

English 12 & Honors English 12

Blizzard Bag Assignment #1

Assigned: Friday, March 28, 2014

Due: April 7, 2014

**Receive Extra Credit for turning in your work by
Wednesday, April 2, 2014**

- Read the excerpt from *Friday Night Lights*
- On notebook paper, answer Skill Drill questions #1-6
- On the same notebook paper, also answer LC Book Club Question #1 (see the questions on the right hand side of page 17)



FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHT

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MAY HITS

Before it became a hit movie, it was a best-selling book

The Story So Far ...

Odessa, Texas, is obsessed with their high school football team, the Permian Panthers. The players are treated like superstars and the coach earns more than the school's principal. During football season, the entire town lives and breathes for the Friday night game. And few seem to think it should be any different.

by H.G. Bissinger

THE MAJORETTES, THEIR BLACK-AND-WHITE COSTUMES FALLING just below the buttocks, twirled and beckoned as the band—fifty-four clarinetists, fifty-one flutists, thirty-six cornetists, twenty-six trombonists, twenty-five percussionists, eighteen saxophonists, fourteen French horn players, nine baritone players, and nine tubaists—belted out “Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy.” The color guard waved its flags to “Barbara Ann.” The master of ceremonies made the introductions with the flare of a circus ringmaster asking the audience to direct its attention please to the center ring. “Ladies and gentlemen, the very best football team in the state of Texas!” From all around came whoops and cheers for the two rows of players at the front in their black jerseys, from the stunningly dressed girls over in the corner with their leather skirts

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and Vuitton bags and blond hair that rose to a rounded peak and then fell like the fanned plumes of a peacock, from the clean-cut boys in their pleated pants and stone-washed jeans and short haircuts, from the teachers dressed in black, from the parents who brought along toddler sons in black football uniforms and toddler girls in cheerleader outfits, from the rows of Pepettes in their white tea-party gloves. The lights went off for a flashlight show, little rings of light twirling around, once again like something from the circus. There was a skit in which the Panther mascot moved about ripping up paper tombstones symbolizing Permian's fallen opponents. The sports director of one of the local network affiliates came forward to give the Superstar of the Week award to the Permian defense, and twelve of the boys in black jerseys coyly swaggered forth

out of their metal chairs to accept it to more wild applause and whistles. The lights dimmed and the players went to find their Pepettes so they could put their arms around them for the singing of the Permian alma mater. Up in the bleachers the rest of the students locked hands.

*All hail to Alma Mater,
We'll always loyal be,
Where'er the future leads,
Our thoughts will return to thee.
On every field of battle
Will our banner ever wave,
There'll be a glorious victory for
Permian High always.*

The lights went back on. A couple of Pepettes stayed around to take down the black and white streamers and black and white balloons arching across one side of the bleachers to the other like a covered bridge and the beauti-

Classic Connections

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE A SPORTS FAN TO APPRECIATE THESE SPORTS-THEMED BOOKS

THE BOOK	THE STORY	THE STYLE
 <p>ONE GREAT GAME (2003) by Don Wallace</p>	<p>In 2001, two California schools—a wealthy, mostly white, Catholic suburban school and a racially diverse, inner-city public school—sent teams to the first ever national championship high school football game.</p>	<p>Wallace spent a year interviewing players, coaches, parents, and fans from both teams. His narrative captures the intense emotions leading up to the game and concludes with an exciting play-by-play.</p>
 <p>THE BEST OF FRANK DEFORD: I'M JUST GETTING STARTED (2000) by Frank Deford</p>	<p>This “best of” collection from sportswriter and novelist Deford includes profiles of Bobby Knight, Bill Russell, and Nolan Richardson. It also features a fascinating investigation into the world of bowling.</p>	<p>Wit, honesty, and irony characterize Deford's writing. Through the lens of sports, Deford presents insights into American culture that even those who have never set foot into a stadium will enjoy.</p>
 <p>THE GREAT AMERICAN NOVEL (1973) by Philip Roth</p>	<p>Word Smith, an alliterative old sportswriter, tells the story of the Ruppert Mundys, the homeless baseball team of the 1940s. The team belonged to the Patriot League, erased from history by a Communist plot and a capitalist scandal.</p>	<p>Roth's farcical reimagining of baseball's history is really a biting satire of American political and cultural life. Clever wordplay helps make this an entertaining and often hilarious novel.</p>

ful hand-crafted posters ringing the walls. It was time to go to school, at least for some students.

Understandably heady from the experience of the Friday morning pep rally, Don Billingsley's focus was on the game ahead, not on school. Not all the weekly pep rallies were as rousing as this one had been, but it was always hard to concentrate after them. "I

tened to an interview with the noted criminal theorist Charles Manson and heard relatives of crime victims make such intellectually stimulating comments as "I would like to see him die in the electric chair. He doesn't deserve to live."

It included photography, with the class spending the period learning how to feel comfortable in front of a television camera.



School was just there for Don, a couple of classes to fill up time that offered virtually no challenge whatever.

don't do much on Fridays," he said as he sauntered off to class in his black jersey with the number 26 on it, and even if he had felt otherwise about it, there wasn't a heck of a lot to do anyway. School was just *there* for Don, a couple of classes to fill up time that offered virtually no challenge whatever, and he was the first to admit that if he was learning anything his senior year it was a miracle.

His schedule that day included sociology class, in which he watched a video of a Geraldo Rivera television special succinctly titled "Murder" while munching on fresh-baked cookies that he had been given during the pep rally. As his class instruction that day he lis-

When it was his turn, Don dutifully rose to the challenge by successfully mouthing the scripted words, "This is Don Billingsley. Headline news next . . ."

It included English, where the class spent the first ten minutes going over the homework assignment for Monday and the next forty-five minutes doing the homework assignment for Monday.

It included food science, this particular lesson being on Correct Menu Form and the question of what one should place first on the menu when writing it out, shrimp cocktail or Jell-O salad. "This is what I do all day," said

continued ➔

MEET THE AUTHOR: H.G.

Bissinger

BORN

1954 in New York City



HOW HE WROTE THE BOOK

Spent a year living in Odessa, Texas, getting to know the Permian Panthers and their families.

The town of Odessa was so upset about the way they were portrayed in the book that he was warned never to come back. He finally did—15 years later when the film version was released.

AWARDS

The Pulitzer Prize in 1987 for a series on the Philadelphia court system.

QUOTE

"When I wrote the book I felt football was like war. These young, noble gladiators going off, in a sense, to an early death and knowing it."

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Billingsley as he grappled with the shrimp cocktail versus Jell-O issue, moments before plunging into the far murkier ground of the appropriateness of listing cream of tomato soup and grilled cheese sandwich on the same line. “All I do in class is show up. They should make these classes fifteen minutes long. Last year in English I had to work. This year it’s like, teach me *something* before I go to college.”

DON, OF COURSE, WAS A football player, which gave him special status among his peers regardless of how he performed in class. In the hierarchy of the school, where girls and partying and clothes and fancy cars were as important as academics, being a football player opened doors that other students could only dream of. All other achievements seemed to pale in the face of it.

Eddie Driscoll, a wonderfully articulate student ranked number two in the senior class, loved to read and debate and throw out ideas. He stood out in class like a sore thumb. There were some who admired him and others who considered him a pompous windbag. Despite all his academic accomplishments, Eddie himself often wondered what it would be like to sit in those two rows at the front of the pep rally each Friday in a brotherhood as supremely elite as

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Skull and Bones at Yale or the Porcellian Club at Harvard. Such musings didn’t make him resentful of the football players; he liked them. He just felt a little envious. No matter how many books he read, no matter how exquisite his arguments in government class about gun control or the Sandinistas or the death penalty, he never got the latest scoop on who was having the weekend parties. Only the football players were privy to that sacred knowledge.

Roqui Pearce, who had graduated from Permian in 1988 and was going out with a starting defensive cornerback Coddie Dean, said there was definitely a mystique in the school about dating a Permian football player. “Everybody’s into football. Football is *the* sport.

In the hierarchy of the school, where girls and partying and clothes and fancy cars were as important as academics, being a football player opened doors that other students could only dream of.

I wouldn’t say it’s an honor or anything but it’s looked up to: “Wow, you’re going out with a football player, a Permian football player.”

Roqui had been chosen a Pepette her senior year. Lots were drawn to see which player each Pepette would be assigned to for the season. Some of the players were obnoxious and egotistical, but Roqui didn’t really mind as long as it was a football player she got and not one of the student trainers. “Nobody wants a trainer. You want a football player.”

She had ended up being assigned to Coddie, who was then a junior. At the Watermelon Feed that year, she hadn’t worn his number on her jersey, which angered him. But they hit it off well. “I liked him, plus I wanted to be a real good Pepette. I didn’t want him to think I was a bad Pepette. I wanted to be a good Pepette.” She brought Coddie an ice cream cake in the shape of a football field from Baskin-Robbins. She baked him cakes and brownies. She got him a black trash can and filled it with popcorn balls. She gave him a towel and pillowcase decorated with the insignia of Mojo and



Texas. After several months they went on a date and then started going out steadily.

From time to time the role of the Pepette became controversial. A stinging editorial in the school newspaper, the *Permian Press*, applauded a new rule prohibiting Pepettes from placing candy in players' lockers every Friday. "Though losing a tradition, Pepettes have gained much respect," said the editorial. "No longer will a member be the personal Geisha girl of a player. Instead, she can focus

more on the organization's original purpose, boosting morale. And in so doing she will carry the image of professionalism she deserves for her work bolstering the famous Mojo spirit." But the Pepettes still spent time baking players cookies and making them signs. Since they could no longer put goodies in the lockers of the players, they just handed the stuff to them instead or dropped it off at their houses.

Their role was symptomatic of the role all girls played at Permian. ■

SKILL DRILL

CIRCLE THE BEST ANSWER FOR EACH OF THE FOLLOWING:

- 1. The first paragraph of the excerpt describes**
(A) a school pep rally.
(B) a circus.
(C) an awards ceremony.
(D) a high school football game.
- 2. Bissinger presents Don Billingsley's classes as**
(A) a lot of fun.
(B) dry and boring.
(C) ridiculously easy.
(D) extremely demanding.
- 3. What is the name of Permian's football team?**
(A) the Cougars
(B) the Panthers
(C) the Pepettes
(D) the Mojos
- 4. *Friday Night Lights* was written by**
(A) a journalist.
(B) a Permian student.
(C) a former teacher.
(D) a novelist.
- 5. On page 16, what is "the hierarchy of the school"?**
(A) the system of social ranking among students
(B) the system of academic ranking among students
(C) the organization of the school into four grades
(D) the richest group of students at Permian
- 6. When a rule prohibiting Pepettes from placing candy in players' lockers was passed, how did the Pepettes respond?**
(A) They applauded the rule.
(B) They protested the rule.
(C) They found a way around the rule.
(D) They disobeyed the rule.

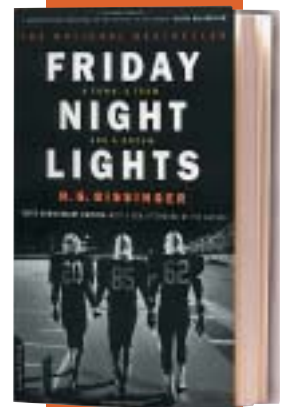
>>Your Turn! How does Permian, as it is portrayed by H.G. Bissinger, compare with your school? Write an essay describing the similarities and differences between your school and Permian.



20-Minute Essay
>>TAKE 20 MINUTES

TO PLAN AND WRITE AN ESSAY BASED ON THE FOLLOWING:

Describe the role sports play in your school. Does your school overvalue athletics?



LCBook Club Questions

1 How would an outsider see your institution? What are the telling details that would reveal the character of your school.

2 What should the role of sports be in school? What about in our culture?