



Overall Rating:
☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

Did you complete the book?
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Almost

What was your overall opinion of the books?

What was your favorite part of the books?

What did you not like?

Your favorite quotes:

01. The book describes the history of deep racial tensions in Odessa. How are those tensions illustrated from the point of view of both black and white residents?

02. How did the author’s frequent use of the n-word help to convey the attitudes that existed in the town at that time? Was he right or wrong to use the word?

03. What does the obsession with high school football say about Odessa’s principles more broadly? Why were generations of adults—especially men— so focused on what a group of teenagers were doing on a playing field?

04. The book exposes the misplaced priorities of many Texas schools in the late 1980s — football over education at almost any cost. Do you think this is still the case in Texas today or have priorities about education and athletics become more balanced?

05. The role of girls and women in the book is reminiscent of 1950s America. In particular, the “Pepettes” are assigned to take care of a particular player, spending hours making yard signs and baking him cookies. How did the descriptions of these unbalanced relationships demonstrate common attitudes about gender?

06. How might the book have been different if it had focused on more female characters and shared their inner lives?

07. The book describes how Odessa's fortunes are tied to the booms and busts of the oil industry. In what way did that affect the town's culture and perception of itself?

08. There are several stories in the book that describe athletes going onto the field despite broken bones or other serious injuries. What does this say about the players on the team? What does it say about the pressure that adults in the town—parents, coaches, boosters, and others—put on the players?

09. If you read the 25th Anniversary Edition, were you surprised to learn where each of the team's star players ended up?

10. As you read the book, did you find yourself rooting for the Permian team?



We can't do this work without the support of donors like you. **Scan to support** our vital work.

LEARN MORE: MothersForDemocracy.org

QUOTES

“ In the silence of that locker room it was hard not to admire these boys as well as fear for them, hard not to get caught up in the intoxicating craziness of it, hard not to whisper “My God!” at how important the game had become, not only to them, but to a town whose spirits crested and fell with each win and each loss. You wished for something to break that tension, a joke, a sigh, a burst of laughter, a simple phrase to convince them that if they lost to the Rebels tonight it wasn’t the end of the world, that life would go on as it always had.

“ But Odessa also evoked the kind of America that Ronald Reagan always seemed to have in mind during his presidency, a place still rooted in the sweet nostalgia of the fifties—unsophisticated, basic, raw—a place where anybody could be somebody, a place still clinging to all the tenets of the American Dream, however wobbly they had become.

“ The black population of Odessa was quite small—about 5 percent. Since the majority of blacks still lived below the tracks, it was easy for white adults to go about their daily lives, particularly if they lived on the northeast side of town, and never see a single one, not in the mall anchored by Penney’s and Sears, not in the supermarket, not in the video store on a Saturday night. The lack of contact created distrust and fear, and only further reinforced the images whites heard about and read about and had been in the town’s psyche since the early days when blacks were run out.

“ Many teachers felt that no matter how creative they were in the classroom, it wouldn’t make a difference anyway. They talked about a devastating erosion in standards, how the students of today bore no resemblance to the students of even ten or fifteen years ago, how their preoccupations were with anything but school. It was hard for teachers not to feel depressed by the lack of rudimentary knowledge, like in the history class in which students were asked to name the president after John F. Kennedy. Several students meekly raised their hands and proffered the name of Harry Truman. None gave the correct answer of Lyndon Johnson, who also happened to have been a native Texan.

“ The value of high school football was deeply entrenched. It was the way the community had chosen to express itself. The value of high school English was not entrenched. It did not pack the stands with twenty thousand people on a Friday night; it did not evoke any particular feelings of pride one way or another.

“ Voting on principles was hardly a new phenomenon, but it seemed to go a step further in 1988. In Odessa and Midland, as in other places, liberalism had come to be perceived not as a political belief but as something unpatriotic and anti-American, something that threatened the very soul of the hardworking whites who had built this country and made it great.

“ American education was faltering and Texas was no shining exception. The state ranked thirty-fifth in the nation in expenditures per pupil for public education. Its average SAT scores ranked forty-sixth in the nation. Earlier that year, a landmark \$11 billion lawsuit that would determine how local school districts were funded by the state had played to an empty courtroom. Here, with the issue of whether the Carter Cowboys would stay in the playoffs or be replaced by the Plano East Panthers, the place was packed and frothing.