2013.

RUNNING TIME 1 hour and 30 minutes. *There will be no intermission.*

PERFORMANCE NOTE One of the characters smokes briefly in some scenes.

AOIFE (Ee-fa)

Gaelic name (Eva in English) meaning “joyful, radiant;” Third most popular girl’s name in Ireland. (babynamesofireland.com)

ARTISTIC BIOGRAPHIES

JOHN PATRICK SHANLEY (Playwright)

John Patrick Shanley is from The Bronx. His plays include *Outside Mullingar* (Tony nomination), *Danny and the Deep Blue Sea*, *Savage in Limbo*, *Italian-American Reconciliation*, *Welcome to the Moon*, *Four Dogs and a Bone*, *Dirty Story*, *Defiance* and *Beggars in the House of Plenty*. His theatrical work is performed extensively across the United States and around the world. For his play *Doubt*, he received both the Tony Award and the Pulitzer Prize. In the arena of screenwriting, he has nine films to his credit, most recently *Doubt*, with Meryl Streep, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Amy Adams and Viola Davis; *Doubt*, directed by Mr. Shanley, was nominated for five Academy Awards, including Best Adapted Screenplay. Other films include *Five Corners* (Special Jury Prize, Barcelona Film Festival), *Alive*, *Joe Versus the Volcano* (which he also directed) and *Live From Baghdad* for HBO (Emmy nomination). For his script of *Moonstruck* he received both the Writers Guild of America Award and an Academy Award for best original screenplay. In 2009, The Writers Guild of America awarded Mr. Shanley the Lifetime Achievement In Writing.

RANDALL ARNEY (Director / Artistic Director)

Randall Arney has been a theater professional for over 30 years and has served as Artistic Director of the Geffen Playhouse since 1999. In addition to his artistic programming and oversight at the Geffen, Arney has helmed more than 10 productions for the theater, most recently *The Night Alive*, *Reasons to Be Pretty*, *Slowgirl*, *American Buffalo*, *Superior Donuts*, *The Female of the Species*, *The Seafarer*, *Speed-the-Plow* and *All My Sons*. Arney is an ensemble member and former Artistic Director of Chicago’s Steppenwolf Theatre where his directing credits include: *Slowgirl*, *The Seafarer*, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, *Death and the Maiden*, *Curse of the Starving Class*, *Killers* and *The Geography of Luck*, among others. Arney also directed Steppenwolf’s world premiere of Steve Martin’s *Picasso at the Lapin Agile*, as well as the subsequent national and international acclaimed productions. Mr. Arney’s acting credits with Steppenwolf include *Born Yesterday*, *Ghost in the Machine*, *The Homecoming*, *Frank’s Wild Years*, *You Can’t Take it with You*, *Fool for Love*, *True West*, *Balm in Gilead* and *Coyote Ugly*. As the Artistic Director for Steppenwolf from 1987 to 1995, he oversaw the creation of a new state-of-the-art theater which is Steppenwolf’s current home. Broadway transfers under his leadership include *The Rise and Fall of Little Voice*, *The Song of Jacob Zulu* (six Tony Award nominations) and *The Grapes of Wrath* (1990 Tony Award, Best Play). Mr. Arney has an MFA degree in Acting from Illinois State University and has taught master classes and workshops at UCLA, Steppenwolf, around the U.S. and in Tokyo.

SECTION 2

THEMES & TOPICS

RURAL IRELAND

IRELAND

An island off the west coast of the British Isles in Europe that is 172 miles at its widest point and 302 miles at its longest. It is divided politically between Northern Ireland (about a fifth of the land mass), which is part of the United Kingdom, and the independent Republic of Ireland, which is where the play takes place.

URBANIZATION (noun)

A “population shift from rural to urban areas,” which results in “predominantly rural culture being rapidly replaced by predominantly urban culture.” This phenomenon has occurred throughout history and “has been closely linked to modernization and industrialization.” (Wikipedia)

PHOTO CREDITS

Public Domain / Pixabay/PD

SOURCES

tinyurl.com/IrelandGeo
teagasc.ie/agrifood/
tinyurl.com/FamFarmImport
tinyurl.com/RuralTrouble



In Ireland, farming has provided sustenance to human beings and their communities for centuries. As a result of the last Ice Age, when retreating glaciers gouged the landscape and left rich soil, grasslands have lain at its center, surrounded by rocky mountain ranges. In the midst of this striking terrain, lie over 130,000 small farms, many of which have been family-owned for generations. Agriculture has also been able to flourish because the temperate, rainy climate allows millions of cows and sheep – which outnumber the human residents – to graze in pastures for ten months out of the year. This has helped sustain Ireland’s ability to supply dairy products and meat to other European countries.

Playwright John Patrick Shanley has placed *Outside Mullingar* in two neighboring farms in the small town of Killucan, which is ten miles from the larger town of Mullingar, in the middle of the countryside. Through Anthony we learn how consuming farm work is – he has “broken his back,” tending the fields that feed their livestock and overseeing the care of their cattle and sheep, since he was five years old. We also hear the concerns his father and Rosemary’s mother have for their offspring, and their legacies: if each does not get married and have children, no one will inherit and continue working the land, as their families have for over a hundred years.

This story occurs at a time when more young people are choosing to live in the city of Dublin, or to emigrate to other countries, than to devote themselves to agriculture. As a result, lands are being consolidated into larger, industrialized farms. Recently, bus and mail services have been stopped in rural areas, as more people choose to drive long distances to large shopping centers in major towns. Elderly residents who depend on local post offices and public transportation, will likely be cut off from certain lifelines, and depopulated small towns may no longer serve as centers for community-enhancing pursuits such as Irish music and dance. In these ways, urbanization, while often advancing a country’s economic power, can have profound social and cultural consequences. While playwright Shanley does not focus on the particulars of such changes, grief, both for family members who’ve passed away and what is being lost in Irish life, hangs in the air.

STAYING VS. LEAVING HOME

AMBIVALENT (adjective)

Having mixed feelings about someone or something; being unable to choose between two (usually opposing) courses of action.

(dictionary.reference.com)

SOURCES

tinyurl.com/NatGeoBeautBrains



Tony Reilly believes Anthony is too sensitive to make a go of the farm on his own –“You never stood up on the farm like a king,” he exclaims as they argue about Anthony’s right to inherit it. Since he considers his son a dreamer, who is “not normal,” just like his mother’s side of the family, he thinks his son may be happier living in Dublin, a city of a million residents, that like many cities in the West, can absorb all kinds of different people.

For all of his protests about wanting to hold onto the farm, Anthony is ambivalent about staying there. He admits to Rosemary he feels trapped by the place, “I hate it for a prison,” and that his life “is fixed down with a rock on each corner.” He escapes by reading magazines about machines, and “flying” – walking in the fields for hours. If he ever owned a helicopter, he’d “fly it to the moon.”

The impulse to leave home is part of the human condition. Some scientists have proposed that leaving behind what is familiar, in search of novelty, has helped our species take advantage of new opportunities and thrive. Those who grow up in the countryside only to settle in cities may feel hemmed in by the lack of stimulation or life choices in their hometowns. On the other hand, people who never leave the communities in which they were raised appreciate the stability and sense of location that enduring relationships with family members and friends can provide.

Anthony fights to hold on to the farm not because he feels tied to the community, but because he is resigned to his lot in life. He agrees he is a “lump,” as Rosemary calls him, but urges her to leave farm life even if he cannot: “I’m useless but not you. Go somewhere and set up fresh.” His instincts to remain pay off, however, when he experiences a transforming moment with his father that he would have missed had he left their homestead.

DISCUSSION POINT

How many times have you moved from a place you considered “home?” How has relocating affected your life? If you have never moved, what have you missed out on, or gained?

LETTING GO OF FEAR

IRRATIONAL (adjective)

Not based on reason, good judgement, or clear thinking. (merriam-webster.com)

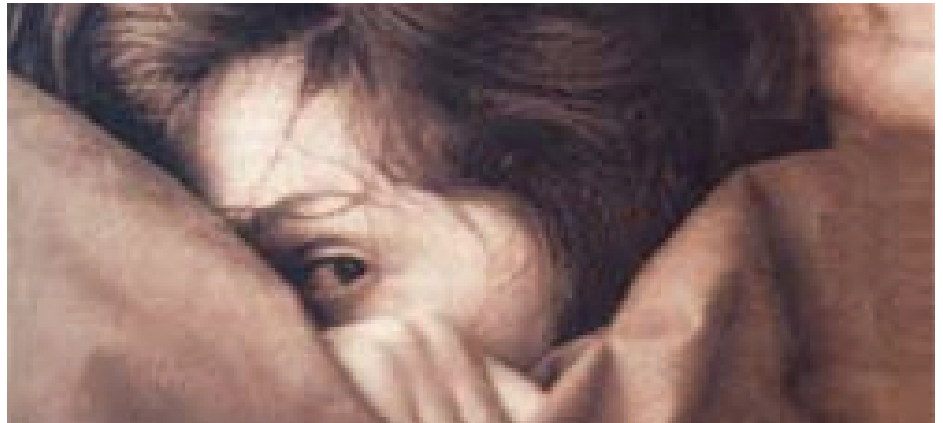
PHOTO CREDIT

tinyurl.com/WikiCommAnxiety

SOURCES

tinyurl.com/PsychTPain

tinyurl.com/PsychTFear



In *Anthony*, playwright John Patrick Shanley has created a character who has endured his father's criticism throughout his life and who believes that a moment of self-revelation drove his first love away. These experiences have left him immobilized where Rosemary is concerned.

While fear can keep us safe by alerting us to dangers, irrational fears can limit our lives. We may cling to what is familiar, even if it is not good for us, because we fear the unknown. If we only know mistreatment or loneliness, as Anthony has, it may actually feel scary to get romantically involved with someone who is kind. We push them away because their care and company feel alien. Ironically, being treated badly or remaining alone can feel more comfortable and, therefore, desirable, because it is known.

Many are afflicted with the fear of being “found out.” Being put down as we are growing up, especially by authority figures, such as parents or teachers, can make us see ourselves through their critical eyes. As a result, if someone treats us positively, we may believe they will run away once they encounter the deficient person we assume ourselves to be. Even though Rosemary clearly recognizes his kind and poetic spirit, the pain Anthony experienced previously with love was so great he cannot bring himself to connect more deeply with her.

To maintain suspense as stories unfold, authors often use certain kinds of people to stand in the way of lovers coming together, such as disapproving parents, jealous suitors or evil human beings. The playwright has used Anthony's inner conflicts about his worth to block his true feelings for Rosemary from emerging. Ultimately, Shanley's message is one of hope: In order to stop sabotaging your happiness, you must stop hiding in the shadows and step out into the bracing light.

DISCUSSION POINT

How have irrational fears limited your life? What would you do, if you weren't afraid?

SIGNIFICANT OBJECTS

FIDELITY (noun)

Devotion to duties, obligations; faithfulness. (collinsdictionary.com)

EPIPHANY (noun)

Any moment of great or sudden revelation. (collinsdictionary.com)

SOURCES

tinyurl.com/RingSymbol



The circle is a universal shape found in nature, mathematics, art, architecture, ceremonies, dance and decoration. Since it is a continuous line without a beginning or end, it is seen as symbolizing eternity, especially when in the form of metal bands that are exchanged at weddings and worn during marriage.

Rings have been used to signal the union of couples since ancient times. Egyptians were thought to have worn rings made of braided reeds and to have established the tradition of wearing one on the fourth finger of the left hand, because it was believed that a vein ran from that finger to the heart. In this way, such a ring signified fidelity. Romans used metal bands but “...viewed these bands as symbols of possession. The wife now belonged to the husband.” In modern times in the West, rings made of precious metal, such as gold and platinum, are used in wedding ceremonies to symbolize everlasting love.

A wedding ring both illuminates and drives events in *Outside Mullingar*. In a poignant moment between father and son, Tony reveals, “When I asked Mam to marry, sure I had nothing to call my own. The ring I gave her was but brass, though she took it like diamonds.” After experiencing an epiphany about his love for her, he was inspired to buy her a ring of gold, which he passed on to Anthony after she died, in the hopes that he would give it to the woman he married. The ring’s “journey” ends up affecting Anthony and Rosemary’s relationship in unexpected ways.

DISCUSSION
POINT

What object – a family heirloom, a gift, something you acquired – holds a special place in your heart. Why?

CHARACTER TRAITS & OBJECTIVES

STAGE DIRECTIONS

(noun) Instructions within the text of a play, a.k.a. the script, that indicate movement, position, emotional tone, or anything the author of a play cannot convey simply in the dialogue to the actors. (genius.com)

DIALOGUE (noun)

The lines spoken by characters in drama or fiction. (collinsdictionary.com)

CHARACTER TRAITS

(noun) Representation of a character’s qualities or peculiarities through dialogue, gesture, movement, costume and makeup. (teachers.oakarts.org)

OBJECTIVE (noun)

The goal toward which a character is striving. (teachers.oakarts.org)

Playwrights seek to create characters who are believable as human beings yet are vivid and compelling enough to hold an audience’s attention. They do this by envisioning specific *traits* that make each character distinctive. *External traits* – their age, physical features, appearance and way of moving – are often described in a play’s *stage directions*. The characters’ *internal traits* – their personality, temperament, view of life, ethics – are sometimes indicated in the stage directions, but are conveyed mainly through their *dialogue* and behavior.

For the play’s director, designers and actors the script is a blueprint, which they analyze and interpret in order to bring the play to life on a stage, in front of a live audience.

To get acquainted with the process, consider John Patrick Shanley’s description of some of the characters in *Outside Mullingar*. Tony Reilly, is “a wily old Irishman in a serviceable dark suit and Greek fishing cap,” who is “75 or so.” His son Anthony “is 42, and his eyes of those of an intense dreamer.” Widow Aoife is “70, in bad health, short of breath, walking with a cane, a bit ravaged with grief.”

Take a moment to jot down what you learned and/or envisioned from reading these descriptions.

Character	External Traits	Internal Traits
Tony Reilly		
Anthony Reilly		
Aoife Muldoon		

Read the excerpt on the next page. Imagine and/or interpret Rosemary’s traits.

Character	External Traits	Internal Traits
Rosemary Muldoon		

Objectives: Central to each character’s evolution in the course of a play is his or her “want,” also known as an *objective*, and what he or she says and does to achieve it. A character can have an overall goal, as well as several specific objectives, depending on with whom he or she is interacting in a scene. For example, Rosemary’s overarching goal in the play is to be close to Anthony. Her objective in the scene from which the excerpt has been drawn is to convince Tony to let Anthony inherit the farm so they can live next to each other.

SUBTEXT (noun)

The thoughts that accompany the line, implied but not spoken in the text. The actors invent the subtext appropriate to their characters and situations to help achieve the sense of immediate truth. (teachers.oakarts.org)

AMBIGUITY

Part of what makes Shanley's plays so engaging is the element of *ambiguity* – the sense of uncertainty about who has the more righteous position – embedded in the conflicts between his characters. Even though Tony is hard, at first, on his son, we realize Anthony may be ill-equipped to handle the farm on his own. Conversely, when Anthony fights back, we see he has more than earned the right to the farm. Like all great artists, Shanley never judges his characters, just sets them in motion, in full possession of their strengths, flaws and desires, and lets us come up with our own answers to the questions he raises among them.

Read the excerpt again. How does Rosemary express what she wants? Cite what she says to the other characters to back up your interpretation. What is Tony trying to accomplish in the scene? Aoife? What is your evidence?

Character	Objective	Evidence
Rosemary Muldoon		
Tony Reilly		
Aoife Muldoon		

ROSEMARY

Mam, look at me and take pity. You will leave me soon.

AOIFE

Sure it's true. I can't deny it.

ROSEMARY

I feel that grief never more than today. But what preserves me is knowing there are safe roads after.

TONY

He's not normal.

ROSEMARY

I don't care what he is, and if you're bound by an oath, keep it! I don't care about anything but that that man have his land and my house be hard by!

AOIFE

Rosemary.

TONY

He'll never marry.

ROSEMARY

Then neither will I. And he will be in his house and I will be in mine. Here's your tea.

Now that you have analyzed characters' traits and wants, join two other people, divide up the roles, and bring the scene to life, by embodying your character's traits and infusing each line of dialogue with your character's objective.

SECTION 3

PERSONNEL PROFILE

AN INTERVIEW WITH CAROLYN MARIE WRIGHT

What is your title and how long have you worked at the Geffen?

I'm the Manager of Education & Community Engagement. It's a brand new position, and I started September 1st of this year.

What is your background in theater, as an artist and educator?

My first play was *The Frog Prince* with Yale Children's Theater during my freshman year at Yale. As we toured local elementary schools in New Haven doing shows and theater workshops, I quickly realized how much I love performing and teaching. I spent several summers on the theater staff at Paul Newman's Hole in the Wall Gang Camp, and then moved to Chicago, where I worked with Chicago Kids Company, performed a lot of Shakespeare, and trained at The Second City. Eventually, I got my M.A. in Educational Theatre at NYU's Steinhardt School, and my M.F.A. in Acting at UCLA's School of Theatre, Film and Television. I've been a teaching artist and performer in Los Angeles for the last seven years.

What drew you to seek a position at the Geffen?

During my first year as an MFA actor at UCLA, I was lucky to take an on-camera class with Gil Cates, and he introduced me to the Geffen Playhouse. That's when I saw my first Geffen production – *Time Stands Still* by Donald Margulies, who had been my playwriting professor at Yale. I remember thinking: this is quality theater. I kept checking the Geffen website to see if there were any available jobs that were the right fit and finally this position emerged. About five or six friends forwarded the job posting to me that same week, since it draws on so many of my interests and skills.

What are your primary responsibilities in your current position?

I help manage four programs: the Geffen Playhouse Literacy Project at Mendez High School; our High School Partnerships Program; our Lights Up program for community groups; and our Veterans Playwriting & Performance Workshop – now in its pilot year. I work closely with Jennifer Zakkai, Director of Education & Community Engagement, to plan and implement



the programs; create our educational materials; support Teaching Artists; and handle administrative tasks, such as coordinating schedules with teachers and schools. I also have the privilege of serving as a Teaching Artist, which I love. Lastly, I collaborate with the Geffen's awesome Development Department, which generates incredible support for our programs.

What excites you most about working in Education & Community Engagement at the Geffen?

I love how theater and the other performing arts can empower people and inspire conversation. I have seen firsthand how a person – or a community group – can grow by participating in a theater workshop, attending a performance and discussing a play. Even walking into the Geffen lobby – with its beautiful stone walls and colorful banners – feels special. It was amazing to feel the excitement as high school students and teachers entered the building and experienced their first student matinee a few weeks ago. I look forward to continuing to help our students and community members connect deeply to the great theater the Geffen provides. ■

SECTION 4

AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE

Going to the theater is a unique experience, and we all need to be mindful of “audience etiquette,” or how to behave at the theater.

The audience plays an essential role in the performance of a play. Without an audience, the actors are only rehearsing. Audience members’ concentrated silence and responses, such as laughing and applauding, provide energy to the actors as they bring the performance to life.

Since the actors can hear and see the audience, it is important not to engage in behaviors that might disturb or distract them – and fellow audience members. These actions include:

- Talking
- Texting
- Allowing cell phones to ring
- Taking photographs or video
- Getting up to leave before intermission or the end of the show (unless it is a true emergency)
- Eating or drinking
- Unwrapping candy or cough drops
- Touching or leaning on the stage.

Audience Awareness Activity: Before going to the Geffen Playhouse for the first time, compare and contrast the experience of seeing a live play with:

- going to the movies
- attending a live sporting event
- watching television.

DISCUSSION POINT

If you were onstage performing a play, how would you want the audience to behave?

POST-SHOW DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Depending on the time available and your group members' interests, guide them to respond to questions selected from those suggested below. Encourage everyone to participate, while having respect for differing opinions. Individuals can share their thoughts with a partner or in a small group. Ask for several volunteers to share their groups' answers with the larger group.

- Overall, how did you feel while watching the play? Engaged? Distanced? Entertained? Bored? Confused? Inspired? What made you feel this way?
- What did you enjoy most about the play? What made it hard to connect?
- What did you learn about life in rural Ireland from watching the play?
- Have you ever had experience working on a farm? If so, how was the farm life depicted in the play similar and/or different? If not, how do you think you would handle living and working on a farm? Why?
- Which character held your interest the most? Describe his or her external and internal traits.
- With which character did you identify the most? What did this character want?
- With which character did you identify the least? Why?
- With which character did you empathize the most? Why?
- What were the most surprising moments in the play? Funniest? Most moving? Describe the specifics.
- What did you appreciate most about the performances by the actors?
- How did the set, props, lighting and costumes contribute to the impact of the play?
- Would you recommend *Outside Mullingar* to other theatergoers? Why, or why not?

SECTION 5

RESOURCES

WATCH John Patrick Shanley discuss his work in a feature on Irish playwrights at tinyurl.com/YouTubeShanley.

VIEW a map and satellite image of Ireland to learn about its political structure and geography at tinyurl.com/MapIre and tinyurl.com/SatImageIre.

LEARN about farming and other aspects of Ireland’s rich culture at tinyurl.com/IreCult.

VIEW Ireland’s lands, people and customs in a gallery of photographs at tinyurl.com/Nat-GeolrePhotos.

VISIT a farm sanctuary in Acton, CA to learn about the needs and humane treatment of farm animals at tinyurl.com/FarmSanctLA.

LEARN about migration patterns within the United States at tinyurl.com/PewLeaveStay and tinyurl.com/AtlanticLeaveStay.

LEARN about efforts to help native residents to stay in their home countries rather than migrate to more affluent countries at tinyurl.com/IndigStay.

LEARN about the different roles fear can play in of our lives and how to overcome its effects at tinyurl.com/PsychTFear-Overview.

LEARN about the impact of painful experiences in childhood and how to grow out of them at tinyurl.com/PsychTPain.

LEARN about the “psychological tasks” that if fulfilled can help couples enjoy a successful marriage at tinyurl.com/APAGoodMarriage.

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And many more!



As of print date: November 6, 2015