

The Value of Education and *Friday Night Lights*

One of the the most prominent themes in *Friday Night Lights* is how much the town of Odessa values education, or the lack thereof. From an early age, children are taught to aspire to one thing and one thing only: to support the Permian High football team in high school. The football players themselves are given any exemptions to school and classwork, as though high school itself was only a means through which they can play football, rather than a way they could learn and earn a diploma. In addition, most of the jobs in Odessa are ones that don't require even a high school diploma in order to operate, setting the standards very low for children who may simply aspire to be something more than another small-town face.

The psyche of the town does not encourage children to earn a good education, through a perhaps self-sustaining notion that, if they do, they would simply leave town anyway. The only way the town benefits from children going through high school is if they play or support the football team. This nearly brainwashing mentality allows Odessa to thrive, even though its priorities are inherently warped. Since everyone is supporting the same goal, the entire town is unified in a sense, united and isolated from the necessity to aspire to be anything more than a suburban gutter where people cannot move on from. The few who do attempt to earn an education normally go on to college to get an education. It is likely that very few educated ever return to Odessa, only to be sucked in by the overriding mentality of Permian High football, a dead-end psyche resting on the unreliable backs of a mere handful of high school students, rather than making their own destiny.