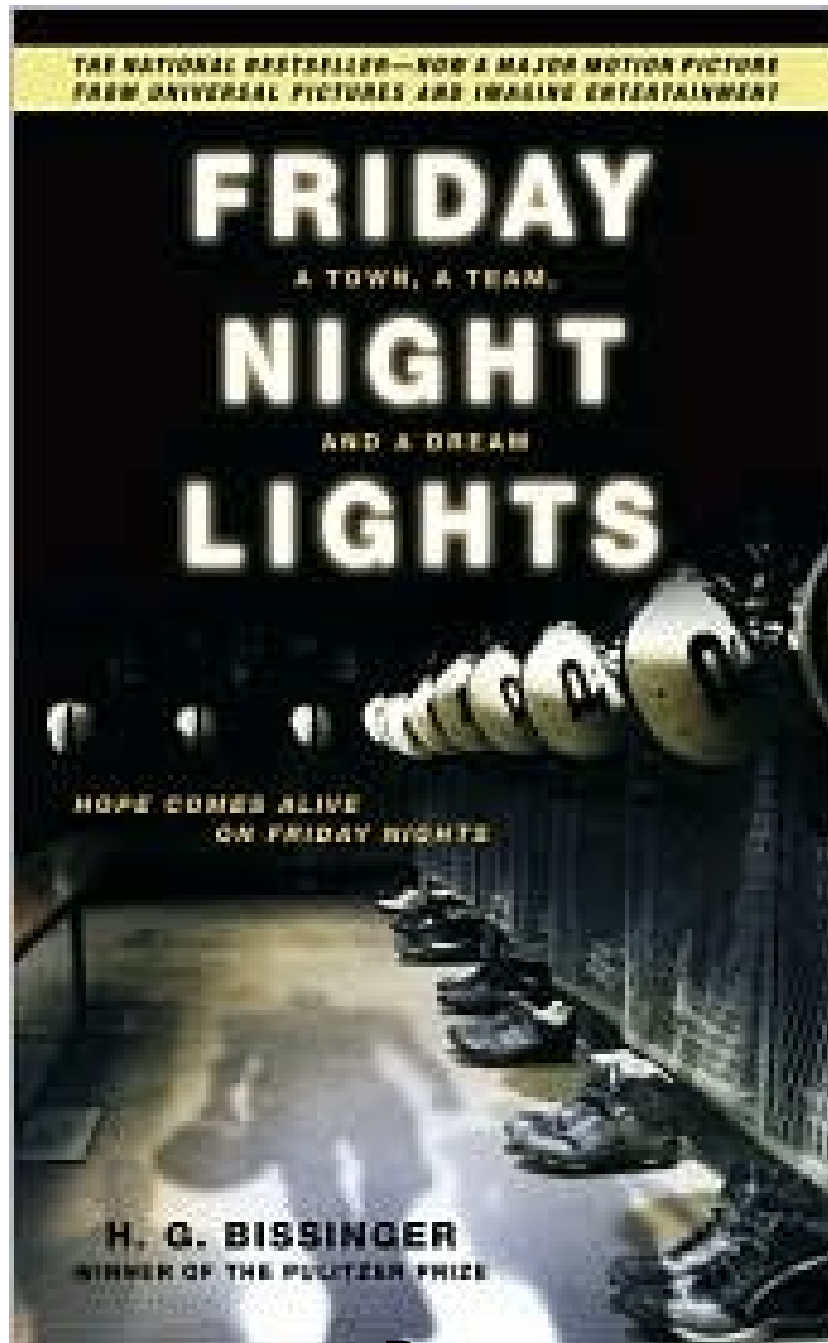


Friday Night Lights: A Town, a Team, and a Dream Book PDF Download



By:
H.G. Bissinger

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What people Say:

Jason

This book is heartbreaking.

I grew up in a very liberal part of the country. My family is comprised mostly of hard-working European immigrants who value education above all else. In many ways, I should be the last person able to appreciate or understand life in small-town Texas with its conservative values and its unhealthy obsession with high school sports. Yet, I actually did attend a private junior/senior high school with a hockey program that is probably the best in the country. We won the st

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shouldn't be so foreign to me after all.

But nope, it is still foreign to me.

foreign.

This book reminds me of about a handful of John Mellencamp songs that praise the glory days of youth and that try to recall a feeling of nostalgia for a simpler time and place. Mostly I feel sorry for anyone who actually identifies with any of that, as it just perpetuates the nonsense that one will spend the majority of his life with his best days behind him. To me that's a bit pathetic. This book, though, is a complete embodiment of the Mellencamp philosophy. It is the story of the 1988 football season of Permian High School in Odessa, Texas. It is the story of the town itself, insular and deeply rooted in social conservatism, unabashedly ignorant of the larger national political scene, and seriously,

racist. Oh my God, how racist. But above it all, town pride for its high school football team shines through that pride that is fundamental to its nature, to its identity.

On the surface, the intensity with which the townspeople of Odessa embrace their high school football team is rather endearing. It gives the kids something to do on a Friday night; it gives them

something to work for and to be proud of. But as the author delves further, the intensity starts to seem a little grotesque. These people depend on high school football to survive. More than just an escape from the financial ruin that has set in since the Texas oil bust, high school football is the

Paul

I was on an airplane one Friday night when I was reading this book. As the plane took off from Cleveland I noticed a high school football game in progress. I could see the lights.. the two teams on the field.. the crowd and the marching band. I watched the field as long as I could. Just at the point when I couldn't see the stadium anymore my eye caught the lights of another football field. Then.. when I looked out over the countryside I noticed that there were football games in most of the small

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Jenny (Reading Envy)

"Life really wouldn't be worth livin' if you didn't have a high school team to support."

In the Reading class I am teaching in May 2016, I challenged my students to read a book from a genre they had not read. I played along, and ended up reading an Amish romance and this sports book. One reading friend talked about this book on an

and made it sound pretty compelling, sports or no sports.

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"You'd watch these kids play, and it seem like somethin' burning would be inside of you and want to come out."

And it is compelling. Enough that they made a movie and a television show based on the book (neither of which I've seen.) It isn't just about football, but about social order, small town culture, racism, new money, the education system, conservatism, etc. I freely admit that I read the non-sportsing parts more closely than any play by play scenes (of which there were few, thankfully.)

"We fit as athletes, but we really don't fit as a part of society... We know that we're separate, until we get on the field. We know that we're equal as athletes. But once we get off the field we're not equal. When it comes time to play the game, we are a part of it. But after the game, we are not a part of it." (black coach at Permian, 1988)

Taylor

I didn't grow up in a football-watching family. My father, who apparently loved the game, passed away when I was young. My mother was much more interested in baseball, and had coworkers with season tickets, so I grew up going to the Kingdome to watch Ken Griffey Jr., Randy Johnson, Joey Cora, Edgar Martinez, Jay Buhner, Dan Wilson... I even spent my high school prom night at Safeco Field, watching Freddy Garcia pitch a great game against the Yankees (who he'd eventually join, years later, sigh)

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I came to football late in life, and have grown to love the game for any number of reasons. My knowledge of football certainly has a ways to go, still, but I do admit to being a total sucker for player stories and backgrounds - it's part of the reason why I fell in love with the Seahawks when Pete Carroll and John Schneider came along and shook things up - they found themselves a bunch of guys who were hungry to prove themselves, who'd been told over the course of their careers that they weren't good enough. If you saw this year's Super Bowl, you know how that worked out.

I say all of this because while I love football now, if you'd have told me a few years ago that I'd fall so in love with a book about football, I probably would not have believed you. But the thing is that the television show version of "Friday Night Lights" has a lot to do with why I opened my eyes to football to begin with, because much like

the book - it's about so much more than football.

takes place in Odessa in the '80s, which becomes its own sort of character - an oil-boom town that never quite recovered from the bust, full of people living it up, thinking they were invincible... but then that whole business in the middle east was sorted out, and gas prices dropped off, and millionaires and banks in Texas found themselves broke.

Odessa was also dealing with its own particularly stagnant brand of race relations in the '80s, so much so that they had segregated schools for so long that eventually the government came in and said, "No, really, you can't do this anymore." But of course, once they realized that Black people were good at football, they were far more accepting, and drew town lines based on what demographic of people lived where (so that Permian could get more Black people). Yikes.

Most of all,

is about the team and the coaches of Permian - the character traits and flaws that brought them failure and success, the single moments in games that came to define them, the dreams they held of greatness and the reality of life post-football, the toxicity of being held on a pedestal at such a young age contrasted with the question of, if they hadn't had football to be great for, then what?

Even though I totally understand why Bissinger uses the distinguished H.G. at the front of his name, a part of me wished he used his nick-name, "Buzz," because it perfectly describes his prose. His

writing is just teeming with energy, with life, like the humming of a street light or a telephone wire. Bissinger shines when he's writing about people - their hands, the way that they eat, the look in their eye - you feel as though you've met them before.

Charles

If you think this book is about high school football in Texas, you're pretty much wrong. There is a fair amount about football, but this book is really a sort of sociological study of a small Texas town where Football is played. There is a lot about the difficulties of the local economy after the oil slump, and in general the book gives what I thought was a fairly negative view of the people and their preoccupations.

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I almost never like movies better than books, but in this case I thought the movie did a really excellent job of cutting out the boring parts of the book and of bringing out the good qualities and the passion of the locals instead of focusing more on negatives.