

A Guide for Reading

Lessons of the Game

by
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Student teacher Kaylene Morales has a surprise reunion with Alex Garrison, a fellow instructor. While becoming immersed in enjoyable scenes, readers find themselves pondering dilemmas: the conflicts between athletic and academic demands and between professional duties and personal aspirations.

Critics' Praise

Named to the New York Public Library's 2000 Books for the Teen Age

"The Hispanic setting and characters help fill a void in YA romance." —*Booklist*

For writing or class discussion:

1. What lessons do people learn as players of any game?
2. Make a list of lessons you have learned from a game.
3. Make a list of lessons you have learned from working at a job.

Chapter One

1. What impressions of Kaylene's personality do readers gather after reading chapter one?
2. What impressions of Alex's personality do readers gather after reading chapter one?
3. What lessons has Kaylene learned by the end of chapter one?
4. The story is told from two viewpoints. What are the advantages and disadvantages in revealing the actions and attitudes of two main characters?

Chapter Two

1. What facts about coaching football in Texas are presented in this chapter?
2. Why do both Alex and Kaylene fight their attractions to each other?
3. What are the risks in a relationship such as theirs?

Chapter Three

1. What mixed signals are Kaylene and Alex sending to each other?
2. What impression is Kaylene trying to make on her first day teaching? Is she successful?

Chapter Four

1. What are some of the drawbacks in the careers that Kaylene and Alex have chosen? What are some of the rewards of these careers?
2. By chapter four, what subtle changes have occurred in Kaylene and Alex's relationship? What is the cause of these changes?

Chapter Five

1. How does Ralph Hernandez use his discovery about Kaylene to his advantage?
2. Discuss Kaylene=s various strategies in dealing with Ralph and his friends in the classroom.
3. What changes occur once Mrs. Dunn leaves Kaylene on her own with the students?
4. Mrs. Dunn comments that Kaylene Athinks like a college student, not like a freshman.@ Do you agree with her?
5. Discuss the one-on-one talk that Ralph and Kaylene share. What are your thoughts about Kaylene=s opinions on profanity, classroom behavior, and grades?
6. Why is Kaylene=s embarrassing mistake in sixth period so enlightening for her?
7. By the end of chapter five, what lessons from the school zone has Kaylene learned?

Chapter Six

1. How are professional responsibilities beginning to influence Alex and Kaylene=s personal relationship?
2. Do you feel that Kaylene is inexperienced or stubbornly ignoring the connection between their jobs?
3. What is the basis for Alex and Kaylene=s argument at the end of chapter six?

Chapter Seven

1. How has Ralph=s character emerged as an important influence on Kaylene and Alex=s relationship?
2. Discuss the approaches both Kaylene and Alex used in dealing with Ralph.
3. Why is Alex so surprised by his reaction in the locker room?
4. What changes have you noticed in Kaylene=s style of teaching and learning since the start of her student teaching?

Chapter Eight

1. What are some new tensions surfacing in the relationship between Kaylene and Alex?
2. Based on what you know about Kaylene and Alex, how will they handle their new tensions?

Chapter Nine

1. What are your perceptions of the coaches= wives in this chapter? Are their complaints justified? Defend your position using specific examples from the text.
2. What are your perceptions of Kaylene=s reaction and subsequent emotional outburst?
3. Is Kaylene being selfish or unreasonable, or is she naive?
4. Why does Alex give Kaylene time to think about their relationship without pressuring her?

Chapter Ten

1. What are Kaylene=s motives in helping Ralph?
2. Why does Alex want to give Ralph another chance as an athlete?
3. If you were Mr. Zachary or Mrs. Dunn and had to evaluate Kaylene=s teaching methods, what would you say about her. Be specific and use examples from the text to support this evaluation.
4. Why are Mrs. Dunn=s insights about the coaching career so crucial?
5. Why do you think Kaylene couldn=t move past Aher own selfish needs@?
6. Has your opinion about a career as a football coach in Texas changed since the early chapters? What about your opinion about a career as a teacher?

Chapter Eleven

1. What gives Kaylene the courage to take another chance on her relationship with Alex?

2. Make a list of important insights that have made the difference in her perspective.
3. What has Alex learned about relationships since chapter one?
4. Based on the personalities of the characters and their actions in the story, predict what *sacrifices* will each one need to make in order for this relationship to succeed.

For writing or class discussion:

List the similarities and differences between a game of high school football and a loving relationship between two people.

Make a list of the *lessons* that Kaylene and Alex learn about love, work, and life in general.

Research some of the daily challenges in a career of your choice. Use the research to develop a fictional short story or narrative poem about that career.