

Every year, thousands of students converge on college campuses across the country for CTY's exciting humanities, math, and science classes. Many students, like CTY veteran William Benet, return year after year. His first summer, Will took *Logic: Principles of Reasoning* at Johns Hopkins University; last summer, he took *International Politics* at Dickinson College. Here, Will explains why he keeps coming back.

# CTY: The Real Deal

by William Benet

**A**t first I was thinking, Get me out of here. I want to go home. I didn't know the people and it was a strange campus. It was tough for the first week, but then I got into the groove of it, and we all enjoyed it more by the second week. Nobody I've ever talked to at CTY has said they won't be coming back, unless they're a nevermore, which are people who *can't* come back.

The social atmosphere is something else. Some sites have meet-and-greets for all the students to attend, and this is when you start to find your friends. Every campus has dances, and these are even more social—and more fun. With so many kids in one area for extended periods of time, you're bound to make friends.

It's not just that we're all academically gifted. It's deeper than that. You can truly be yourself. No one is going to judge you. The other kids have the same nerdy secret habits you do. If you really, really like to build houses of cards, everybody will get that. You become really close to the 12 or 15 people on your hall. You can't just call your parents whenever you want, so these kids become your family.

The classes are a full-time commitment. There's no time wasted at CTY because you're cramming a full semester into three weeks. It's a 7-hour workday for school, and that seems like a lot, but you have lunch and dinner and spend time with everyone in your hall, so it gets spaced out really well. It is intense but not overwhelming.

For the first two days, people barely said a word in class. But then—maybe because of all the things we did outside of class, or maybe because the instructors know how to bring out the best in everyone—even the shyest, most introverted people felt comfortable, moved from the corners to the front, and participated eagerly. No one is viewed as a smarty-pants or teacher's pet because in a way, we're all like that.

After class, we have two hours of mandatory fun. For one-hour blocks, we can play soccer or card games or choose from two or three novelty programs such as movies or tie-dyeing shirts. One of my favorite activities was making paper airplanes to learn about aerodynamics.

My second summer was better in a lot of ways. I knew what to expect. I went to a different campus, and I liked it better. I was at Hopkins the first year, which is right in the middle of Baltimore, so they had to keep us on campus as much as possible. Dickinson's campus is more rural, so we got to travel around Carlisle and go places. I enjoyed that freedom.

I learned so much about how the world works when I took *International Politics* last summer. We learned how to negotiate and how to deal with terrorism. We did a mock U.N., and each of us had to be a president from a different country. I was Nicolas Sarkozy, president of France. Now I wake up every morning and watch the news. I felt like I knew something this year when the presidential debates came around. I felt like I could be a part of the discussion, where I used to just think of Bush as that guy in the White House.

The most important thing I learned about myself at CTY is that I can cut loose and be myself around people. I was very introverted before CTY, but having a huge group of friends—and everyone has friends at CTY—I learned to be more outgoing, and I'm much happier because of it.

Of course I'm going back, and a group of my friends will be there, too. **i**



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