

It's Not About the Bike Study Guide

It's Not About the Bike by Lance Armstrong

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Plot Summary

Lance Armstrong is known for his accomplishments on the bike as repeat winner of the Tour de France. But out of public view, Lance overcame struggles far greater than any mountain in France. Lance is also a cancer survivor. Lance shares stories normally kept very private. He shares the difficult start he had in life being raised by a teen mother without any support from his biological father who disappears from Lance's life when he is two. Lance shares that his stepfather is somewhat abusive and a liar.

Lance struggles as a young boy to fit in among the football town when he has no skills at the sport whatsoever. But through that challenge, Lance begins entering and winning triathlons, which is the precursor to bike racing. Lance discusses how at first he rides a bike just to feel free, like he could ride away from his stepfather and the town he does not fit in. But it becomes more than that to him. It is a passion. A way of life. However, it becomes a life threatened.

Lance is diagnosed with testicular cancer. It has become stage 3 cancer, having spread to his brain and lungs. While doctors continue to provide treatment options and give as much hope as possible, the fact is that he has a very low chance of survival and will most probably be left sterile. Lance takes on the challenge of cancer like he would tackle a mountain stage. After painful and agonizing chemotherapy treatment and brain surgery, Lance starts the slow ride back to racing. At first, Lance struggles with surviving cancer. In fact, he discusses giving up racing altogether, believing he just cannot do it. The cancer is gone, but the fear of it returning is too much for Lance at times. His racing team does not have much faith in him. They threaten to opt out of his contract. Lance does try a comeback, but it does not go like he would have dreamed. In fact, he ends up quitting in the middle of a race.

Eventually, Lance commits to racing again and joins the US Postal Team. He sets his goal on winning the Tour de France. He and Kik make a goal of becoming parents via in-vitro fertilization using sperm Lance froze before chemotherapy left him sterile. Through dedication, they overcome obstacles. Both accomplishments happen successfully. They become parents to a son named Luke, and Lance shares how he won the back-to-back Tour de France races in 1999 and 2000.

Lance also shares his new passion for starting a cancer foundation and starting the Ride for the Roses Cancer fundraiser. As a cancer survivor, Lance is forever changed. He wants to share that with others whose lives are affected by cancer. The personal stories he shares include many examples of how those whose lives or loved ones are affected by cancer become like one big support group who can understand and support each other when others cannot.



Before and After

Before and After Summary and Analysis

Lance Armstrong is a world renown cyclist known best for his multiple wins of the Tour De France. But while he conquers many challenges in the sport of cycling, his story in this book is about the challenges off the bike when he faced life-threatening cancer at the age of twenty-five. Just when he was winning races and becoming a force on the cycling circuit, his body showed signs of illness, which a hard training and driven athlete like Lance found many excuses to ignore. Finally the symptoms became dangerous and obviously serious. Suddenly, in one afternoon, Lance describes how he became a different person. Lance fights the nearly fatal odds and survives cancer. He meets the woman he will marry, Kik, and together they face the struggles of Lance's return to racing. Lance overcomes obstacles to win the Tour de France. They also overcome personal obstacles to become parents via in-vitro fertilization after cancer treatment leaves Lance sterile. The journey of survival both on and off the bike offers inspiration.

Lance begins describing how he wanted to live long and die a cycling champion, fulfilling all his personal and professional goals. As a young and healthy twenty-five year-old prime athlete, one would think death would be the last thing to worry about. However, as Lance describes, death is a part of life. It is inevitable, but what is important is to remember that while many may fight against death and still die, there are many who fight death and win; these are the ones that live.

Lance experienced many symptoms that should have given him pause to see what was wrong. But he was driven to race in the Tour De France and Atlanta Olympics. His body could not finish either of those races. When his symptoms and ailments finally became undeniable, he sought counsel from a friend who was a doctor, Dr. Rick Parker. Because of the issues with his inflamed testicle, Rick sent him to see a urologist Dr. Jim Reeves.

Dr. Reeves immediately saw Lance upon learning his symptoms. He did a battery of tests including x-rays. The results were conclusive. It was cancer. Lance was crushed. At first he did not fear dying, but rather the end of his cycling career. Lance was ready to fight the cancer right away. He was ready for the fight and to defeat it. The same drive he had in taking on a hill in a cycling race was what he would use to take on cancer.

While the fear of the end of his career affected him at first, he suddenly realizes that death is possible, and must face how he will tell his mother her only child has cancer.



The Start Line

The Start Line Summary and Analysis

The title of this chapter is more than a racing metaphor. More than representative of just the start of Lance's life, the title shows how he became who he is, the start of the fierce competitor who would use the same determination to become the winning racer to fight cancer.

Lance tells about his mother, Linda Mooneyham, who has Lance at seventeen. Lance admits his birth father was nothing more than a source of DNA. It is not easy for Lance's mom to raise her son by herself being so young. Her family tries to help as much as they can. What they cannot give financially they give in love and support. Lance shares how close he is to his family and how his love for his mother helped him to not miss having a father. In fact, he shares how much he dislikes the man who becomes his stepfather when he is three, Terry Armstrong. Terry paddles Lance and Lance never really like him.

Lance's mother works two jobs and graduates from high school while raising Lance. After a couple years she gets a job as a secretary in the Dallas suburb of Richardson. Down the street from where Lance and his mother live is a bike shop run by Jim Hoyt. When Lance is seven, he gets his first bike, a Schwinn Mag Scrambler, from Hoyt's shop. Plano is where Lance grows up in the preteen and teen years. Lance has trouble fitting into the football crazy community. He tries football, but it is not his sport. He enters a running race at school and wins. He tries to fit in by joining the swim team. It is a struggle for him, but Lance's drive and determination show through at a young age. He not only works his way up from the lowest skill level group of swimmers, but he starts riding his bike to and from practice. Lance enters an Ironkids competition, which he wins. This leads to more triathlons and more wins. Lance ends up racing with older, more experienced racers and holds his own. He is able to win money in the races.

Lance rides his bike often, and usually on the sides of the roads. Lance does not have a pedometer on his bike, so his mother drives the route Lance would ride so he would know how long it is. Lance shares stories of being hit by vehicles more than once while riding. Sometimes it is his fault, sometimes that of the drivers. One time he is riding recklessly, running lights, like he often does, when he is hit by a car. He is taken by ambulance to the hospital and treated. The doctor tells him there is no way he can race in the triathlon six days later. But Lance overcomes the injury and his pain, enters the race, and takes third.

Lance continues to enter 10k races and triathlons. He runs and rides fast and hard and also starts to drive the same way. Jim Hoyt, the bike shop owner, helps him get a loan on a fast car. But nothing helps Lance fit in with the peers at his school. Plano East High School is a football driven school. No one understands or appreciates the sport in which Lance excels. The school proves how much they do not understand when Lance is



invited to race in the 1990 Junior World Championship in Moscow. It would require Lance to miss school, and the school authorities do not approve it. Lance goes anyway, and impresses international coaches at the race, but does not impress his school. Upon his return, Lance and his mother learn the high school will not let Lance graduate. Lance's mother is able to get Lance into a private school to graduate on time.

After graduation, Lance is going strong in racing. He is riding one of the best bikes that he got from Jim Hoyt's store. Lance is riding it in a race where he ends up in a fight with his closest competitor. When Jim Hoyt witnesses the fight after the race, he takes the bike and leaves the track. Lance could tell how mad Jim is. Jim also knows about Lance's car racing, and since Jim holds the title to Lance's car, he also takes the car away from him. Lance is very upset with Jim and admits years go by before they will speak again.



I Don't Check My Mother at the Door

I Don't Check My Mother at the Door Summary and Analysis

Lance describes that cycling is not an easy sport. Not only is the training rough and dangerous but the races themselves require patience and persistence. Throughout this chapter, Lance tells the story of his early racing career, from amateur International racing, to starting as a pro, to not being able to complete an entire Tour de France Race, to winning a stage in honor of a fallen teammate. Each race, win or lose, becomes a lesson for Lance. Each is a journey he shares with his mother.

Lance sets the scene of his early career by referring to himself as brash. He shares how in the beginning he struggled with listening to his coaches' advice to not come out fast early on, that he needed to pace himself. He would continue to learn this the hard way, failing at many races because he did not take their advice to heart. Lance learns about the politics early in racing when he is a member of two different racing teams. For international competition, he races on the US National Team under the coaching of Chris Carmichael. For domestic races, he races for Subaru-Montgomery. At an international race in 1991, Lance is racing for the US National Team, but one of their competitors is the Subaru Team. After Lance came in a close second in the first Stage behind the leader of the Subaru team, the coach of the Subaru team leaves. Lance knows that he needs to help the leader of the Subaru team win and not win the race himself. Lance lets his coach Chris know, and Chris counsels Lance that this is his race to win and he owes nothing to the Subaru team. Lance calls his mother for her input. She asks him if he could win it, and he answers he thinks he can so she says then that is what he should do. This is what Lance did, he won and it is the first European race victory for the US National Team.

Lance admits to times where he wanted to quit races. During those struggles his coach points out that through the defeats he will probably learn more than in his victories, as long as he does not quit. But the struggles are not just in finishing the race, it is in learning to deal with his competitors as well. One of his toughest competitors is an Italian named Moreno Argentin. Moreno has no respect for Lance and even intentionally finishes a race in fourth place instead of second to Lance's first place finish because he refuses to stand on the winner podium with Lance.

When Lance is twenty-one, he becomes the youngest winner of a stage at Tour de France when he achieves his first stage victory. But even an eventual Tour de France winner has to overcome challenges in conquering the Tour de France. The same year he wins his first stage, Lance is unable to finish the entire Tour. Physically, he cannot finish it. His coaches know he is not ready, and they patiently guide him to prepare him for when it would be his time.



Lance shares the story behind the title of this chapter. Again at the age of twenty-one, Lance is competing in the World Championships in Oslo. He asks his mother to come to see his race. This time, Lance listens and waits to make his move in the race. While his mother sits watching for seven hours in the rain, Lance becomes the youngest winner of a world cycling title. After the race, Lance is escorted to meet the King of Norway. He brings his mother with him, but when they arrive where the king will meet him, Lance is told his mother cannot go with him. Lance responds "I don't check my Mother at the door". He turns to leave with his mother and the escort stops him, and says his mother may join him. They meet the king, together.

In 1995 at the Tour de France, Lance learns through a painful loss what it takes to be ready to win the Tour De France. Lance is racing on the Motorola team. During the race that year, his teammate Fabio Casartelli is killed during a downhill stage. The loss deeply affects Lance, who wants to see the team quit the race. But Fabio's widow comes to talk to the team to tell them not to quit because that is not what Fabio would want. When it comes time for the stage at Limoges, a stage which Fabio had said he wanted to win, Lance knows he must win it for Fabio, and he does, easily. Lance shares how he felt Fabio with him at the finish line, and how it taught him what the race and life is really about, and that it made him the man he needs to be to finish the Tour.



Bad to Worse

Bad to Worse Summary and Analysis

Learning he has cancer teaches Lance about fear. In the past, he only thought he had things to fear. But now he has fear of cancer, fear of death. This is true fear. After learning he has cancer, Lance starts contacting friends and family. Lance cannot bring himself to tell his mother. His friend Rick Parker offers to do it. Of course his mother is upset, and she heads to Austin to be at her son's side for surgery. Friends from all over offer their support. Many even came to Austin to be by Lance's side.

On the morning of the surgery, Lance arrives at the hospital ready to undergo further tests to help them know exactly what they are up against. Lance still has hope they will tell him the diagnosis is wrong, but sadly, that does not happen. They proceed with the surgery. He learns he will start chemotherapy in a week, and that in the meantime he needs to bank as much sperm as he can in case his sterility is affected by the chemo. Before he can even start, they determine the cancer is spreading very quickly, and instead of waiting a week to start chemo, he would need start it much sooner. This means he only has one chance to bank sperm. When he does go to the bank and provides his sample, he learns his count is low, so it is likely he will become sterile.

It is time to hold a press conference to announce his cancer and let them know he will not be racing. His new team, Cofidis, is on the phone during the press conference and pledges their support to Lance during his treatment and recovery. Soon after the surgery, Lance receives notice that his insurance is denied. It turns out that although his contract with Cofidis had started, the cancer was considered pre-existing so the new insurance would not cover it. Because he is no longer with Motorola, that insurance is not available.

Lance receives another letter from a Dr Steven Wolf, who is not only an oncologist, but also a cycling fan. He offers encouragement to Lance in the letter as well as reminding him there are many treatment options, many of which might be more inclined to enable him to return to racing. After receiving the letter, Lance calls Dr. Wolf, who asks Lance about his test results and some of the high numbers in the results indicated the possibility of the cancer spreading to his brain. Lance's doctor was coming to the same conclusion and he did an MRI the next day. It turned out that things were going from bad to worse, as the cancer had spread to Lance's brain. The next step is for Lance to go to Houston and get start a new treatment plan. He would also expand the doctors that are involved in his case, experts from around the country would collaborate in order to give Lance the best chance of survival.

Lance shares that fear no longer became an option for him. He believed that "fear should not rule the heart". From that point on, he decides not to be afraid.



Conversations with Cancer

Conversations with Cancer Summary and Analysis

Lance describes how knowing cancer is growing in your brain makes it personal. So he got personal with it. He would speak to it and tell it how it picked the wrong person to attack. He vowed to defeat it. The next step in defeating the cancer is traveling to Houston to look into the next stage of treatment.

The meeting with the doctors in Houston is not as positive as Lance had hoped. The doctor present a very aggressive plan that the doctor describes as bringing Lance to the brink of death and then bringing him back to life. The doctor is not very optimistic Lance will ever ride again. In fact, he stresses that Lance will be very weak and struggle to walk. The doctor's attitude and treatment plan does not sit well with Lance or his mother. The doctor warns Lance that time is not on their side. They need to start treatment in just a couple days, so he has to decide that day. Lance asks to go to lunch to think about it. He will need to return in the afternoon to share his decision. During lunch, he contacts Dr. Wolf to get his opinion. Dr. Wolf feels strongly that Lance should go to Indiana University for a second opinion from Dr. Larry Einhorn, who had pioneered testicular cancer treatment. Lance feels he has nothing to lose in talking to the doctors in Indiana. He calls Dr. Nichols, who is in charge of the clinic while Dr. Einhorn is out of the country. They agree they should see Lance the next morning. Lance and his mother and some friends head to Indiana.

The treatment discussions are like night and day between Houston and Indianapolis. Dr. Nichols and Dr. Shapiro are realistic of the challenges ahead of them, but they are far more optimistic with the treatment options and recovery, especially in offering solutions that will provide the best chance for Lance to ride again. They discuss a stronger chemo protocol that would aggressively attack the cancer but that would not harm his body as adversely. Dr. Shapiro would also be the surgeon to remove the lesions on Lance's brain. The doctors all agree that the best course of treatment for the brain lesions is surgery.

After hearing all the doctors have to say, Lance asks for some time with his family and friends to decide between the two treatments that had been presented to him. Lance wants his family and friends to speak up and tell him what he should do. Instead they remain quiet, all wanting Lance to be the one to decide. It is clear which one made them feel better about treatment but which one would save his life. Finally, Lance speaks up and says he wants to do his treatment in Indiana. Immediately his mother and friends smile, relieved, as this is what they want for him.

A week later the surgery proves a success, as the doctors got the lesions out without complications. The biopsy of the lesions shows the tissue was dead and unlikely to have spread. It looks like they got it all. More good news comes when Lance learns his sponsors Nike, Giro, Oakley, and Milton-Bradley intended to keep him on board. They



each offer their support and keep plying him without asking when he would ride again. In addition, the CEO of Oakley even pressured their insurance company to provide insurance to Lance.

After the first week of chemo, Lance is feeling the effects, but the chemo is working. The blood tests show the cancer is responding to the treatment. The first cycle is rough on his body and he still has two more to go, but Lance remains optimistic that he is beginning to talk down the cancer.

Chemo

Chemo Summary and Analysis

As Lance describes his chemo treatments, he describes his life as one long IV drip. All of the focus of his healing revolves around the chemotherapy drug routines he must endure. But in order to kill the cancer, Lance's body must feel like it is dying. Making it through one cycle only gives a short sense of relief. Three more cycles for a total of four were required, and the effects on the body got worse with each one.

The treatment takes place in Indianapolis, and in between treatment cycles, Lance returns to his home in Austin. The traveling is hard on Lance as well. Dr. Nichols sees the difficulty associated with going back and forth and offers to coordinate with doctors in Austin to continue his treatment without having to travel. However, Lance is willing to travel in order to make sure the doctors can see how he responds to the treatment.

Lance's mother is not able to stay by his side during all of the chemo treatment. She needs to return back home to her job. In her place, Lance is kept company by his friend and cycling manager, Jim Ochowicz, whom he calls Och. Lance tells how chemotherapy can make you feel lonely. Och does his best to keep Lance company and tries to keep his spirits up and help him eat. Och travels from Wisconsin to Indiana whenever Lance is in town for treatment.

Lance's chemotherapy nurse, LaTrice, becomes his guardian angel and friend. She helps Lance understand the specifics of his treatment. Lance is full of questions and it helps him feel more in control the more he knows. Besides answering all the questions, LaTrice continues to remind Lance to keep well hydrated and other aspects of caring for himself that will help with his recovery. She also is there for Lance to talk to and confide in.

One day during Lance's third cycle of chemotherapy, Alain Bondue, the director of Cofidis cycling team, comes to visit Lance at the hospital. Lance is feeling very tired, weak, and ill and is not in any mood to talk to him. Mr Bondue tries to make it look like he is there to show support to Lance, but he asks to speak Bill Stapleton, Lance's manager, alone. Once alone, Mr. Bondue tells Bill that they do not want to fire Lance but they need to reduce what they are paying him since he is not able to ride. Bill cannot believe that while Lance is so sick and in the hospital they would bring this up. They argue, but make no progress. Finally, Bondue says that if they do not agree to the reduction in pay in a new contract, they will ask for an immediate medical examination that Lance is going to fail, and when he does it is within their right to terminate the contract all together. Mr. Bondue leaves and Bill must discuss the matter with Lance. Most upsetting is how publicly Cofidis has been pledging their support of Lance but behind the scenes they are trying to force him at his lowest moment to give into their pressure.



After weeks of trying to stall but with Cofidis continuing to pressure them, Lance and Bill finally agree they need to give into the revised lower paying contract. For Lance, he sees it as a message from Cofidis that they think he is going to die.

However, Lance is still beating the odds. While physically Lance is grower weaker, his body is actually fighting the cancer with success. The blood tests show the cancer markers dropping at such a fast rate the doctors are even surprised. Lance compares to getting the results at the end of each day to winning the yellow jersey at the end of each stage of the Tour de France.

During his off cycle time back in Austin, Lance would try and ride his bike. He was nowhere close to his racing condition. In fact, he shares how a middle-aged woman beat him up a small incline one day. But being able to be on the bike allows Lance the chance to feel freedom just like it did when he first began riding as a small boy. Through the struggle to ride again, Lance finds his love for riding. No matter how hard it is for him, he doesn't stop, he doesn't quit.

Once all four chemotherapy cycles are complete, Lance returns to Austin and sets his goals on returning to normal life. During his chemotherapy treatments, Lance has the realization he would like to start a cancer foundation of some type. He is not exactly sure what it will do but he knows it is something he is called to do. The first step is starting a charity bicycle race called Ride for the Roses. From there the specifics of the foundation would evolve. Lance knows he wants it to benefit research.

Even though the final tests he took before he left Indianapolis showed the cancer levels heading toward zero, the doctors want Lance to continue to be constantly monitored. Lance's cancer had been fast growing when it came on, and they worry it would be just as fast if it returned. So with each test, Lance waits to hear the day when his level is at zero. One day after Dr. Youman had given the results to Dr Nichols, they decide to have LaTrice call Lance with the news. The numbers are normal. The cancer is gone. Lance would not be completely out of the clear for a year, but for now he was back to normal.

Kik

Kik Summary and Analysis

A month after Lance finished chemotherapy he meets Kristen Richard, whom people call Kik. She works in advertising and public relations and comes to help with the Ride for the Roses race. It is not love at first sight; in fact, when she feels her client is not being treated fairly in the races publicity, she takes it out on one of the foundation staff, and Lance is not pleased. He calls her back and they argue. Finally she suggests they go out for a beer and try to resolve the argument. They enjoy each other's company and Lance asks her to become a part of the foundation meetings.

The foundation is growing and becoming a wonderful focus for Lance's time and energy. He meets Jeff Garvey, a Austin business man and amateur cyclist. Jeff is also someone who's life has been touched by cancer. Both his parents lost their lives to the disease. Jeff's passion for fighting cancer and his business sense make him the perfect candidate for CEO of the foundation.

Kik and Lance started spending more and more time together working on the foundation. Eventually it becomes more than just business, and each start noticing special things about the other. The first Ride for the Roses is very successful. Many famous cyclists attend the race, and people are making many generous donations. One donation means more than the others. Lance is signing autographs when a checkbook is placed in front of him, and a man's voice asks, "How much do you want?" It turns out it is Jim Hoyt, whom Lance has not seen since he took back the bike and the car years earlier. Lance apologizes and Jim accepts and then writes Lance a check for \$5,000, which is how much Lance had put in the Camero that Jim had repossessed. Jim becomes a recurring supporter of the the ride and the foundation, and once again a close friend to Lance.

The foundation and the ride touch the lives of many cancer patients and their families. One of them is Kelly Davidson, a little girl who has cancer and is a big fan of Lance's. She comes to the ride to get an autograph from Lance. His heart is so touched by her that Lance finds her and contacts her and they start a friendship.

Even though Lance is happy spending more and more time with Kik, he still lives fearful the cancer will return. Everyone is nervous. Lance is afraid to ride, and finally admits it. He worries that training will bring the cancer back. The recovery becomes tougher than chemo. It is even more out of Lance's control whether it comes back or when. He keeps telling everyone he is not going to ride again, that he is retired. The fear grows even stronger when his good friend Stacy Pounds is stricken with lung cancer. Sadly, hers is inoperable. All chemo can do is slow it down, it cannot be cured. She chooses not to continue chemo. As she is dying, her last desire is to see her son who is on a ship with the Navy. Every attempt to get him home fails, until Lance decides to call in a favor to a



general he knows. The general recently lost his wife to cancer and understood how important it is. Stacy's son Paul is able to see her before she dies.

Kik plans to go to Europe to visit a friend. Lance decides to go with her. It is his first time to enjoy Europe as a tourist and not a competing or training cyclist. It changes his life. He sees and feels things he has not felt before. That is where he and Kik admit they are falling in love. But it is also where Lance speaks to reporters at the Tour de France and says he is riding for recreation now and not competition. But everyone around him, including Kik, believes he could ride the tour again if he would get over his fear and commit to doing it. He keeps putting off the decision.

Finally he decides he is going to race again. But just when Lance starts to believe, Cofidis decides to take the option to dissolve Lance's contract. Bill, Lance's agent, counteroffers, and they finally agree to a very very low base salary. Bill hopes to get Lance an offer from another team, but the offers do not come. The offer from Cofidis is so low that Lance does not feel it would be worth risking his disability pay to take. He feels not racing at all and taking the five years disability pay is better than racing for someone who does not believe in you. Then Bill and Lance meet with Thom Weisel, the chief investor of the US Postal Team. They are able to agree to a contract for Lance to race with the US Postal team. The next step is for Lance to start training again, but first he has an important question to ask Kik. While on a romantic date with Kik at Lake Austin, he asked her to marry him, and she accepts. Kik moves with Lance to California so he can start his rigorous training, and after that it will be off to Europe for racing season.

On October 2, he passes his one year anniversary of learning he had cancer. Now it is time to move on with his life. Now he is considered a cancer survivor.



Survivorship

Survivorship Summary and Analysis

Lance finds being a cancer survivor is not easy. He struggles with his body not being what it was before the cancer. Even his comeback is not what he had envisioned. It is not a big sensational moment, it is not an instant win. In fact, in his first race back as a pro at Ruta del Sol, he finishes fourteenth. Although people are impressed, Lance feels empty and depressed. This is not the kind of racing he is used to. He is used to being a leader, a winner, not just a finisher. Plus, there is so much hype and press to his return that he feels distracted. For him it is about the ride. Each stage he finishes well, which should be considered an accomplishment for a cancer survivor, but Lance struggles to see that, he just feels a failure. Then in the next stage, he does something he has never done. He quits. The rain, the speed, the cold all get to him, breaking his spirit, and he pulls over and quits. In his mind he is not just quitting that stage or that race, he is quitting racing all together. He and Kik return to the States.

He wants to make his retirement official, but all his friends keep suggesting he take some time to think about it. Lance tries to convince all of them and himself that placing fourteenth in the Ruta del Sol is enough of a comeback. He would say that is all he wanted to come back to do. But then his agent, Bill, points out that the races Lance has done were low profile in Europe and no one in the US knows about them. Really, those races do not count as a comeback. Bill states, "you will be the guy who got cancer and never rode again". This gets Lance's attention and he responds, "we can't have that". Lance, however, is still not ready to commit. Now it was getting over quitting the race that Lance struggles with. He is not committed to doing anything. His friends and family are noticing. Finally, Kik, Bill, Chris, and Och work together to get Lance to commit to one more race before giving it all up. They suggest the US Pro Championships in Philadelphia. Lance still hesitates. Chris suggests taking Lance away from Austin to think. They go to Boone, North Carolina where Lance had raced as part of the Tour Du Pont.

Slowly, as Lance rides and trains in Boone, he starts to change back into the Lance everyone knew. Even riding in the wind, rain, and cold feels good to him. Chris asks him to ride Beech Mountain where Lance had won Tour Du Pont stages in the past. This is where it all changes for Lance. It becomes his comeback, his welcome home. There, at the top, washed out but still visible, is the message that had been written during a previous tour, "Viva Lance". Lance's body and mind change. Even Chris sees it from the follow up car and offers encouragement. Lance makes it to the top of the mountain. When Chris wants to load up the bike and drive down like they had planned, Lance says no, he wants to ride down. At dinner that night, they start planning his comeback.

A month later, Lance and Kik marry in Santa Barbara. Their honeymoon includes training rides for Lance. The next month Lance makes his official racing return at the US Pro Championships. His teammate, George Hincapie, wins it and Lance places fourth.



The next step is taking on Europe again. Kik and Lance returned to France and settle into a an apartment in Nice. Lance starts racing in the European racing circuit. This year he skips the Tour de France, which becomes a controversial Tour due to a doping scandal.

Two years after his diagnosis, Lance is racing well in Europe, and he and Kik decide to move into a house. It is a new start for them both personally and professionally. Even the director of the US Postal Team sees the bright future when he sends a note to Lance congratulating him on the racing accomplishments in Europe and telling him he is looking forward to seeing Lance on the Podium at the Tour de France next year. This helps Lance decide his new goal, to win the tour next year.

Lance and Kik have a new personal goal as well. They decide they are ready to have a baby. Because Lance was left sterile from chemotherapy, they would do in-vitro fertilization using the sperm he had frozen in San Antonio. Kik endures x-rays, shots, and blood draws to prepare for the in-vitro. Kik has to give herself some shots on her own, which is a challenge because she is afraid of needles. Making things even more challenging is Lance being on the rode racing during part of the process. Through it all they grow closer and hopeful. Then, after waiting two agonizing weeks following the in-vitro procedure, they receive the phone call, Kik is pregnant. Seeing the picture of the ultrasound of the baby gives Lance even more motivation to ride. He finally feels he has survived.

The Tour

The Tour Summary and Analysis

Lance becomes dedicated to training for the Tour de France. He has the support and confidence of many friends, family, and fellow cancer survivors. However, the start of the season leading to the Tour begins with Lance and a couple of crashes. His technique and confidence need some extra attention. Lance changes his focus from the classic races he has done in the past to putting everything into the Tour. Lance and the entire US Postal team focus on preparing for the Tour de France. The director of the team is Johan Bruyneel, and he knows what the team must do to prepare and win the Tour.

Maintaining the healthiest body whether by training or what he eats is Lance's main focus. Kik's focus is on having a healthy baby. Together each of them are filled with purpose and drive like never before. Cancer had changed more than just Lance's outlook on life, it changed his body too. The changes in body build and composition help Lance when it comes to tackling the mountains.

Soon the training runs would stop and the races leading up to the Tour de France begin. In the Amstel Gold Race, Lance goes head-to-head with the expected favorite for the Tour de France, Michael Boogerd. Lance loses to him by only a centimeter. Lance vows a rematch at the Tour in July. Lance keeps training and training hard. With each training run, his times are getting faster and faster. His friends are believing he can win the Tour de France, and they start telling everyone.

When the Tour begins, the US Postal team is not among the talked about favorites. But when Michael Indurain, former Tour champion, is asked who will win, he responds, Lance Armstrong. The first stage of the race is a time trial where each rider races by himself against the clock. The route for this stage is expected to take everyone less than nine minutes. The individual riders start three minutes apart. Two of the favorites to win, Abraham Olano and Alexander Zulle, put in times of 8:11 and 8:07 respectively. But Lance surprises everyone, even himself when he puts up a time of 8:02 and wears the yellow jersey for the first time. For Lance, the stage win, wearing the yellow jersey, talking to his wife, are all wonderful highlights of the day, but he also feels good going past the Cofidis team, the team who lost faith in him, wearing the yellow jersey.

The next stage of the Tour is on July 4, when Lance realizes he is the first American, riding for an American team, riding an American bike, to lead the Tour de France. He feels the pressure but puts it aside to focus on his goals. It is not all easy going. There are wrecks and pileups to avoid. The US Postal team works hard to stay out of the pileups and near the front. Then ten days go by and it is time for another time trial. Kik comes to watch the time trial. Again Olano starts out before Lance. At the third checkpoint, Lance is ahead of Zulle by 1:45. Just ahead, Lance is catching up with Olano, who has never been caught in a time trial. Lance passes him and sets his sights



on the next rider, who is from team Cofidis, Bobby Julich. Before Lance passes him, he crashes. Lance must swerve to miss a small child who runs out into the road. In the end, Lance blows everyone away and wins the stage. It is really looking possible for him to win.

With each stage, Lance is gaining more and more of a lead. He has the support of his team and they are all racing well. However, with each stage he is also getting some negative attention, from the French press especially. They start writing and saying all sorts of things about Lance and insinuating he is using performance enhancing drugs. Of course there is no proof of it and Lance passes every mandatory drug test.

Lance's mother comes to watch the last time trial. She rides in the team car. It makes her nervous but she feels being closer to Lance can help ensure Lance will not crash. If he kept enough of a lead after this time trial, he could be far enough ahead in the overall standings to be a guaranteed winner going into the last stage in Paris. Lance wins the stage and the next closest racer in the overall standing is Zulle, who is behind him 7:37 seconds. Lance wins the Tour. There is no way Zulle could make up that amount of time.

Lance's mother shares with Lance that back in the States people have been following the Tour and his lead is causing a frenzy. Lance cannot seem to comprehend it. Even when American reporters come to talk to him about the following he is getting in the States, it still does not sink in for Lance. During the final stage, it all starts to come together. There are spectators along the route holding up Texas signs. There are American flags and Texas State flags. After the final crossing of the finish line, Lance sees dozens of his friends and family from the States. As he does his ceremonial victory lap, and someone gives him an American flag to carry. He did it—Lance wins the Tour de France.

The Cereal Box

The Cereal Box Summary and Analysis

Lance starts this chapter sharing if he is was asked to choose between cancer and winning the Tour he would choose cancer. This seems strange to hear, especially for those who just read about the struggles in the fight against cancer and the near death experience with it. But it becomes obvious that the fight against the cancer is what makes Lance who he is now.

It is still hard for Lance to comprehend his popularity in the States since the win. Nike flies him back to the States for the day so he can do some American press and return to Europe to finish the traditional post race obligations. Lance is surprised to see the size of the crowds at the press events. It is hard to believe that he went from being the racer no one wanted on their team to the winner everyone wants to see. But while the world is focused on Lance, Kik and Lance are focused on the upcoming birth of their baby.

Two weeks from the due date, Lance has a speaking engagement in Las Vegas. While away, Lance constantly checks in with Kik. She shares she is feeling strange and sweating. On the trip home, while on a layover in Dallas, Lance calls Kik. She is having contractions. Lance cannot believe it at first and teases her. But she is not laughing. Bill Stapleton, who is traveling with Lance, advises Lance to call home again to check on her. She tells him she thinks she is having the baby that night. When the plane lands, Lance calls her again and she tells him to get to the hospital right away. Lance David Armstrong is born that night.

Lance observes how children are naturally brave. They have determination and do not think about failure. As a result, they have higher cure rate from cancer and other ailments. They have a resiliency. They also never lose the beauty of being a child. Lance observes this firsthand during a press conference at a children's cancer ward. It is for the unveiling of Lance's Wheaties cereal box. A small boy approaches Lance holding the cereal box and asks if he can have it. Lance says yes. The little boy asks if the cereal is in shapes. Lance says yes. The little boy says cool. To the little boy it is about the cereal—not the cancer, not the win—just the cereal.

Lance asks Dr. Nichols one day just how bad his odds had been with the cancer. The doctor finally admits they had been close to three percent survival. Lance had truly beaten the odds. The what if's flooded Lance's mind. But in the end he realizes that the suffering and the risks are there to help improve the person you are. Cancer does not mean death, it can mean a redefinition of life. A second chance at life is what Lance sees every time he looks at his son.



Encore

Encore Summary and Analysis

For Lance, each time he wins the Tour de France, its another year cancer free. The pain he eagerly endures is part of the test of his human spirit, showing him how much can he endure, how much can he push himself. As much as Lance pushes himself to win the Tour de France the first time, he is even more determined and driven to win a second time. It is not about the comeback anymore, it is about continuing to strive and succeed as a cancer survivor.

But in the cycling world, he is still a long shot. There is talk about who had not been in the Tour to challenge Lance last year, but would be there this year. They do not pick Lance as the favorite pre-race. Lance is used to being considered the long shot. He is used to people questioning if he can do it, but most important he is used to proving them wrong.

Lance starts training in the Pyrenees in May. It is a hot day when he goes on a training ride on one of the most difficult ascents. Lance removes his helmet in the heat. On the ascent down, Lance's bike hits a rock and blows a tire. It is a fluke accident, but it is all about the timing. He had not put back on his helmet. He files off the bike and hits a wall, headfirst. But in another matter of timing, a couple is having lunch near the same spot and both of them happened to be doctors. They immediately start to work on Lance. Johan, who is following in the training car, calls for an ambulance. Lance spends a night in the hospital and then returns home to Kik in Nice to recuperate for the next month. He returns to the same hill to try again. This time it is very cold. He rides the hill but feels he still does not have it down. It is a four hour ride and Lance does it again. This time he feels he conquered it.

The Tour de France begins. There are crashes and near misses, and sadly on the first stage, Lance does not keep the yellow jersey. It goes to his good friend David Miller from Scotland. Even more near misses take place when the entire US Postal team is nearly hit by a French camera crew car. Then there is a team challenge. This requires the entire team to cross together or there are time penalties that can impact individual overall times and affect the lead. US Postal is able to come through together because of some great skill and riding at the very end when the get slightly separated. Even though they were second on the team trial, the fact they came through together is what mattered. Zulle and Escartin both lost time in their overall standings because their team did not cross together.

When the mountain stages begin, Lance is where he wants to be in the standings but is surprised by a rider named Javier Otxoa, who has been attacking Lance on the stages. When they get to the stage with the highest ascent that Lance had practiced twice in one day, Otxoa continues the attack. Lance comes up just short of beating him in the



stage, losing by forty-one seconds, but in the overall standings he takes the yellow jersey.

Other stages wins are elusive and Lance has to fight to maintain his overall lead. He struggles on one massive hill, fighting hunger and fatigue. He manages not to give up much in the overall time. It does show Lance he needs to listen to his body and not just the will of his mind. Coming into the final time trial, Lance has still not won a stage at this Tour. His greatest competition on this stage is Ulrich, who is from one of the towns the stage passes through. He will have the crowd behind him. Lance focuses and endures and wins the stage by twenty-five seconds. Going into the next and longest stage, Lance has confidence and feels the win is within his reach. The team succeeds through the stage and gets ready for the ceremonial final stage in Paris, where Kik and Luke will be waiting to celebrate with him. For Lance's victory lap in Paris, he would carry Luke on his shoulders. Lance does it. He won the Tour de France for a second consecutive year.

Cancer is no longer the focus of the press regarding Lance. It has, however, played an important role. It showed Lance how to fight, and how to truly survive. It helped him deal with emotions, and sometimes how to deal with losing. When it comes time for the Olympics in Sydney, Lance hopes to win the gold medal. A short time before the Olympics, Lance is out on a training run near Nice with some fellow cyclists. They are on a road chosen specifically because it has little to no traffic. Yet again, timing comes into play. Coming out of a curve, Lance hits an oncoming car headfirst. The crash sounds deadly and looks just as bad. Lance flies over the car. Kik comes to pick them up and everything seems fine. But the next day Lance cannot move his head and is in extreme pain. A trip to the hospital reveals a fracture in his vertebrae. Lance listens to doctors and rests to heal, but he is still determined to get a gold medal. In the end, Lance does not get the gold he desires. He does, however, get a bronze.

Lance celebrates his four year anniversary of the cancer diagnosis. He and Kik call the day Carpe Diem Day, to remind themselves to always seize whatever opportunity each day has to offer.



Characters

Lance Armstrong

Lance Armstrong is born in Texas. He starts his athletic career running, then swimming and then cycling. He wins the first triathlon he enters. As a teen, he defeats many elite adult racers in triathlons. He starts focusing on cycling-only races and gets the attention of the US Cycling Federation. He races for the US Cycling team and the Subaru-Montgomery racing teams. Lance becomes the first American to win the Settimana Bergamasca Race.

Lance gets high profile endorsements from companies like Nike and Oakley. He later rides for the Motorola Racing Team. He has just switched to the Cofidis Racing team when he gets diagnosed with stage 3 testicular cancer, which has spread to his brain and lungs. He undergoes brain surgery and four rounds of chemotherapy at Indiana University in Indianapolis. By the end of his treatment, his body is weak but he has beaten the cancer.

Lance returns to Austin and starts a cancer foundation. He establishes a Ride for the Roses charity bike race. During this he meets Kristen (Kik) Richard, whom he later marries. They have a son named Luke via in-vitro fertilization, using sperm Lance froze prior to chemotherapy.

After his battle with cancer, Lance eventually returns to racing, but Cofidis has expressed doubt in his ability so he ends up riding for the US Postal Cycle Team. In 1999 and 2000, while riding with the US Postal team Lance wins the Tour de France.

Kristen (Kik) Richard Armstrong

Kristen (Kik) Richard is a public relations representative in Austin, Texas when she first meets Lance Armstrong. She represents a high profile client who is helping sponsor the Ride for the Roses charity bike ride. After Kik gets into an argument over the phone with a staff member of Lance's foundation, Lance calls her and they argue. But Kik suggests they try and work things out over a beer. After they meet, they work out the issues and she begins to attend the foundation meetings at Lance's house.

Both Lance and Kik are dating other people when they first meet. Later, however, both of them find themselves single at the same time and begin to date. Kik plans a trip to Europe to visit a friend. Lance is going over at the same time to watch the Tour de France. They decide to travel together and realize on the trip that they are in love.

Kik accepts Lance's marriage proposal at Lake Austin. They begin planning a wedding and living in France. They marry in Santa Barbara but then return to France for Lance to train. Kik is supportive of his training and takes care of things on the home front when they move from an apartment into a house in Nice, France.



Kik also rises to the challenge when they decide to have a baby via in-vitro fertilization using Lance's sperm he froze prior to chemotherapy. Despite her fear of needles, Kik undergoes painful blood tests and even learns to give herself shots as part of the process. The treatment is successful, and in 1999 she gives birth to a son named Luke.

Linda Mooneyham

Linda Mooneyham is Lance's mother. She had Lance when she is seventeen. She worked two jobs to make ends meet. She drives training routes for Lance to determine how many miles they are. She comes to support Lance during his chemotherapy treatment. She is also with him when he wins the Tour de France.

Bill Stapleton

Bill Stapleton is Lance's agent and friend who lives in Austin with his wife Laura. He supports Lance through his cancer treatment and winning of the Tour de France.

Dr. Jim Reeves

Dr. Jim Reeves is a well-know urologist in Austin who starts the tests and treatment of Lance's symptoms that turn out to be cancer.

Dr. Rick Parker

Dr. Rick Parker is a neighbor of Lance's and his personal physician in Austin.

Jim Hoyt

Jim Hoyt is the owner of a bike shop in Richardson, Texas where Lance gets his first bike. He becomes a good friend to Lance and helps him get started in racing as a teen. They have a falling out, but work things out. He is there when Lance wins the Tour de France.

Terry Armstrong

Terry Armstrong is Lance's stepfather who adopts Lance as a small boy. He paddles Lance often, and Lance learns later about him having an affair on his mother.

Chris MacCurdy

Chris MacCurdy is Lance's swim coach who helps Lance improve dramatically as a swimmer.



Chris Carmichael

Chris Carmichael is director of the US National Cycling team, and is who recruits Lance for the team and becomes a good friend, supporting him during his cancer and his Tour de France wins.

Jim Ochowicz

Jim Ochowicz is the director of the cycling team sponsored by Motorola. Lance calls him Och. He becomes a good friend to Lance and is with him throughout his cancer treatment and Tour de France win.

Dr. Dudley Youman

Dr. Dudley Youman is an oncologist in Austin.

Dr. Steven Wolff

Dr. Steven Wolff is an oncologist and cycling fan who puts Lance in touch with Dr. Einhorn and Dr. Nichols, both of whom help treat his cancer.

Dr. Lawrence Einhorn

Dr. Lawrence Einhorn is an oncologist at Indiana University who discovered using platinum as a successful treatment of testicular cancer.

Dr. Craig Nichols

Dr. Craig Nichols is the chief associate of Dr Einhorn in Indianapolis, and he leads the treatment of Lance's cancer.

Dr. Scott Shapiro

Dr. Scott Shapiro is a neurosurgeon at Indiana University who performs the surgery to remove the lesions on Lance's brain.

LaTrice Haney

LaTrice Haney is the chief oncology nurse when Lance undergoes chemotherapy.



Alain Bondue

Alain Bondue is the director of the Cofidis racing team.

Jeff Garvey

Jeff Garvey is a friend of Lance's, and an Austin business man who becomes CEO of Lance's cancer foundation.

Stacy Pounds

Stacy Pounds is Bill Stapleton's assistant and a friend of Lance's who succumbs quickly to inoperable lung cancer.

Thomas Weisel

Thomas (Thom) Weisel is the chief investor in the US Postal Cycling Team, and is who approves the terms of Lance's contract.

Fabio Casartelli

Fabio Casartelli is an Olympic champion cyclist and teammate of Lance's on Motorola who dies on a stage in the Tour de France.

Mike Parnell

Mike Parnell is the CEO of Oakley, one of Lance's sponsors who fights hard to successfully get Lance covered by his company's health insurance.



Objects/Places

Tour de France

Tour de France is the top road cycling race in the world that takes place throughout France and bordering countries every July.

Yellow Jersey

The yellow jersey is what the leading rider in the Tour de France wears.

Richardson Texas

Richardson Texas is where Lance lives growing up.

Plano Texas

Plano Texas is where Lance lives in his teen years and goes to high school.

Ironkids

Ironkids is the triathlon Lance enters and wins.

Moriarity New Mexico

Moriarity New Mexico is where Lance enters a time trial and gets noticed by the US Cycling Federation.

Moscow

Moscow is where Lance is invited to race with the US Cycling team at the Junior World Championship during his senior year of high school.

Toro de Texas

Toro de Texas is the nickname given to Lance by the press in Spain.



Indianapolis Indiana

Indianapolis, Indiana is where Indiana University is located and where Lance received cancer treatment and underwent brain surgery.

October 25th

October 25th is a date Lance will always remember, as it is the date of his brain surgery.

Cofidis Racing Team

Cofidis Racing Team is the racing team Lance had just joined when he is diagnosed with cancer. At first they pledge their support but later they will threaten to opt out of his contract.

Ride for the Roses

Ride for the Roses is the charity bike ride that Lance's cancer foundation establishes.

Lake Austin

Lake Austin is where Lance proposes to Kik.

Cap Ferret

Cap Ferret is in France and where Kik and Lance rent their first apartment.

Beech Mountain

Beech Mountain in North Carolina is where Lance goes to ride when he has the realization that he does want to compete and does not want to retire after seeing a faded message, Viva Lance.

Nice France

Nice France is where Kik and Lance buy a house.

Champs-Elysees

Champs-Elysees in France is where the Tour de France always ends and the winner takes their victory lap.



Themes

Cancer Survival

Cancer survival is a main theme throughout the book. Lance has a goal from the minute he is diagnosed that he will beat the disease, even if it is against all odds. One learns late in the book that Lance had very low odds of survival. The description of survival in the book is that it is something one actively takes on. One cannot just sit back waiting for it to happen, but must believe it, whole mind and heart.

It becomes clear that survival is not something that one achieves and then are done. It is a process which Lance lays out very clearly, but he also shows that it is not easy. One's mind can fight being the survivor. There can be guilt, uncertainty, and fear all along the way. It really is not something one can achieve, it really is a journey.

The survival of cancer is something that stays with you forever, however. It changes one's life and how one lives it, how one sees it, and how one enjoys it. It is also something that bonds one forever to other survivors and those affected by the disease in any way. The changes left after cancer are beyond any scars that treatment leaves, a whole life is transformed. It is up to each individual what they do with their new changed life. In the case of Lance Armstrong, it is clear he uses surviving cancer to make him a better person and live life to its fullest, rising and conquering every challenge put before him.

Overcoming Obstacles

Lance Armstrong shows many examples of conquering mountains and the elements in his racing. He also shows how the same skills and determination and mindset can allow a person to overcome any obstacle. There are so many times, starting with his childhood, actually even his birth, where he is going against the odds. When the obstacles come to Lance, he does not run from them or avoid them—he tackles them head-on, often against unbeatable odds and popular opinion.

Even with his treatment, Lance spoke with one doctor that felt if Lance got treatment in Indianapolis that he would end up needing additional treatment when it fails. But again, Lance overcame the doubt and naysayers and survived the treatment in Indianapolis.

Then Lance's racing team Cofidis lost confidence in him and voiced it loudly. But this did not prompt Lance to give up or accept their lack of faith. It prompted him to work hard and use it as an obstacle to overcome and propel him to success. Even when he finally makes a run at winning the Tour de France, very few people outside of his family and friends believe he has a chance. But he proves them all wrong and wins it against the odds.



Unconditional Love

It may seem strange to have a theme of unconditional love in a book written by a man who made his mark in sports. But there are so many examples of unconditional love throughout the book it is an undeniable theme.

Lance's mother shows so much unconditional love for her son, especially in his early years when they have next to nothing, and what they do have she is working day and night to achieve. No matter how long she has worked or how tired she is, she is ready to offer love and support to Lance and whatever she can do to support his racing. When he is diagnosed with cancer she is right there, through all the ugliness and pain, by his side. She is his advocate, his champion. She puts her life on hold as long as possible to support him through his darkest times.

So many of Lance's friends show unconditional love as they sit by his side, supporting him through his chemotherapy treatment. These are men supporting another man in a way they have probably never been asked to do. Chemotherapy and its effects are not pretty, and Lance's friends look beyond all that and focus on making sure he survives and is as comfortable as he can be along the way.

Lance shows unconditional love as well. He establishes the foundation and turns his own struggles into something he can do to give to others he knows are suffering as well. Lance takes on caring for his friend Stacy when she is suffering with cancer and acts as her advocate much like his mother did for him. He uses his personal contacts to help her see her son before she dies.

Cancer is one of the ugliest and most feared diseases, but this story shows how, even through something so ugly and devastating, love and beauty can rise.

Style

Perspective

The book is written in the first person perspective of the author, Lance Armstrong. His expertise in cycling provides both insight and accuracy on the topic. While his knowledge could make the discussion very technical, the author presents the information in a way the average reader can understand and enjoy.

The author is willing to share very intimate topics and events and provide details that only he could reveal. It gives the book honesty and integrity. The stories are not overtold; they provide just the right level of detail and therefore do not come off boastful nor seeking pity. As a member of the cycling community, Lance presents a very accurate description of the cycling events, but he also presents them accurately, sharing the good and the bad points.

The topics chosen for discussion are well selected. They hold the reader's interest and maintain a pace that does not cause boredom. There are not too many subplots to cause confusion with the reader. Each topic is well written from beginning to end, and presented in a manner in which they are understood. There are no unnecessary details provided. Each story or event has a purpose and fits into the entire story goals.

Tone

The tone of the book is motivational. The author presents his struggles and challenges with honesty and emotion. He emphasizes not just the challenge, but the outcome as well. The author places focus on the positive outcomes that come from even the hardest of trials.

By always balancing the positive with the challenges, it keeps the tone upbeat and motivating rather than depressing. There is honest portrayal of the low points, but all of them are there for a purpose, and the author successfully shows how they serve a purpose for the greater good. Nothing is included as gratuitous, it all serves a purpose to come together to motivate and offer support to readers facing similar challenges.

Structure

The structure of the book is chapter format. There are eleven chapters. Each chapter has a title, some of the titles are not as obvious where they relate in the chapter until the end of the chapter. There is no foreword or introduction. The last chapter reads like it might have been added at a later date. It feels a little different in structure and style from the others.



There is a section of black and white pictures provided that encompasses many of the events and people discussed in the book. Some chapters are longer than others and could easily have been made into more than one chapter. For the most part, the chapters are written chronologically. The first chapter starts with the diagnosis of cancer and then the next chapter gives early information on Lance's life, but the rest of the book is mostly chronological.



Quotes

"A slow death is not for me. I don't do anything slow, not even breathe." Chap. 1, p. 1

"Make every obstacle an opportunity." Chap. 2, p. 16

"Make every negative into a positive." Chap. 2, p. 21

"There are moments when you can use your energy to your benefit and there are moments when you use it to no avail. That's a waste." Chap. 3, p. 56

"I thought I knew what fear was until I heard the words You have cancer." Chap. 4, p. 70

"Winning my life back would be the biggest victory." Chap. 4, p. 86

"Because as good as you are at cycling, I'm a lot better at brain surgery." Chap. 5, p. 106

"At least I was beginning to talk this thing down to size." Chap. 5, p. 125

"The question was which would the chemo kill first, the cancer or me?" Chap. 6, p. 126

"The irony was, the worse I felt, the better I got. That was the chemo for you." Chap. 6, p. 140

"You know I would rather have one year of wonderful than seventy years of mediocre." Chap. 7, p. 180

"Lance's whole life has been against all odds." Chap. 9, p. 257

"The truth is if you asked me to choose between winning the Tour de France and cancer, I would choose cancer." Chap. 10, p. 259

"I am very firm in my belief that cancer is not a form of death. I choose to redefine it: it is part of life." Chap. 10, p. 267

"Pain is temporary." Chap. 11, p. 269



Topics for Discussion

In the beginning, Lance ignores the symptoms that turn out to be cancer. Do you think it is human nature to ignore symptoms? Is it out of fear? Pride? Denial? Or is it just that his drive to win is greater than anything else so he easily ignores it?

Lance is able to tell many friends about his cancer. Why does he ask someone else to tell his mother? Do you think this is a normal response? Would you respond the same or different?

Do you think Lance's ability to fight the cancer successfully is due to his cycling training or his personality? Would someone else be able to fight it the same way?

It seems like it was easier for Lance to fight the cancer than survive it. He handled the treatment better than the remission. Do you think this is normal? Why do you think the remission was so hard for him?

In the beginning, Cofidis racing pledged their support for Lance. But later they threatened to revoke his contract and eventually cut back how much they would pay him. Do you agree with how they handled it? Should a business be expected to pay someone for not working? Or, should the reason for his not being able to perform be considered?

The French press seems to have it in for Lance. Do you think it is because they really believe there is truth to drug allegations? Were they just trying to sell papers? Or, were they upset because an American was winning their race?

Lance starts a cancer foundation. Do you think this is part of his way of coping with his near death experience? Do you think it helped him feel in control? Do you think it helps him feel like he is doing something to help others control the uncontrollable?