

TALK BACK!

1. If you had ESP, what would you do? Is it a good or bad thing?
2. What do you think your parents and siblings are thinking about you? Would you want to know?
3. If you could have one superpower, what would it be?
4. Do you think people communicate too much or too little about what they're thinking and feeling?
5. What do you think about Lottie using her new ability to cheat? Would you do it if you had the chance?

EARLY MAN

5F, 1M

WHO

FEMALES



Eve
Jasmine
Kaylee
Kitty
Petra

MALES

Thal

WHERE Scene 1: Outdoors; Scene 2: Eve's garage.

WHEN Present day.

-  Eve, Petra, Kitty: Try using a "substitution" for Thal. Instead of the actor before you, imagine he's someone in your life who you really, truly think is helpful and great.
-  Write a play about how Kitty, Eve, and Petra found Thal in the first place.

Scene 1: The Plan

PETRA: Thal, I just don't know what to do. People think I'm smart. They expect a lot of me. But the pressure is really hard to deal with. I'm just a kid, right? I don't feel like doing everything well. Sometimes I just want to be sloppy and relaxed. But I don't even know how! You know what I mean, right?

(THAL smiles and grunts.)

PETRA: So what should I do? I'm sick of being perfect. I want someone else to take control. For once, I want to just sit back and relax. Can you understand that? Why am I even asking? Of course you do. It's so good to talk to someone who understands you. It makes you feel less alone. The thing I like most about you, Thal, is that you listen. I already feel better. I just know you're going to help me because you understand how I feel.

(THAL claps his hands together slowly and carefully like it's the first time he's ever done it as EVE and KITTY enter.)

PETRA: How come other boys can't be like you?

EVE: I think it's because Thal's parents must have brought him up differently, him being ancient man and all that. People must have been quieter and more polite back then.

PETRA: Can you imagine a whole world filled with real gentlemen like Thal here? Just changing Jesse Quavers and Rick Nippy would be a massive improvement on the world.

KITTY: I don't know if I've said this before, Thal, but thank you for never giving me a wet willy.

(THAL looks confused.)

KITTY: I mean it. I really appreciate it.

(THAL grunts.)

EVE: I just got the best idea! I can't even believe how smart I am. Yes, I can! I can believe it now since you've encouraged me so much, Thal. I have so much more confidence in myself. My self-esteem is through the roof.

PETRA: Your idea?

EVE: Right! Here it is. Brace yourselves. I think Thal here should teach lessons to other kids on how to behave. We really shouldn't keep him to ourselves, even though he is perfect.

KITTY: I like having Thal to ourselves. It's like having a walking jar opener!

PETRA: Not to mention our long talks. Is sharing Thal such a good idea?

EVE: Well, I hear what you're saying, you two. I hear what you're saying because Thal taught me to pay attention more, right Thal? You think that we wouldn't have as much time with Thal if we shared him. I understand. I do. I just wonder if we would be doing something great for the universe if we did this. This could be an automatic intro in heaven or something. I know you're Jewish and don't believe in heaven, Kitty, because you told me that last week and I was listening to you, but you must have some

kind of similar thing. I'm just thinking this could be big. He could teach manners, listening skills, deportment, grooming—all kinds of things! And we could maybe charge a small fee for these services. So we could buy some cute stuff for ourselves and for Thal, too, of course! What could be better? We'd be making the world a better place *and* we'd be able to afford that trip to Africa to go on safari, too. Girls, we must do this. The world needs this. We need this. Thal needs this. We can't be selfish anymore! I have discovered a Purpose in Life!

PETRA: Isn't deportment what happens when they kick you out of the U.S.?

EVE: That's deportation. Deportment is how you walk and stuff.

KITTY: Are you sure?

EVE: Yes!

KITTY: I think Petra's right.

EVE: Whatever. You know what I'm saying.

PETRA: You don't believe in heaven, Kitty?

KITTY: We sort of have a heaven, but a different name. But it's more important to be good now, in the present moment. Or at least that's what my mom thinks. But that brings up a point. Eve, can we really be doing good in the world if we're getting paid for it?

EVE: We're still helping the world.

PETRA: But we're also helping us.

EVE: But we're also helping the world.

KITTY: But we're also doing it for selfish reasons.

EVE: But we're also helping the world! You can do both!

PETRA: Can you?

KITTY: What do you think, Thal?

(THAL scratches his head.)

PETRA: It's a tough question.

KITTY: You're so smart, Thal.

EVE: Don't you see? Thal could show people how to treat people and how to think, and we could do their hair and nails and all that. It could be like a beauty shop. But also with manners. Here. Let me show you an example. I come to see Thal. Hello, Thal.

(THAL waves.)

EVE: Thal, I never listen to anyone and I'm mean.

(THAL blows a raspberry.)

EVE: See? Kids can relate to Thal; he gets right to the point. Here's another example. Say I come in walking like this *(EVE walks stiffly like a robot.)* like Petra.

PETRA: Hey!

EVE: Thal, can you help me?

(THAL shuffles over to EVE, slouching.)

EVE: See? Thal knows how to walk right. He looks relaxed and cool.

PETRA: Is that what you think I should do, Thal?

(THAL waves at PETRA.)

PETRA: That is so smart! People will expect less of me if I look less upright. I won't seem so smart and capable. Thanks, Thal!

KITTY: Thal knows everything. You're the coolest, Thal.

EVE: Definitely. I used to walk upright before, and boy did my back hurt. Now that I'm slouching, I feel much better. All because of Thal! He's a genius!

(THAL starts running in circles like he's chasing his tail.)

KITTY: Aw! Look how excited he is!

PETRA: OK, Eve, let's do it!

EVE: Excellent!

(THAL falls over, dizzy. He stays lying on the ground.)

PETRA: We'll need some supplies.

KITTY: And we need advertising!

EVE: We should make signs.

PETRA: Thal can help us figure out what to say on them.

EVE: Of course, we need beauty supplies and a space to work in.

KITTY: My mom has a lot of makeup. She won't notice if some is missing. She might even donate some if I ask nicely. She sometimes lets me wear her stuff.

EVE: My brother plays with his band in our garage. If I have a fit, I bet my parents will let me use it, too. It's only fair. Why should he get to use the garage for his stuff and not me?

PETRA: So we've got supplies and a place and we'll make signs. I think we're in business!

KITTY: Thal, are you ready for this?

(THAL is still resting on the ground.)

KITTY: Sorry. He's resting.

EVE: Good! He's thinking ahead. He'll need some rest, once the business is up and running!

PETRA: Do you really think we could go on safari in Africa?

EVE: Can and will! You've seen how excited Thal gets when we watch the Discovery Channel. It's the least we can do.

KITTY: We need some paper and markers. Let's start making signs!

EVE: This is going to be a huge success! With Thal's help, we are going to change the world!

Scene 2: The (Cave) Man

(JASMINE enters. She is very well groomed and neat.)

JASMINE: I saw a really strange sign outside. It was just scribbles. What's going on in here?

EVE: That's abstract design got us our first customer!

KITTY: Thal always knows best.

PETRA: So, Jasmine, come in!

JASMINE: What's going on in here?

EVE: Welcome to Thal's Finishing School. We'll finish everything about you that's undone.

JASMINE: What do you mean? I think I'm done.

KITTY: It's like a beauty parlor but with manners, too.

JASMINE: Oh! That's cute. OK. So what do I do?

PETRA: Come sit in our chair while Thal thinks about what you need. Thal?

(THAL enters.)

JASMINE: Oh my God! What is that?

KITTY: Not *what*. Who!

JASMINE: Who is that?

EVE: That is Thal. The best, most amazing, smartest, most talented guy in the universe! He's also ancient man.

JASMINE: What?

PETRA: A Neanderthal.

JASMINE: I thought those evolved.

KITTY: Did they? Or did we devolve?

JASMINE: Is that even a word?

KITTY: Well, it is now.

JASMINE: What do you mean "devolve"?

PETRA: We've noticed that Thal listens more and is more polite than other boys—

KITTY: He never interrupts!

EVE: He's also very direct. You never have to guess what he's thinking.

PETRA: It's so much simpler.

KITTY: So maybe we've gone backward—devolved—instead of going forward.

EVE: Jasmine, we discovered Thal frozen in a nearby cave. We thawed him out—

JASMINE: Oh! That's how he got his name!

KITTY: No, not Thaw, Thal! Like Neanderthal!

JASMINE: Oh!

EVE: Anyway, as I was saying, we found Thal and thawed him out and discovered that he knew a lot more about stuff than we did. He's really got great self-esteem.

KITTY: He's got such a distinctive walk!

PETRA: He doesn't fuss too much with hair gel.

EVE: He knows just what to say and when to say it.

PETRA: He's just amazing! He knows everything!

KITTY: We all feel so much more confident.

EVE: So we had to share him with the world.

PETRA: And today, Jasmine, you are the first person to take advantage of Thal's amazingness.

JASMINE: I feel so lucky!

EVE: You should. You are about to be remade. Thal, what do you think?

(THAL circles JASMINE.)

JASMINE: I'm nervous.

PETRA: Don't be. Really. He knows what he's doing.

JASMINE: OK.

(THAL comes up behind JASMINE and suddenly

starts messing up her hair. JASMINE screams. THAL walks away from JASMINE and sits on the floor.)

PETRA: That's it!

KITTY: It's perfect!

JASMINE: What? What? What did he do to me?

EVE: Only improve you a million times over.

JASMINE: How? I don't even know what he did.

KITTY: He just knew exactly what to do.

JASMINE: What? What?

EVE: Let's do the finishing touches.

(KITTY, EVE, and PETRA take out brushes and start messing up JASMINE's hair more.)

JASMINE: I don't get this. What are you doing?

PETRA: Finishing you! Just stay still. You're nearly done.

KITTY: Ta-da!

EVE: You're done!

JASMINE: Let me see!

(KITTY pulls out a mirror and shows JASMINE her reflection. Her hair is very messed up.)

JASMINE: My hair! This is an improvement? You've got to be crazy. I look terrible! I can't believe you messed up my hair! I liked it how it was! Now I don't know if it will ever be the same. How could you do this? I never thought my hair was that important to me, but now . . . Now I *know* it's important! I mean, it's right on top of my head; it's practically the first thing you see. I just don't know what to do! How could you? What will I tell my mother? I hope she won't notice. She always tells me how good my hair looks when it's nice and neat. I am going to be in so much trouble! I'm sorry to be mad about this and I don't want to be a baby, but I just can't believe it!

PETRA: I like you so much better now.

EVE: You look relaxed.

KITTY: And so glamorous!

PETRA: Thal always knows what to do. He fixed my walk!

(KAYLEE enters. She is very cool and relaxed—in fact, she appears to be half asleep.)

JASMINE: I don't know about—

KAYLEE: Jasmine! I love your hair!

JASMINE: You love it? I look better? Seriously? Maybe I just don't know what's nice. Are you sure? Is . . . is it glamorous?

KAYLEE: It's sassy and fun!

JASMINE: Thanks!

KITTY: See?

JASMINE: Thal, you're a genius!

EVE: Don't just thank him; pay him!

(JASMINE takes out some money.)

JASMINE: Well, I've only got my allowance money—

(EVE takes the money from JASMINE's hand.)

EVE: That will do!

JASMINE: Thanks! Bye!

KAYLEE: What's going on? Is this a beauty shop?

PETRA: Sort of. It's that and more.

KAYLEE: Excellent! So, fix me up! I love a good makeover.

(KITTY, PETRA, and EVE step away from KAYLEE.)

KITTY: This is going to be hard.

PETRA: She's quite a challenge.

EVE: She's already cool, isn't she?

PETRA: I wonder what Thal will do.

KITTY: Well, he'll know what's best.

EVE: I can't wait to see what he does!

KAYLEE: Should I sit?

PETRA: Sure!

KITTY: Thal? Thal!

(THAL's napping and snoring loudly.)

EVE: Thal!

(THAL awakens with a start.)

PETRA: Thal, Kaylee here needs your help.

*(THAL stands and roars, angry at being awakened.
KAYLEE is wide-eyed and frightened.)*

KAYLEE: Aaaaaah! What is that?

EVE: Kaylee, I never knew you had such pretty eyes!

KITTY: You are so right!

KAYLEE: I do?

PETRA: When you open them up wide like that, you can really see the color.

KAYLEE: Really?

EVE: Completely!

(KAYLEE looks in the mirror.)

KAYLEE: You're right!

KITTY: I knew Thal would know what you needed.

KAYLEE: Wow! So that was all an act.

PETRA: Definitely. Thal always knows what's best.

KAYLEE: Wow. I am going to tell all my friends about him!

PETRA: Please do!

EVE: That will be five dollars.

KAYLEE: OK! It was worth every penny. Thanks, Thal!

Know what? I actually think I learned something, can you believe it? I thought your friend here was some kind of creep because he's not evolved. But the fact is he's really excellent. He improved both my looks and my outlook! Now that my eyes have been opened, I see the world more clearly. It's a sunny day and there's so much I can do! For one thing, I want to tell all my friends about your cave-man friend. I guess since he's not all caught up in all the silly things in the world like stickers and books and shoes and school, he can concentrate on what's important. Like seeing people with clear eyes and trying to help people out. Just one thing—do you think he could wear a shirt? I mean, now that he's helped me, I just want to pass on some advice, too. I'm not sure it's sanitary for him to walk around shirtless like that. Plus, it's cold outside. It's a little bit wacko, even for someone who's pre-historic. Just a thought.

(THAL growls at KAYLEE.)

KAYLEE: Aaaaah! Oh, thanks for the reminder, Thal.

PETRA: We'll take your ideas into advisement. But it might not be what's right for Thal.

KAYLEE: Of course. It was just an idea. Well, see ya!

EVE: Tell your friends!

KITTY: Another job well done. I feel so good about myself today. We are truly decent and giving people thanks to you Thal.

(THAL belches.)

EVE: You always know just what to say.

TALK BACK!

1. Do you ever talk to your pets or someone/something that can't talk back? Why?
2. Do you think you're judgmental about people's intelligence based on their looks?
3. Do you tend to see the positive or the negative side of things? For example, the girls in the play saw the positive side to Thal's scaring Kaylee. Would you?
4. What did you think of Thal's makeovers? Are they really improvements?
5. Is it possible to do a really unselfish act? Or is it selfish if you get satisfaction or payment for what you do (even if it does help people)?
6. What was life like in Thal's time? Would you want to live back then? Why or why not?