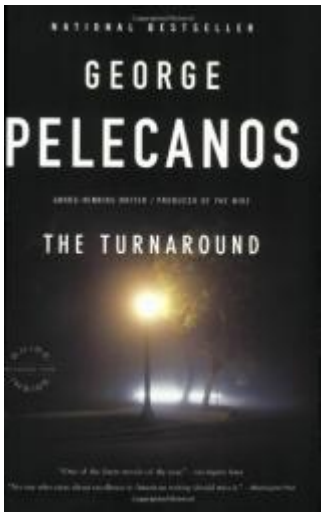
bookreporter

The Turnaround

by George Pelecanos



About the Book

On a hot summer afternoon in 1972, three teenagers drove into an unfamiliar neighborhood and six lives were altered forever.

Thirty five years later, one survivor of that day reaches out to another, opening a door that could lead to salvation. But another survivor is now out of prison, looking for reparation in any form he can find it.

The Turnaround takes us on a journey from the rock-and-soul streets of the '70s to the changing neighborhoods of D.C. today, from the diners and auto garages of the city to the inside of Walter Reed Army Medical Hospital, where wounded men and women have returned to the world in a time of war. A novel of fathers and sons, wives and husbands, loss, victory and violent redemption, **The Turnaround** is another compelling, highly charged novel from George Pelecanos, "the best crime novelist in America." -*Oregonian*

Discussion Guide

1. Discuss the character of John Pappas. How influential does he prove to be in the life of his son, Alex?

2. The Turnaround is a story in which many of the characters undergo difficult struggles and large transformations. Which character do you think learned the most and why?

3. Discuss the role of family in the novel. How does the way Alex thinks of family change after he becomes a father? How strong a force does family prove to be by the novel's end?

4. How do the pressures of youth compare with the pressures of adulthood in the novel? How large an impact does American society in the two eras when The Turnaround is set, the 1970s and the present day, have on how the characters handle these pressures?

5. The Turnaround is told from the point of view of many different characters. Who did you find to be the most compelling character, aside from Alex? Did you find that your favorite character changed after the thirty year interim that occurs in the novel?

6. Early on James Monroe makes a tremendous sacrifice for his brother, Raymond. Have you ever encountered a similar sacrifice for a family member in the course of your life?

7. Cars prove a source of endless fascination for the male characters in **The Turnaround**, but also a source of major catastrophe. How do cars ultimately help the characters in the novel find a resolution?

8. George Pelecanos sets his novels in and around Washington DC. How does the city shape the events of **The Turnaround**? Do you think the city has a stronger presence in the novel when Alex Pappas is a teenager or an adult?

Author Bio

George Pelecanos is the author of several highly praised and bestselling novels, including THE CUT, WHAT IT WAS, THE WAY HOME, THE TURNAROUND and THE NIGHT GARDENER. He is also an independent-film producer, an essayist, and the recipient of numerous international writing awards. He was a producer and Emmy-nominated writer for "The Wire" and currently writes for the acclaimed HBO series "Treme." He lives in Maryland.

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Publication Date: April 7, 2009
Genres: Fiction
Paperback: 294 pages
Publisher: Back Bay Books
ISBN-10: 0316040924
ISBN-13: 9780316040921