

Friday Night Lights

H. G. Bissinger

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Friday Night Lights is set in the small town of Odessa, TX. A town where highschool football is essentially a way of life, not just a form of entertainment. Odessa is an oil town and has a constant cycle of ups and downs that plague many oil towns. The town is racist and has a history of deep segregation in its roots. The town was very resistant to deep segregation. The book chronicles the lives six key football players on the highschool Panther's team: Boobie, Jerrod, Brian, Mike, Ivory and Don. These players experience ups and downs in their lives and their football careers. The Panthers are idolized in the town, because people are desperate to escape their normal existence with the glory of the football team. The book showcases the player's determination and brotherhood. But it shows there is also a dark side to this football reverence, because even the team is entrenched in racism, homophobia, and sexism.

I felt that the book was worthwhile in its themes, but was a slow paced, sometimes boring read. I found the book didn't hold my attention. I also felt that the book jumped around in its storytelling and was sometimes hard to follow. It just didn't flow nicely, especially in the beginning. However, there were worthwhile themes in the book. It captures how racism disappeared while on the football field, but yet, still existed in the school hallways the next day. It showed the detriment of parents trying to live through their children. It also highlights a troubling culture of toxic masculinity.

I feel this book is only appropriate for an older teen audience. It has a lot of swearing and racial words, especially at the beginning of the book. It also has chapters which show drug use, underage drinking, sexism and homophobia. This book is definitely geared toward an older teen audience, but could really provoke some great thinking and discussion, even just an internal monologue.

Recommended Titles:

Until Friday Night by Abbi Glines

All American Boys by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely

Lonesome Dove by Larry McMurtry