

***But What If We're Wrong?:***  
***Chapter Synopses and Guidelines for Summer Reading***  
Theory of Knowledge  
St. Edward High School  
2023-24

**YOUR TEACHERS' GOAL IS...**

to help you choose the two (2) chapters (aside from the opening essay, "A Brief Examination...", which everyone is required to read) that might make your TOK summer reading as meaningful and enjoyable as possible.

**YOUR GOAL IS...**

to read "A Brief Examination..." as well as the two chapters of your choosing, and then picking one of those three as the focal point for your 300 word written response. Please note that any use of ChatGPT or other AI resources is strictly prohibited for this assignment; we want to see how these readings are impacting and changing your thinking, not a computer's. In the Knowledge and Technology portion of TOK, we may experiment / use artificial intelligence to explore how it impacts our acquisition of knowledge, but it's important that this first assignment be 100% driven by you, your interests and your developing mind.

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**A Brief Examination...**

*This is, essentially, the thesis statement for the book: What if we're wrong about the facts, ideas and theories that make up our understanding of reality itself?*

**A Quaint and Curious Volume of (Destined to be) Forgotten Lore**

*What makes a book (or any piece of writing) have lasting value?*

**But That's The Way I Like It, Baby. I Don't Want To Live Forever**

*What exactly defines "rock and roll", and in the distant future, what band(s) will people point to as the very essence of rock and roll?*

**"Merit"**

*n/a (This chapter can be read for your own enrichment, but will not be counted among the chapters you can read for credit)*

**Burn Thy Witches**

*What if we're really wrong about something really big? Is every generation simply correcting the mistakes of the past generation, while being unaware of its own major blindspots and mistakes?*

**The World That Is Not There**

*What do we actually know about human history that hasn't simply been told to us by someone else...and why does that matter?*

**Don't Tell Me What Happens. I'm Recording It.**

*Once a new form of entertainment replaces television (or tv shows as we know them), what shows will have a lasting influence and importance for future generations?*

**Sudden Death (Over Time)**

*Is a world without sports possible? Is it actually inevitable? How and why might that impact our lives?*

**The Case Against Freedom**

*Will the America we know survive?*

**But What If We're Right?**

*Is it possible we're close to the end of any "new knowledge"? Is there an end to what can be discovered?*

**Only The Penitent Man Shall Pass**

*"We spend our lives learning many things, only to discover (again and again) that most of what we've learned is either wrong or irrelevant" (248). What can we do with that knowledge?*

## **SAMPLE RESPONSE**

Chapter selected: "Sudden Death (Over Time)"

TOK Prompt selected: What is the relationship between knowledge and culture? (#21)

Having read a little bit about Klosterman—and his connections to sports via key pop culture icons like Bill Simmons—I would have assumed that he might be more biased about the quote-unquote death of football. However, I was surprised by how openly he listed the arguments that suggest football will not only die, but will inevitably die, despite of how ingrained and valued it is in American culture. To put it another way, I would have assumed that its value in our culture would lead someone to hide problematic knowledge about it, but Klosterman does the opposite. "The number of on-field concussions continues to increase," he writes, "as does the medical evidence of how dangerous football truly is. More and more pro players proactively quit (linebacker Chris Borland being the first high-profile example). Retired players start to show signs of mental deficiency at a higher and higher frequency" (179, 180). **[OPENING THOUGHTS]**

*The relationship, then, between knowledge and culture in this case seems to be that a culture has to have a Knower brave and unbiased enough to share his or her knowledge in a way that promises to help that culture change.* **[DIRECT, EXPLICIT STATEMENT IN WHICH YOU ANSWER THE PROMPT/QUESTION]**

One major unturned stone or limitation, however, of the chapter is that it does not fully imagine how innovations, whether in the rules of the game, protective equipment, or both, might arise so that the game is not fully stripped from our culture. Some brief thoughts are provided about how the game might become safer (181), but those very innovations could arise because Klosterman (and others like him) helped spread knowledge of the sport's supposedly inevitable doom. Openly and honestly talking about this doom could be exactly what spurs doctors, administrators of the sports, etc. to make the necessary changes that could save the sport long-term. **[LIMITATIONS OF THE CHAPTER; WHAT ISN'T EXPLORED?]**

So again, as far as the relationship between knowledge and culture goes: problematic knowledge does not have to destroy culture; perhaps it can transform it. **[FINAL THOUGHTS/INSIGHTS]**

WORD COUNT: 321

***RESPONSE TEMPLATE***

Name

Mr. Knittel / Mr. Kuhar / Mr. Merriman

Theory of Knowledge, Year #

Date

Chapter selected: ""

[TOK Prompt selected](#): (#??)

Word Count: