

The Blind Side Study Guide

The Blind Side by Michael Lewis (author)

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Plot Summary

Written by Michael Lewis, *The Blind Side* contains two separate stories. One details the trials and tribulations of a young black teenager named Michael Oher. The other details the evolution of the position Michael will ultimately play in the game of football. The left tackle position, as Lewis describes it, is one of the most important in the entire sport, for the person fulfilling this role is responsible for protecting the quarterback's "blind side."

Only by convincing readers of the importance of this position on the field is Lewis able to demonstrate the significance of this single young boy. Michael Oher, although he has never played a single down in the NFL, is widely considered possibly the best left tackle in the country. As such, he is also expected to be a high draft pick in 2009 when he graduates from the University of Mississippi (Ole Miss).

Yet Michael Oher is no ordinary football prodigy. A product of one of the poorest zip codes in the country, Oher grows up in federal housing projects, foster homes, and any other place where he can find a spot on which to lay his substantial head. Oher's father is absent, and his mother is addicted to drugs. At six-foot-five inches tall and weighing approximately 350 pounds, Michael Oher is a freak of nature. He is incredibly strong and fast.

A gentleman named Big Tony takes Michael under his wing and tries to get him enrolled in one of East Memphis's prestigious private and predominantly white Christian schools. Unfortunately, Michael's school transcripts are terrible. Michael misses as many classes as he attends, and appears to be functioning at a grade level far below where he should be. Nevertheless, the administrators eventually agree to accept Michael and try to help him get through high school. Big Tony points to Michael's athletic abilities as further incentive to give the boy a much-needed opportunity to change his future.

After Michael begins to acclimate himself to his new school environment, it becomes clear that the boy's home and family situation is still greatly lacking. A rich white family takes the boy in as one of its own. When Michael begins to demonstrate his unique potential as one of the greatest left tackles the country's ever seen, college coaches around the nation also take sudden interest.

In *The Blind Side*, Michael Lewis relates the story of an unusual social experiment. Michael Oher's success in his new school, with his new, rich, white family, raises some inevitable questions. Would he have been given the same chance to succeed in school, and indeed in life, if he did not display such athletic prowess? Should all young people in Michael's situation be afforded the same opportunities? How many lives could be changed? Is it fair for an academic underachiever like Michael to use loopholes in admissions processes attend college and possibly begin an incredibly lucrative career based solely on his athletic ability? Is he receiving special treatment that is truly unfair to others? Should children with similar gifts in areas like music and art also be singled out for special attention? Author Michael Lewis begins a debate that is not new, but is now fueled by new and intriguing questions.



Chapter 1, Back Story

Chapter 1, Back Story Summary and Analysis

The first chapter begins with a step-by-step description of a famous football play and the role of the offensive linemen that protect the quarterback from opposing defenses. The author also explains how the roles of offensive linemen are changing. He introduces the reader to New York Giants defensive star linebacker Lawrence Taylor, who delights in instilling fear in the opposing quarterbacks he faces on the field. Taylor is not only large and powerful, but also surprisingly fast. He runs past the people who are responsible for blocking him, and he loves sacking the quarterback and putting him on the ground.

Giants coach Bill Parcells describes Taylor in detail, and explains his theories about the secret to his success. Parcells decides to have Taylor play on the right side of the defensive line, since that is considered a right-handed quarterback's "blind side." That way, it will be harder for quarterbacks to see Taylor running toward them. Lewis recounts the famous moment in 1985 when Washington Redskins quarterback Joe Theismann badly breaks his leg after being tackled by Taylor. When Taylor emerges from the pile of players on the field, he appears crazed, screaming and grabbing his helmet with both hands. Lewis explains that Taylor is claustrophobic.

Lewis tells how Joe Jacoby, the outstanding left tackle who should have blocked Taylor from reaching Theismann, is injured and out of the game. He is replaced by another player who is not agile or fast enough to match up with the fierce Taylor. Lewis describes Taylor's role in the game in order to prepare the reader for the upcoming introduction to Michael Oher, an unknown teenager who is expected to be an NFL standout, and even more importantly, a young man who appears more than capable of protecting his quarterback from men like Lawrence Taylor.

Chapter 2, The Market for Football Players

Chapter 2, The Market for Football Players Summary and Analysis

This chapter begins with a story about Tom Lemming and the first time that he sees a video of Michael Oher. Lemming starts out in 1978 as the creator of a book that ranks the best high school football players in the country. By the time Lemming learns of Oher, he is considered the ultimate authority on all up-and-coming American high school football stars. He identifies the top one hundred players in the nation, and then labels a select group of twenty-five as "All Americans." Beginning in 2000, he selects eighty players to compete in the U.S. Army High School All-American football game.

Lemming is surprised by Michael's speed on the video, especially given his enormous size. He knows that someone like Michael could do very well in the NFL, especially if he is able to play the coveted left tackle position, which pays very well. Lewis describes the perfect left tackle as big, with a wide behind and massive thighs, long arms, and giant hands. It is so rare to find a player with all of these attributes that the successful candidates receive a lot of attention, especially for their ability to protect the star quarterbacks of the league.

In March 2004, Lemming arrives in Memphis to meet Michael Oher in person. At this point, the reader does not yet know much about Michael. Prior to his visit, Lemming finds it difficult to obtain any information about Michael. He is unaccustomed to this, since most promising players and their families are practically begging for Lemming's attention. Lemming cannot even find an address or phone number for the boy. When he finally meets Michael, Michael will not speak. He remains silent and simply shrugs his shoulders in response to Lemming's questions. This confuses Lemming, and he begins to question Michael's character. Michael does not fill out the forms that Lemming gives him, and Lemming finally gives up and ends the meeting.



Chapter 3, Crossing the Line

Chapter 3, Crossing the Line Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 3, the reader meets Big Tony, the man who will take Michael Oher, whom everyone calls "Big Mike," to Briarcrest Christian School. The school is located in East Memphis, and the majority of the school's students are white children from rich families. Michael is poor and black, but Big Tony is trying to help him.

When Big Tony arrives at the school, readers are introduced to the basketball coach, John Harrington, and the football coach, Hugh Freeze. When Freeze first sees Michael, he is stunned by the child's size. Big Tony explains to the administrators at Briarcrest that Big Mike has no father, and his mother is in rehab. According to his school transcripts, he misses a lot of school, and his grades are very bad. Big Tony, however, thinks that perhaps Big Mike could help the school's basketball team. Steve Simpson, the school principal, determines that Michael's grades are not good enough for him to attend Briarcrest, but he wants to help the boy. He tells Big Tony that if Michael enrolls in a Christian home study program and performs well for one semester, Briarcrest will admit him for the next semester.

Big Tony agrees, but two months later, he contacts Mr. Simpson and tells him how sad it is to watch Big Mike just stare at his books and not know what to do with them. Simpson realizes that he is letting Michael down, so he agrees to admit the young man, but tells him that he is not allowed to play on any of the sports teams at school until he proves that he can handle his schoolwork. Michael's new teacher is a woman named Jennifer Graves who works with children who have special needs. As Ms. Graves begins working with Michael, she realizes that he does not understand how to learn in a "real" school, and is uncomfortable interacting with people.

Finally, one of the teachers decides to give Michael a verbal exam in biology, and determines that Michael understands the course material, but does not understand the words in the test questions unless they are explained to him. She explains that "his brain wasn't dead; he simply had no idea how to learn in a classroom." Michael does well enough to pass the course, and it looks like he will be eligible to play sports soon.

Sean Tuohy is a rich businessman who takes an interest in Michael. He owns a chain of eighty-five fast food restaurants. Sean's daughter, Collins, is a junior at Briarcrest, and an athlete. Sean is active in his church and tries to help some of the less privileged students at the school. He arranges for Michael's lunches to be paid for, even though Michael is not aware of this.

In this chapter, the reader meets some of the people who will be influential in Michael's life. Michael speaks very little about himself, so it is difficult to imagine what he has been through or what his life at home is really like. What happened to Michael that he has such difficulty performing in school, even when he seems to understand the

material? Has anyone ever reached out to Michael before? The author piques the reader's curiosity by raising many questions that may never be answered.

Chapter 4, The Blank Slate

Chapter 4, The Blank Slate Summary and Analysis

Michael begins spending up to five hours each day with a tutor. Soon, Michael begins to appear at the football field during practice, even though he is not yet a member of the team. The coaches note how quickly he moves for a young man his size, and decide to weigh the boy. Michael is six-foot-five, and weighs 344 pounds.

Michael also begins playing basketball and competing in track events. Michael's athletic ability is unmistakable. He does not understand many of the techniques and strategies used by the athletes, but he learns quickly by observing.

Michael finally starts playing football during his junior year at Briarcrest. Since Michael is so fast, Coach Freeze starts him out as a defensive tackle. Unfortunately, Michael is not very aggressive, and he lacks the motivation to excel at the position. When Michael injures his hand during a game, he reacts violently, clutching his hand and refusing to let anyone examine the wound. Michael's hand is seriously injured, and he needs to go to the hospital. As a nurse at the hospital tries to give him a shot to numb the pain in his hand, Michael bolts, leaping off the table. The adults realize that Michael has never been to a hospital before, and may have never seen a needle before, either.

During this time, Michael is staying with several different people. His living arrangements seem to vary from day to day. Michael soon moves in with the Tuohy family. Soon after Michael meets with Mr. Lemming, the professional scout. Lemming includes Michael in a private scouting report that goes to over one hundred Division I college football coaches.

For the rest of the year, coaches from all across the country come to see Michael in action. Phil Fulmer, the coach for the University of Tennessee, visits one day and proclaims Michael the best player in the nation. Coach Freeze notices that all of the coaches expect Michael to play in the NFL one day at the left tackle position.



Chapter 5, Death of a Lineman

Chapter 5, Death of a Lineman Summary and Analysis

The author explains how the game of professional football has evolved over the last forty years. A game once centered on the running game is now more heavily weighted toward a strong passing attack. Bill Walsh, a former NFL coach is an assistant coach in the 1970s when he realizes that he must develop a strategy to protect his quarterback from powerful pass rushers coming from the player's blind side. Lewis describes the criticism Walsh receives early in his career from experts who disagree with this theory. When Walsh shows a real talent for turning marginal quarterbacks into passing sensations, coaches around the league start to watch him more closely.

As Walsh continues to have success with his "nickel-and-dime" offense, other coaches also begin to focus more on their passing games. In response, high schools and colleges begin turning out better quarterbacks each year. Quarterback salaries skyrocket, and the salaries of the men assigned to protect the team's biggest investment—left tackles—go up as well. Having a rare talent at the left tackle position is especially valuable.



Chapter 6, Inventing Michael

Chapter 6, Inventing Michael Summary and Analysis

After four months of trying to get used to the idea that he is a football star, Michael's season finally starts. He is being contacted by coaches around the country, who can now communicate with him directly and regularly offer him full scholarships to any school in which he shows interest. Michael is also being tutored in football by both Coach Freeze and Coach Long, who has experience as a left tackle in the NFL.

When Briarcrest plays against a team called Munford, the defensive end who lines up directly across from Michael begins teasing him. It is not as though the adults have to be too concerned with Michael's temper. He is not likely to retaliate. Something in this game, however, is different. Suddenly, Michael not only blocks the kid who's been teasing him; he picks the kid completely off the ground. Then he runs across the field, all the way to the sideline and beyond. Still holding the boy in his arms, he barrels through the opposing team's bench and its players. He continues running, across the track, onto the grass, and toward a chain link fence. The entire Munford team jumps on his back, and Michael finally lets go, emerging from the pile and throwing players off of him in the process.

Coach Freeze is known for his trick plays and Bill Walsh-like belief in the intellect of the sport and the importance of game planning and strategy. Once the football season starts, however, he decides to take a risk on his most talented player. The Briarcrest team begins to beat its opponents by simply having Michael block for the running back and open up running lanes by destroying anyone in his way. All the running back has to do is stay with Michael and wait for his blocks. Under pressure to showcase his rare star, Coach Freeze capitalizes on the brute force of his team for most of the season by running this one simple play over and over again, and the team reaches the state championship game.

Coach Freeze has to demonstrate plays to Michael through pictures and video, because Michael does not really understand as well when he is shown words or charts. Under Freeze's careful instruction, however, Michael begins crushing his opponents. He gets fit and lifts an opposing nose tackle off his feet before throwing him on the ground ten yards later.

During the state championship, Coach Freeze is actually getting bored with his single-play game plan. He actually believes that Michael is making it too easy. Freeze calls a trick play that is so unusual and unexpected that Michael is stunned by it. He simply stands and watches the play unfold around him instead of making his blocks. When Sean asks Michael about it, he simply replies, "It was such a great play. I just wanted to watch." The Briarcrest Christian School Saints win the state championship, thanks to their brute force of nature, Michael Oher.



Chapter 7, The Pasta Coach

Chapter 7, The Pasta Coach Summary and Analysis

After Michael's team wins the state championship, the college football coaches intensify their pursuit of him. They are expecting to woo the poor young black man with free plane tickets, tickets to sporting events, and other amenities that most men in his situation might not have. Unfortunately for them, they do not understand that Michael's living situation is very different now from what they expect. As a bona fide member of the Tuohy family, Michael has access to anything he could ever want or need. The family estate is worth millions, and Sean is well connected, so if Michael ever wants something that Sean does not have, he probably knows someone who can provide it.

Michael's college selection process is a complicated matter for Sean and Leigh Anne Tuohy. Both are graduates of Ole Miss, and they are devoted to the school, but they want Michael to make the choice on his own. Leigh Anne is amused by the coaches' visits to their home, especially since Michael's grades are so poor that he cannot even qualify to go to any college at this point. A former Ole Miss basketball standout, Sean tries to stay out of the college discussions as much as possible, so that he will not appear to be pushing Michael to go there.

To complicate matters further, Michael's football coach, Hugh Freeze, begins negotiating with the University of Tennessee for a coaching job, and encourages Michael to consider that school. Michael's friend Justin begins visiting several colleges, and Michael often accompanies him. Michael would like to attend the same school as Justin, so eventually colleges learn that in order to have Michael play for them, they have to take Justin as part of the package. Michael's tutor, Sue Mitchell, is also a graduate of Ole Miss, and would very much like Michael to go there. She tries to scare Michael away from the University of Tennessee, and she tutors him for free in hopes of benefiting Ole Miss with a gifted player if he becomes academically eligible to attend college.

The Tuohys even tell Michael that if he is considering Ole Miss, they should go through the process of formally adopting him, so that their gifts to him will not be misconstrued as anything other than the support of loving parents. Michael keeps everyone in the dark about his choice, so no one really knows where he plans to go. He goes on many trips to visit various colleges, and the coaches also come to meet him personally at the Tuohy home. It seems the coaches know no limits in negotiating with the mysterious young man. When Ole Miss assistant coach Kurt Roper meets Michael personally, he notices how close he is to young Sean Jr., and decides to capitalize on the relationship by offering the boy an all-access pass.

Michael begins narrowing down his choices for college until there are only three options left: Ole Miss, the University of Tennessee, and LSU. When Michael meets with the coach from Ole Miss, he confirms that his friend Justin will be able to attend as well.



When Michael finally decides in February 2005 to go to Ole Miss, some of the other coaches complain to the NCAA that a rich white family in Memphis took Michael out of the ghetto, showered him with gifts, and convinced him to play for their alma mater. When Sean Jr. asks Michael how long ago he made his decision, Michael admits that he always intended to go to Ole Miss, and decided back in September. He enjoyed meeting all of the coaches, however.



Chapter 8, Character Courses

Chapter 8, Character Courses Summary and Analysis

This chapter opens with a description of a meeting at the Tuohy home with a woman named Joyce Thompson. Miss Thompson is an investigator for the NCAA, and she is interviewing Michael to determine if the Tuohys are in violation of NCAA recruitment rules due to their relationship with Michael and their status as Ole Miss boosters. During the interview, the reader learns that Michael may have at least thirteen siblings. He is not even sure of all of their names. Sean points out that they may have different last names as well, since he believes that Michael's mother has children by at least five different fathers.

Michael understands what Miss Thompson is thinking. He also wonders if all of the rich white people helping him would be so helpful if he were not such a promising athlete. He notices that his high school football coach, Hugh Freeze, begins negotiating for college football coaching positions after the team wins a state championship using Michael as their key player. Once Michael is accepted at Ole Miss, Freeze is offered a coaching position there, too.

Michael also tells Miss Thompson that he remembers at least two foster homes as a child. He answers Miss Thompson's questions with as few words as possible. After she interrogates him for five hours, Sean asks her to leave. She threatens to return with more questions. Once she leaves, Michael crumbles and cries to Leigh Anne.

Meanwhile, Miss Sue, Michael's tutor, is working with him every day to help him graduate. Although Michael earns all As and Bs during his senior year, his grades are still not good enough for him to go to college and play football. Sean begins desperately looking for a way to help him. He finds out that Brigham Young University offers online courses that Michael can use to help him replace the courses for which he has failing grades. He can also continue receiving credit for these courses up until August 1st, but only if Sean can prove that Michael is truly learning disabled.

Sean takes Michael to a psychological examiner to be tested. The examiner determines that Michael is learning disabled, but somehow his IQ is going up, when normally that number would stay about the same for his whole life. She notes that Michael has an excellent memory, and is still absorbing knowledge like a seven-year-old, not a teenager about to graduate from high school. The psychologist believes that Michael is now learning to solve problems, rather than give up on questions he does not understand. This is good news for Michael. Now that he is officially labeled as learning disabled, he has more time to enroll in the online BYU courses and bring up his grades. Sean refers to the BYU program as the "great Mormon grade-grab." The courses are brief, so Michael can complete one nearly every week.



Soon, Miss Thompson returns to question Michael again. He is at home alone when she arrives. She explains again the purpose of her investigation is to make sure that people are not doing any favors for high school football players in order to get them to play at certain colleges. Michael surprisingly responds, "I should be paid. They're making all this money off football. Why shouldn't they pay the players?" Miss Thompson laughs, but Michael raises a serious and valid question.

The author explains the dilemma of college athletes and recruiters. The young athletes make a lot of money for their schools, but they cannot legally be compensated. When Sean arrives to see Miss Thompson questioning Michael again, he is upset. He and Miss Thompson argue throughout the remainder of her interview with Michael, and finally Michael leaves the two adults alone. Sean confides in Miss Thompson that taking Michael in may ruin the family. Whenever they see a boy in trouble now, they wonder whether they should intervene. They think back on Michael's success story and wonder what they should do.

When Michael's graduation approaches, Leigh Anne has a problem. The Briarcrest yearbook traditionally displays a baby picture next to the graduate's photograph, but Michael does not have any of his baby pictures. Leigh Anne visits Michael's mother again, but the woman only has one childhood picture of the boy. The picture is of Michael at about age ten. The picture was not taken by Michael's mother or any other member of the family. The picture was taken by an employee of Memphis Children's Services. Michael is thrilled when he sees it. Unfortunately, this photograph is not a baby picture, so it cannot be used for Michael's yearbook. Leigh Anne searches online for a picture of a little black baby and submits that stranger's picture instead so that Michael will not be the only graduate missing a baby photo in his yearbook.

When Michael graduates, the Tuohy family is in attendance, and Big Tony is there, too. Michael's mother, however, is not there. She is expected to ride with Big Tony, and she says that she wants to come, especially since no one in her family has ever made it past the tenth grade. When Big Tony arrives at her house to pick her up, however, no one answers the door. Michael's mother does not attend.

Michael completes his BYU courses just in time to meet the NCAA deadline. His grades are now good enough for him to attend Ole Miss and play football. The coach expects Michael to start on the offensive line during his freshmen year. This is highly unusual, since offensive linemen have some of the most demanding jobs on the team. Most study, watch, and learn from the bench their first year, and then begin playing the next year. Michael, however, is so good that the coach wants him to start right away.

Sean is concerned about this responsibility for Michael so soon, and drives down to Ole Miss to meet with the coach in person to discuss it. He explains that Michael is not like other star athletes. He is not experienced in weight training or complicated study of the game of football. Michael is used to spending his time studying academic courses just so he can graduate. Sean plans to send Miss Sue to Ole Miss along with Michael to help him get through his college courses, but who will help Michael with his football studies and preparation once he is away from the Tuohy family? The Ole Miss football

coach listens closely to Sean and takes a lot of notes. He seems to understand what Sean's concerns are.



Chapter 9, Birth of a Star

Chapter 9, Birth of a Star Summary and Analysis

In this chapter, the author describes the evolution of the left tackle position and why it is now one of the most valuable positions in professional football. Lewis presents the story of Steve Wallace, a left tackle for Bill Walsh's San Francisco 49ers. Wallace is not the starter, but gets the job when another player named Bubba Paris fails to perform. The 49ers are successful during the regular season, but cannot seem to get through the playoffs, mainly because that is where they usually run into Lawrence Taylor. Another defensive star, Chris Doleman, is also presenting a problem.

Doleman is such a nightmare that even superstar Joe Montana cannot hold his own against him. Wallace watches from the bench during the playoffs as Montana struggles. He explains, "He never let Joe get his feet set." The author points out, however, the effect Doleman has on Montana's feet is nothing compared to the way that Doleman is able to get into the quarterback's head. Montana begins looking to see where Doleman is first instead of looking to find an open receiver. He plays so badly that Walsh yanks the future Hall of Fame quarterback out of the game and replaces him with another star, Steve Young. Young is left-handed, so Doleman's blind side rush is not as effective on him. It is too late. The 49ers lose a game they were expected to win easily.

Steve Wallace takes over the left tackle position in Walsh's final attempt to protect his quarterback. Author Lewis explains the pressure of the position, saying, "The left tackle was defined by his weakest moment." He can play wonderfully for the whole game, but the only television coverage he will receive will be the replay of the one time he misses the defender and is blamed for the quarterback being sacked. Wallace is finally able to best Doleman in a critical game, and this sets the tone for left tackles of the future.

The professional football market rules change in 1993, and coaches use their finances to demonstrate the importance of the left tackle position. The position soon becomes the most highly paid on the field next to the quarterback. It completely changes the game. The Indianapolis Colts actually put a clause in tackle Will Wolford's contract that guarantees his position as the most highly paid player on the team for as long as he plays. This means that if the team drafts the most expensive quarterback in the league, Wolford's salary will go up by just as much. It is an unprecedented agreement.

Lewis also describes the rise to glory of Jonathan Ogden, a left tackle for the Baltimore Ravens. When his college coach moves him from right tackle to left tackle, Ogden complains to his father, an investment banker. Ogden's father wisely advises his son that the left tackle position is the best position in football if he chooses to pursue a professional career. When Ogden wins a Super Bowl with the Ravens, he is being paid more than any quarterback in the league. He is actually receiving more than eight times the salary of Trent Dilfer, the quarterback he is assigned to protect.



Chapter 10, The Egg Bowl

Chapter 10, The Egg Bowl Summary and Analysis

Lewis provides a more detailed description of Ole Miss, its history and reputation. Ole Miss is associated with the old Confederate army, so it has a reputation for possibly not treating black athletes very well. Interestingly enough, Michael is not the most academically challenged athlete at Ole Miss. The players spent a great deal of time with tutors who help them with their class work.

Michael's offensive line coach, George DeLeone, does not expect Michael to play during his freshman year. The Ole Miss head coach, Coach O, however, has different ideas. He wants Michael to start right away. DeLeone starts Michael at the right guard position because it is the easiest to learn. When Coach O is not looking, DeLeone also pulls Michael out of games to give him a break since Michael does not really understand the plays yet.

In this chapter, Michael is preparing for the Egg Bowl, the annual rivalry game in which Ole Miss plays Mississippi state. The winner of the game receives an egg-shaped trophy that has been passed back and forth for years. Michael is different from many of the other freshman students at the school. His life is not that much different than it was in Memphis. Miss Sue is at Ole Miss to help tutor him. Hugh Freeze is still his football coach. Sean and Leigh Anne spend many nights at a house they have built close to the campus. Collins is also a student at Ole Miss, and cheers at Michael's games.

Michael is still struggling to master the techniques and strategies involved in the game, and his team at Ole Miss is not playing very well. It is not a coincidence that the games in which Michael excels usually take place when Sean can review the plays with him in advance. The blocking schemes are much more complicated in college than they are at Briarcrest, and it is hard for him to learn them quickly. The author explains that only the quarterback has to master the same level of complexity as an offensive lineman.

Ole Miss plays miserably in the Egg Bowl and loses badly to Mississippi State. Late in the game, Michael is pulled out of the game and sent to the bench for the remainder of the contest. Michael, along with the rest of the offensive line, is really not sure what he is supposed to be doing and when to do it. After the game, the head coach fires the offensive coordinator and begins looking for a new offensive line coach. It is at this time that Michael is finally moved to the left tackle position.

In spite of Ole Miss's awful season, Michael is still considered one of the best offensive linemen in the country. His prospects for an NFL career are still outstanding. People are impressed that he is even playing on the line during his freshman year. When the season is over, Michael begins weight training and becomes lighter, yet somehow even stronger.



Some of Michael's friends and teammates are not good influences on him. Sometimes, Michael brings friends over to the Tuohy house. After one visit, a teammate named Antonio Turner teases Michael about his white family, provoking him by making rude comments about his white mother and sister. Michael savagely attacks Antonio, accidentally injuring a small child in the process. When Michael sees the injured boy, he panics and runs away.



Chapter 11, Freak of Nurture

Chapter 11, Freak of Nurture Summary and Analysis

This is the only chapter of the book in which the author reveals much information about Michael's mysterious childhood. Michael's mother, Dee Dee, has an unhappy childhood herself. Her father is murdered in his bed when she is just a child. Her mother is an alcoholic and cannot take care of Dee Dee and her brother Robert. The children grow up in an orphanage. At age twenty, Dee Dee is already involved with drugs, and begins having children. She has five sons within six years.

Her brother Robert kills his wife when she asks for a divorce. While he is on Death Row for murder, he meets a man named Michael Jerome Williams. He asks Williams to visit Dee Dee after he gets out. Dee Dee and Michael Williams become involved, and she is soon pregnant. Williams disappears around the time of little Michael's birth, and Dee Dee learns that the man is back in prison. She eventually decides to start calling the boy Michael Oher, using her maiden name, but never legally changes the child's name.

By the time Michael is five, Dee Dee is already caring for ten children under the age of fifteen. Her nurture is limited, however, because Dee Dee is also addicted to crack cocaine. One of Michael's brothers recalls that Dee Dee would receive her welfare check on the first of each month, leave to buy drugs, and disappear for the next ten days. The children are left without food or supervision, and have no way to take care of themselves.

In spite of her neglect, Dee Dee's children still love her. She has her problems, but she tells them that she loves them often, and she never hits them. One day, the police arrive to take the children away from Dee Dee. Michael and his brothers run away and escape, but they can hear Dee Dee's screams as the girls are taken away. At this age, Michael decides he wants to be a basketball star like Michael Jordan, and he relies on his quick feet to help him keep up with his older brothers when they need to run.

The boys begin a scattered existence. Sometimes they sleep on the streets. Other nights are spent with Dee Dee in an old car. One day, the police find the boys at school, and put them in foster care. Michael's foster mother is cruel and unloving, forcing the boys to work and taking the money that they earn. The older foster children in the home pick on the younger boys. Michael cries himself to sleep every night. When the boys run away from their foster home, Children's Services catches up with Michael and admits him to St. Joseph's Hospital for a psychological evaluation.

Incredibly, Michael does not mind the hospitalization at first. He gets to eat well, and has a bed with a mattress, a rarity for him. Then Michael begins to miss his mother. He runs away from the hospital, and finds Dee Dee and the other remaining children in her care at a housing project named Hurt Village. Dee Dee has even more children now. She



sleeps in one bedroom, and seven of her children sleep crowded together in one bed in the other.

Michael does not attend school at all for the eighteen months after his escape from the hospital. Eventually, it appears that the police and Children's Services simply forget about Michael and the other children. Freed from the responsibility of going to school, Michael plays basketball ten to twelve hours each day and dreams about playing professional basketball like Michael Jordan. He befriends a boy named Craig. He will later say that Craig is the only person he ever fully trusts.

Shortly before his fifteenth birthday, Michael meets Big Tony, the man who will eventually change his life forever. Big Tony believes that the one thing that keeps Michael out of trouble is his lack of connection to most of the people around him. Most kids go bad because they hang around with the wrong people. Other than Craig, Michael does not seem to have any friends.

Michael finally speaks with the author about his experiences at Briarcrest. He feels awkward being surrounded by white people with whom he has nothing in common. He is stunned when he learns that the school lunch at the Christian school is not free. The free lunch is one of the reasons he ever goes to school at all. One day, Big Tony's son Steven comes home with Michael and money that is not theirs. They explain that the white kids at Briarcrest leave all of their money and other valuables lying around unprotected. Big Tony explains that the boys are not to steal, fight, or get into trouble of any kind. Doing so might remove them from their new lives in the white world, the world that is presenting them with opportunities to brighten their futures.



Chapter 12, And Moses Stuttered

Chapter 12, And Moses Stuttered Summary and Analysis

In this final chapter, the author explains what happens after Michael runs away following his fight with Antonio. The police are called to the scene. It turns out that the little boy who is injured is tutor Bobby Nix's son. He is going to press charges against Michael. Michael drives around town, angry and confused. This is a new situation for him. He is more vulnerable now. Antonio's comments about his white family hurt him. Other people can now get to him by using his loved ones to cause him pain.

Sean is urgently trying to reach Michael, and fears what the scared boy might do. He learns that the little boy is hurt and needs stitches, but will recover. He also learns that the police intend to send Michael to jail. Sean calls a lawyer, and contacts people he knows at Ole Miss and the police station who might be able to help. He is relieved when he finally hears from Michael, who is calling Sean first as he promised. In the end, Sean is able to work his magic. Instead of going to jail, Michael only has to complete ten hours of community service and apologize in order to make the whole situation go away.

Coach O calls Michael into his office to discuss the incident. He shows Michael a stack of newspaper clippings recently printed about him, and reminds him that everyone is now watching Michael Oher to see what he will do. Now that Michael is no longer invisible to society, people are going to try and provoke him. He tells Michael that this will not be the last time he encounters someone like Antonio.

Meanwhile in Memphis, the city's poor black children begin applying to Briarcrest in record numbers. They know about Michael, and they want to be the next success story. Michael's teacher, Jennifer Graves, thinks that Michael may be destined for a higher purpose as an example of the success of the educational system. Leigh Anne feels that there is a greater lesson to be learned as well. Upon learning of the untimely, violent death of another young black athlete in Memphis, she insists that she and Sean create a foundation to help children who demonstrate athletic promise, but need academic help in order to go to college.

Michael is now receiving a lot of calls from poor black friends and family, mostly when they need money. They do not understand that Michael is not being paid to play. He is not even in the NFL yet. At one time, Michael planned to build a house for all of his brothers and sisters to stay in, but now he is not so sure. He feels that he is the only one that is taking advantage of the opportunities presented to him, and others are using him.



Characters

Michael Oher

Also known as Michael Jerome Williams, Jr. or "Big Mike," Michael Oher is still somewhat of a mystery. He is the main subject in *The Blind Side*. As the book's protagonist, Michael is subjected to a childhood that no child should ever have to face. He appears to have only the understanding of a child most of the time, yet enough street smarts and cynicism to realize when people might be using him for their own gain.

Michael's life completely changes when he is delivered from a poor black neighborhood and thrust into an affluent white school. As a fish out of water, Michael could not be more lost. As one teacher observes, he does not understand much about life. He does not know what a cell is, or the ocean, or even the Tooth Fairy. No one was ever motivated to teach Michael these things, and he was shuttled through the Memphis public school system like so much chattel. It seems that no one ever really took an interest in Michael's future before Big Mike appeared with him at the Briarcrest Christian School.

A remarkable physical specimen and promising athlete, Michael excels in most sports through brute force alone. Even when Michael does not completely understand the rules of a game, he learns by watching others and quickly surpasses them in ability. The book ends while Michael is a student at the University of Mississippi, and the football team's starting left tackle. Michael is also a hot NFL prospect, and his future seems bright. Whether he is prepared to face that bright future is as yet unclear.

Sean Tuohy

Sean Tuohy is a rich businessman and volunteer coach at the Briarcrest Christian School. He takes an interest in Michael Oher early on, and begins trying to help him. At first, Sean is merely paying for Michael's school lunches. Eventually, Michael becomes a part of the Tuohy family, and Sean tries to help him with his football career and life in general.

Sean is a graduate and former basketball standout of Ole Miss, where Michael eventually decides to go to college. Sean has a large chain of fast-food stores and a sizable fortune. He is also an evangelical Christian. Sean is determined to build Michael up instead of tearing him down the way that his college coaches tore him down. He understands what it is like to go without things, and he is a self-made millionaire. Sean is also well-connected and appreciates the finer things in life. He is prepared to help Michael go all the way.



Leigh Anne Tuohy

A former Ole Miss cheerleader, Leigh Anne is a petite, attractive woman who is fiercely protective of her children, including Michael, whom she treats as her son. Leigh Anne is so color-blind that she sends out family Christmas cards picturing Michael without even realizing that most of the recipients will have no idea who that new family member is or where he came from. She is resourceful and refuses to take "no" for an answer.

Author Michael Lewis describes Leigh Anne as a warrior princess. When she is helping Michael decide where he wants to go to college, her main concern is that her three-hundred-plus-pound baby be taken care of.

Denise

Dee Dee is Michael's mother. Unmarried and having given birth to at least thirteen children by no less than five different fathers, Dee Dee lives a seemingly miserable existence in one of Memphis's most depressing housing projects, Hurt Village. Dee Dee is addicted to crack cocaine and unable to care for her many children. In *The Blind Side*, the reader learns that no one in Dee Dee's family has ever graduated from high school or obtained a driver's license. She professes to love Michael, but she does not attend his games or even his high school graduation.

Collins Tuohy

Collins is Sean and Leigh Anne's daughter. She attends Briarcrest and Ole Miss with Michael. She is also an athlete, a cheerleader, and a sorority member at Ole Miss. She is the homecoming queen at Briarcrest.

Sean Tuohy, Jr.

Sean Junior ("SJ") is Sean and Leigh Anne's youngest son. He and Michael become great friends, and he enjoys negotiating with different college coaches to see what access they might grant him in their quest to recruit Michael.

Big Tony

Tony Henderson is the man who first brings Michael to the Briarcrest Christian School. Tony's son Steven also attends Briarcrest after Big Tony promises his dying mother that he will make sure that Steven leaves the Memphis public school system and enrolls in Christian school. In the beginning, Michael stays with Big Tony periodically when he has nowhere else to go.



John Harrington

John Harrington is the basketball coach at Briarcrest Christian School. He is one of the coaches who meets with Big Tony when he brings Michael to the school for the first time. Coach Harrington will later coach Michael on the basketball team, and defend him when the fans at the game in Myrtle Beach are harassing him.

Hugh Freeze

Hugh Freeze is one of Michael's football coaches, both at Briarcrest and at Ole Miss. Freeze believes in running trick plays, especially when players are not that physically talented. Hugh Freeze is the Briarcrest football coach who agrees to repeatedly run the Gap play with Michael as the focus of the game. This strategy is so successful that the team goes on to win the state championship, and Freeze begins to negotiate for college coaching positions. Michael feels that Freeze gets ahead because of his efforts, and notices that Freeze pressures him to go to the schools where he is interested in coaching. For this perceived slight, Michael begins calling Freeze "The Snake."

Steve Simpson

Mr. Simpson is the principal at Briarcrest Christian School. He is the one who decides to admit Michael even though his grades are not up to par.

Jennifer Graves

Jennifer Graves is Michael's first teacher at Briarcrest. She specializes in teaching children with special needs.

Lawrence Taylor

Lawrence Taylor is the NFL blind side linebacker who emerges in the 1980s and transforms the game as coaches scramble to find ways to stop him. He is credited with the term "blind side" and the importance now placed on offensive linemen, especially those lined up at left tackle with the responsibility of protecting the quarterback's blind side.

Joe Theismann

Joe Theismann is the Washington Redskins quarterback whose leg was horrifically broken on live television by blind side linebacker Lawrence Taylor in the 1980s. Theismann never played football again after he injury.



Tom Lemming

Tom Lemming is the predominant football scout in America. He selects the country's All-Americans and the players who participate in the U.S. Army All-American game.

Betty Boo

Also called "Grandma," Betty Boo is Big Tony's mother. It is her dying wish that her grandson Steven attend a Christian school that inadvertently leads "Big Mike" to the Briarcrest Christian School.

Steven Payne

Steven Payne is Big Tony's son, and the reason that Michael Oher first visits Briarcrest Christian School. He also plays on the basketball team with Michael.

Phil Fulmer

Phil Fulmer is the coach from the University of Tennessee who tries to recruit Michael to play football for him.

Nick Saban

Nick Saban is the LSU coach who is interested in recruiting Michael. Leigh Anne notices his nice clothing and sophisticated, polite manner. She thinks he is polished and charming. Miss Sue thinks he is good looking.

Bill Walsh

Bill Walsh is the head coach for the San Francisco 49ers when they win three Super Bowls in the 1980s. He is so innovative that he is credited for bringing the rhythm passing game to the sport of football. He is a master strategist, and he and his staff are credited with perfecting the now popular West Coast offense.

Coach O

Ed Orgeron is the head coach of the Ole Miss football team on which Michael plays.



Miss Thompson

Joyce Thompson is the NCAA investigator who interviews Michael and Sean to determine if their relationship is a violation of NCAA rules.

Justin Sparks

Justin Sparks is a friend and classmate of Michael's at Briarcrest and Ole Miss. Michael decides which school to go to in part based upon where Justin goes.

Sue Mitchell

"Miss Sue" is Michael's loyal tutor. She is also an Ole Miss alum and supporter.

Steve Wallace

Steve Wallace is a former offensive lineman who plays for Bill Walsh and revolutionizes the left tackle position and its importance in the game.

Bobby Nix

Bobby Nix is one of the tutors at Ole Miss. It is Bobby's three-year-old son whom Michael accidentally injures when he attacks Antonio.

Craig Vail

Craig is Michael's only friend from the old neighborhood. Michael says that Craig is the only person whom he fully trusts.



Objects/Places

The Blind Side

The Blind Side is the side of the field that a quarterback cannot see when he turns his body in preparation to pass the ball. Most blind side linebackers are positioned on the right side of the line in order to defend against right-handed quarterbacks.

The Quarterback Sack

The quarterback sack occurs when a quarterback is tackled behind the line of scrimmage.

Briarcrest Christian School

Briarcrest is the school where Michael begins playing football and meets the Tuohy family, who eventually takes him in as their own.

Ole Miss

Ole Miss is the University of Mississippi, where Michael attends college and plays football.

Hurt Village

Hurt Village is a run-down federal housing project in Memphis. Dee Dee, Michael's mother, lives there.

Fluid Intelligence

Michael's fluid intelligence is described by examiners as his ability to respond on the spot to a situation.

Crystallized Intelligence

Michael's crystallized intelligence is described by examiners as what he has picked up along the way.



Death Valley

Death Valley is the name LSU fans have nicknamed their stadium.

The Grove

The Grove is a grove on the Ole Miss campus that players march through on their way to the stadium.

The Egg Bowl

The Egg Bowl is the annual rivalry game between Ole Miss and Mississippi State. The winner receives an egg-shaped trophy.



Themes

Fish Out of Water

Author Michael Lewis repeatedly demonstrates how uncomfortable Michael Oher is in unfamiliar environments. In Chapter 11, Big Tony sneaks young Michael into a basketball camp. When he receives word that Michael has fled the camp, he goes looking for the boy. When he finds him, Michael is crying. He explains that the bigger, older kids shoved and hit him. Mike is uncomfortable being touched. The coaches grow angry with Michael because he won't knock the other kids down. This is only one example in which the reader witnesses Michael being thrust into an environment in which he clearly does not belong.

In Chapter 3, Leigh Anne takes Michael shopping for new clothes. She is now the fish out of water. She drives into unsavory, unfamiliar neighborhoods in order to go shopping in an area that Michael is familiar with. She turns on "a kind of black station" in the car so that Michael will hear familiar music. At the last shop they visit, she tells Michael, "I've lived here my whole life and I've never been to this neighborhood." When she reaches Dee Dee's house and exits the car, Michael insists that she stay in the car while he gets help carrying the shopping bags. She stays in the car and keeps the doors locked until he returns. Clearly, Leigh Anne is in unfamiliar, uncomfortable surroundings now that she has crossed into Michael's world.

In Chapter 11, Michael recalls an essay he once wrote about his first days at Briarcrest, as one of the only black students and certainly the largest, most imposing one. The essay reads as follows:

"I look and I see white everywhere: white walls, white floors,

and a lot of white people... The teachers are not aware that I have no idea of anything they are talking about. I do not want to listen to anyone, especially the teachers. They are giving homework and expecting me to do the problems on my own. I've never done homework in my life. I go to the bathroom, look in the mirror, and say, "This is not Mike

Oher. I want to get out of this place."

At the end of this same chapter, Big Tony explains to Michael and Steven that they have entered a world with new rules. It is a white world with white rules that do not make sense to the black children, but Tony tells them that "a black kid who got into trouble into the white world was a black kid on his way out of that world."

Acceptance of the Idea that Life is Not Fair

Most of the people in the book have very matter-of-fact attitudes about life in general. They simply roll with the punches and deal with whatever comes their way. They do not



spend a lot of time bemoaning the unfairness of Michael's life. In Chapter 3, the author explains that for Leigh Anne, "Clothing a child was just what you did if you had the resources." There is no indication in the book that Sean and Leigh Anne dwell on the unfairness of Michael's predicament, even though they are clearly attempting to balance the scales in the boy's favor. The couple simply steps into action and gives the boy the support and shelter that he needs in order to be successful.

When Michael is unfairly detained after his mother's arrest in Chapter 10, Sean gives Michael "a little speech about black people and the police and the unlikelihood of the former being treated graciously or even fairly by the latter." There is no indication in the book that Michael questions this advice or complains about the unfairness of it all. Michael himself seems to be unburdened even by the tragedy of his loveless childhood. As Sean points out in Chapter 4, Michael is "mad at no one and doesn't really care what happened. His story might be sad, but he's not sad."

In spite of Dee Dee's neglect, Michael continues to love her and seek her out when they are separated. Young Michael misses Dee Dee when he is taken from her and explains, "I guess you're just supposed to love your mom. Just because she's your mom." Michael doesn't seem to be concerned about whether or not Dee Dee deserves his love or not. She simply receives it.

The Evolution of Football

The author devotes a multitude of pages to the study of the evolution of football. He explains in great detail how Lawrence Taylor's game play revolutionized the sport and forced opponents to account for his presence. A significant portion of the book is focused on the successful strategies of Bill Walsh, along with his quarterbacks, including Steve Deberg, Joe Montana, and Steve Young.

Michael Lewis discusses the role that various defensive and offensive players have had on the outcome of playoff games and past Super Bowl contests. He credits Walsh with changing the sport's focus from running to passing. This change completely alters the role of the quarterback, and also requires a skilled player whose sole purpose is to protect the star as he prepares to complete a pass.

Lewis's admiration for talented left tackles is more than obvious. He points to the complexity of the blocking schemes and game plans that the offensive line must learn. Lewis states that the offensive line positions are the most "intellectually demanding," and stresses the irregularity of assigning an inexperienced Michael Oher to such a critical position.

Style

Perspective

The entire book is written in the third person. It is clear at times that the reader is reading the story from the perspective of a certain person, usually Michael, Sean, or Leigh Anne, but the story clearly compiles personal accounts from most of the people featured in the book.

The book is not politically correct, and does not attempt to be color-blind in any way. Everyone in the story seems to be abundantly clear about the differences between white neighborhoods and black neighborhoods, especially in Memphis. The author seems to have a heightened awareness of various social class distinctions and other differences, and everyone in the story is quite clearly divided into two categories: the haves and the have-nots. What is unclear is whether the author himself is reinforcing this notion or merely relating the social mores of the Tuohy family. The author himself is a friend of Sean's.

Lewis is also very adamant about the ways in which the sport of football has improved due to the teachings of Bill Walsh. He does, however, present the offsetting opinions of legendary coach Bill Parcells as well, and fairly explores his opinions on whether brute force can really triumph over smart strategy in a football game.

Tone

The author maintains a fairly partisan tone for the majority of the book. He clearly favors Walsh's (and Freeze's) brand of football, although the reader is left with the impression that Lewis is at least attempting to appear impartial. His admiration for Walsh is just unmistakable.

Less clear are Lewis's feelings about the social experiment in which Michael Oher is a subject. Lewis is a self-proclaimed friend of the Tuohy family, so perhaps he resists presenting a strong opinion lest he offend Sean and Leigh Anne. Lewis fails to present much of an opinion on several controversial subjects, including Michael's occasional bursts of extreme violence and his ability to emerge unscathed, as well as his avoidance of significant consequences for his actions.

The author also surprisingly depicts Sean's careless attitude about Michael's education as anything other than a vehicle to launch his NFL career. The "great Mormon grade-grab" is quite controversial, not only due to the nickname that Sean so irreverently bestows upon it, but also by his own pride in finding multiple loopholes through which Sean can slip into a college admission that he obviously has not earned. Sean's celebration at the knowledge that Michael is learning disabled is also bound to be offensive for many readers.

Structure

The book is split into twelve individual chapters of varying lengths for a total of 339 pages in the paperback version. Also included in the paperback version are an afterword and an author's note that updates readers on Michael Oher's life, career at Ole Miss, and NFL prospects.

Each chapter deals with either another phase in Michael's life or a corresponding account of the evolution of the game of football, especially as it relates to the importance of Michael's discovery as an exceptionally promising left tackle. It can be a bit frustrating to become engrossed in Michael's story only to be pulled away for another football history lesson, but the author does a good job of successfully tying the chapters together.

As one might expect, the book contains some profanity, mainly on the part of football players and other individuals being quoted. The language, however, fits the story, and readers can imagine that it has probably been edited quite a bit since some of the words were first uttered in a testosterone-laden locker room somewhere full of young male athletes.



Quotes

"Don't worry where I am. I'll tell you when I get there." Chapter 1, Back Story, p. 18

"When a star running back or wide receiver is injured, the coaches worry about their game plans. When a star quarterback gets hurt, the coaches worry about their jobs." Chapter 2, The Market for Football Players, p. 39

"With men this is impossible; with God all things are possible." Chapter 3, Crossing the Line, p. 48

"Good God! He's a monster!" Chapter 3, Crossing the Line, p. 50

"God gives people money to see how you're going to handle it." Chapter 3, Crossing the Line, p. 68

"Michael's gift is that the Good Lord gave him the ability to forget. He's mad at no one and doesn't really care what happened. His story might be sad, but he's not sad." Chapter 4, The Blank Slate, p. 89

"I seen all I need to see." Chapter 4, The Blank Slate, p. 95

"He's the best in the nation." Chapter 4, The Blank Slate, p. 96

"If he isn't a top fifteen pick in the NFL draft three years from now, someone done him wrong." Chapter 4, The Blank Slate, p. 101

"Bill Walsh had made the quarterback a lot more valuable, and so the man who protected the quarterback was going to be a whole lot more valuable, too. Whoever he was, he was going to have to be special. The old idea was about to die." Chapter 5, Death of a Lineman, p. 128

"Did the whistle blow?" Chapter 6, Inventing Michael, p. 136

"I love him as if I birthed him." Chapter 6, Inventing Michael, p. 146

"There's been an accident." Chapter 7, The Pasta Coach, p. 179

"Mom, that's a bad place down there." Chapter 7, The Pasta Coach, p. 183

"I've been offered several NFL head coaching jobs since I've been at LSU, and haven't taken one yet." Chapter 7, The Pasta Coach, p. 185

"I've been offered several NFL head coaching jobs since I've been at LSU, and haven't taken one yet." Chapter 7, The Pasta Coach, p. 185



"Phil, if Archie can sit in the Tennessee stands for four years, I can sit in the Tennessee stands for four years." Chapter 7, The Pasta Coach, p. 189

"YAAAWWW BEEE BAAWWW!" (You a big boy!) Chapter 7, The Pasta Coach, p. 191

"Coach O is pure one hundred percent coon-ass, and I grew up surrounded by coon-asses." Chapter 7, The Pasta Coach, p. 192

"Whazzup dawg?" Chapter 7, The Pasta Coach, p. 195

"People ask me if I ever reach the top will I forget about them? So I ask people if I don't reach the top, will y'all forget about me?" Chapter 8, Character Courses, p. 203

"That lady upset me. I never want to talk to her again." Chapter 8, Character Courses, p. 206

"Don't you let that lady back in this house." Chapter 8, Character Courses, p. 207

"My first thought was that we're not going to have enough money to feed him." Chapter 8, Character Courses, p. 211

"I've never seen kids this old still absorbing knowledge the way he is. You see it in seven-year-olds." Chapter 8, Character Courses, p. 212

"Thus began the great Mormon grade-grab." Chapter 8, Character Courses, p. 214

"Ma'am, he's richer than any Ole Miss boosters." Chapter 8, Character Courses, p. 224

"Mama, that's me!" Chapter 8, Character Courses, p. 226

"Michael's mind is like a house built on sand." Chapter 8, Character Courses, p. 229

"The better he does his job, the more boring he becomes. His job is to eliminate what people pay to see — the sight of Chris Doleman crushing Joe Montana." Chapter 9, Birth of a Star, p. 246

"The first guy in the end zone with Roger Craig is Steve Wallace! Steve Wallace was the guy who made the first block to break him loose!" Chapter 9, Birth of a Star, p. 247

"Farewell, Leo Goeas, Whoever You Were." Chapter 9, Birth of a Star, p. 251

"Let me tell you something, son. It is lonely at the top. I hate you had to learn about this at such a young age, but there are going to be many Antonio Turners. This is the first of many incidents." Chapter 12, And Moses Stuttered, p. 316-317

"But Moses said to the Lord, 'If the Israelites will not listen to me, why would Pharaoh listen to me, since I speak with faltering lips?'"



Topics for Discussion

Have you every known anyone like Michael? Has anyone ever helped that person? Provide examples.

Do you like Leigh Anne and Sean Tuohy? Why or why not?

How do you feel about the opportunity that Sean has been given? Do you feel that he would have received the same treatment if he were not a good athlete? Why or why not?

Do you think that professional athletes are worth the large salaries they now routinely earn? Why or why not? Should offensive linemen have the potential to earn more than the quarterback? Should they be paid more than anyone else on the team?

How do you feel about the "Great Mormon Grade-Grab?" Do you believe it is OK for a student to obtain entry to college through the BYU grade substitution program? Why or why not?

Do you think that games are won by planning and intellect, or by brute force alone? Provide examples.

Toward the end of the story, the author says that Briarcrest has stopped accepting poor black student athletes for enrollment. How do you feel about this?

Do you believe that Michael is learning disabled, or could there be another explanation for his difficulties in class? Explain.

By the end of the story, Michael has been violent on several occasions. Do you feel that he has learned his lesson? Were the consequences he suffered severe enough or too severe? Discuss.

How do you think Michael will do in the future?