



# The BOYS in the BOAT



This study guide is a tool to help you organize your thoughts while reading and provide notes for studying; however, it is not intended to inform you of possible test questions. The study guide will not be reviewed or discussed in class. Reviewing the study guide alone will not insure an adequate grade on summer reading assessments. You should use active reading strategies including **making notes in the margin with predictions or questions, highlighting character descriptions, and summarizing the main events of each chapter.**

**Identify the following characters as you read:**

**Joe Rantz  
Joyce Simdar  
Harry Rantz  
Nellie Rantz  
Fred; Harry, Jr.; Michael; Rose; Polly  
Thula LaFollette Rantz  
Al Ulbrickson  
George Yeoman Pocock  
Tom Bolles  
Ky Ebright  
Royal Brougham**

The crew members who competed in the Olympics with Joe:

**Bobby Mock (coxswain), Don Hume, Shorty Hunt, Roger Morris, Stub McMillin, Johnny White, Gordy Adam, and Chuck Day**

## PROLOGUE

What is the deeper meaning of “the boat” to Joe Rantz, and why is this significant to learn about in the Prologue?

## PART ONE



### **“What Seasons They Have Been Through”**

1. How was the Great Depression affecting life in the United States in 1933?
2. What is happening in Germany at this time?
3. What single event most greatly shapes Joe's childhood?
4. Before his mother dies, what has life been like for Joe Rantz?
5. Which words describe Joe's stepmother Thula, as portrayed in the book?
6. What event causes another major change in Joe's life and what item does his father risk his life to save?
7. According to chapter four, Harry teaches his son Joe what lesson? Where is Joe exiled to that his father sets up with the schoolteacher in Boulder City?
8. What ends Joe's schoolhouse exile?
9. What is the house in Sequim like where Joe's family moves?
10. What leads to Joe's abandonment by his father in Part I?
11. How did Joe use his ingenuity to survive?
12. How is George Pocock's childhood described in Part I and how does he become associated with the University of Washington?

### **PART TWO**



### **“Resiliency”**

1. What history does Coach Bolles have with the University of California at Berkeley crew?
2. What is Ky Ebright's relationship to the University of Washington?
3. How is Joseph Goebbel's rise to prominence described?
4. What frustrations does Coach Bolles face with the freshman crew after their return from the California regatta?
5. How does the author describe the East-West Coast rivalry?
6. How is the theme of “finding value in the discarded” illustrated by the author?
7. Why do you think Thula Rantz repeatedly rejected Joe as part of her family?
8. What is Joe's reasons he gives Joyce when asked about his feelings surrounding his family?

### **PART THREE**



## **“The Parts That Really Matter”**

1. What frustrations does Coach Al Ulbrickson face as the crews prepares for Poughkeepsie?
2. What is the meeting like between Joe and his father?
3. Discuss three “fundamental paradoxes” in rowing.
4. How does the author describe the regatta at Poughkeepsie in 1935?
5. What position does Joe Rantz take at the Grand Coulee Dam site after his sophomore year?
6. What are the Nuremberg Laws that Hitler enacts in 1935? How do these laws define German Citizenship? What conflicts arise in the U.S. regarding Germany hosting the 1936 Summer Olympics?

### **PART FOUR**



### **“Touching the Divine”**

1. What advice does George Pocock give to Joe during the Olympic training session?
2. Why is the 1936 regatta against the University of California at Berkeley significant for Joe Rantz?
3. How does Al Ulbrickson differ from George Pocock in how he addresses the University of Washington crew during the Olympic training session in 1936?
4. How does the University of Washington crew feel as they prepare to depart for the regatta in Poughkeepsie? How is the crew’s performance there?
5. What does Bobby Moch’s father warn him of when he knows that Bobby would be going to Berlin for the 1936 Olympics?
6. Which ship takes the crew to the Olympics, and how do they spend their time while crossing the Atlantic?
7. How does the author describe the whitewashing that takes place in Berlin prior to the 1936 Summer Olympics?
8. Why is Al Ulbrickson concerned about Don Hume and his performance as the University of Washington crew train in Germany?
9. What are the concerns about the regatta course?
10. What last-minute decision does Al Ulbrickson make regarding his crew as they set out for their final race in the 1936 Olympic games? How does the crew respond?
11. How does Adolf Hitler react to the outcome of the men’s eights rowing event at the Olympics?
12. What life lessons does Joe Rantz learn after winning the race?
13. How does this Olympic victory impact Seattle, Depression-era America, and Hitler’s Aryan mythos?