Copyright 2024 SuperSummary

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, transmitted, or distributed in any form, by electronic or mechanical means, including photocopying, scanning, recording, or file sharing, without prior permission in writing from the publisher, except as provided by United States of America copyright law.

The purpose of this study guide is to provide supplemental educational material. It is not intended as a substitute for or replacement of the original source text.

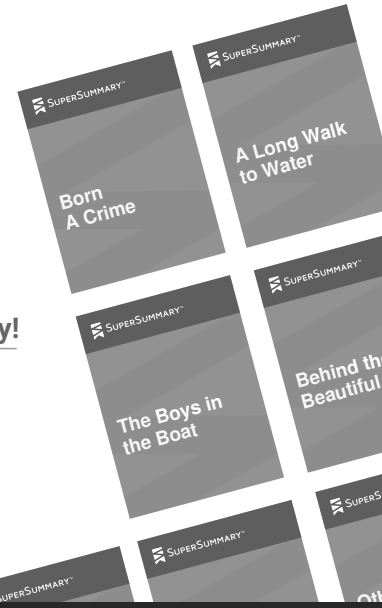
Published by SuperSummary, www.supersummary.com

ISBN: 9798335945646

For more information or to learn about our complete library of study guides, please visit http://www.supersummary.com.

Please submit comments or questions to: http://www.supersummary.com/support/

SuperSummary™



Unlock our entire study guide library!

To thank you for choosing SuperSummary, we invite you to become a subscriber and **enjoy unlimited access** to thousands of plot summaries & in-depth literature analyses.



Claim your exclusive subscription **discount offer** at

www.supersummary.com/amazon-offer

SuperSummary subscribers get

✓ Unlimited, ad-free educational content at your fingertips

✓ Downloadable PDFs

✓ A diverse library of study guides: modern fiction, classic literature, nonfiction, YA, middle grade, plays, poetry, short stories, essays, and more.

✓ Access to new study guide titles every month

✓ Comprehensive summaries & analyses from world-class literary experts

✓ One low subscription fee — at a special discount for Amazon customers

Table of Contents

SUMMARY 3

BACKGROUND 6

Critical Context: Praise as a Sports Memoir 6

CHAPTER SUMMARIES & ANALYSES 8

Prologue-Chapter 5 8
Chapters 6-11 13
Chapters 12-17 19
Chapters 18-21 25
Chapter 22-Epilogue 31

KEY FIGURES 41

Andre Agassi 41
J. R. Moehringer 42
Mike Agassi 42
Philly Agassi 43
Perry Rogers 43
Nick Bollettieri 44
Brad Gilbert 44
Gil Reyes 45
Brooke Shields 45
Steffi Graf 46
Pete Sampras 46

THEMES 48

The Physical and Emotional Toll of a Professional Tennis Career 48
The Impact of Fame on Mental Health 49
The Journey of Self-Discovery and Authenticity 50

SYMBOLS & MOTIFS 52

The Dragon 52
Imprisonment 52
The Hairpiece 53
Islands 53
Open 53

IMPORTANT QUOTES 55

ESSAY TOPICS 63

Summary

Open by Andre Agassi is a 2009 memoir that provides insight into the professional tennis world and the personal life of one of its most iconic figures. Agassi recounts his journey from a pressured child prodigy to a rebellious young star and ultimately a mature athlete who found his true self both on and off the court. With brutal honesty, Agassi reveals his intense physical and emotional struggles, including injuries, relationships, and a deep-seated ambivalence toward the sport that made him famous. Beyond a story of athletic triumphs and defeats, the memoir is a profound exploration of identity, perseverance, and the quest for authenticity.

This guide cites the 2009 HarperCollins e-book edition.

Content Warning: The source material addresses child abuse, mental health, substance misuse, and the pressures of professional sports.

Summary

Andre Agassi recounts his early years in Las Vegas. His father, Mike Agassi, obsessed with making him a tennis champion, subjected him to a relentless training regimen. Andre's three older siblings endured a similar regimen, but he was the most talented and thus the object of the most focus. His father created "the dragon," a ball machine modified to fire fast and high. Andre hated tennis and had no desire to be a champion but loved his father (and feared his violent tendencies). When his father gave him speed to enhance his tournament performance, Andre deliberately played poorly.

Mike sent Andre to Nick Bollettieri's Tennis Academy in Florida. Andre hated the prison-like academy, which enforced a grueling regimen. Attending a local school in the mornings, students played tennis until bedtime. Andre's father could afford the academy's fees for only three months, but Nick, recognizing Andre's talent, coached him for free. Andre disliked school even more than the academy; lacking study time, he couldn't keep up with the curriculum. He rebelled by getting a pink mohawk and ear piercings. When he wore torn dungarees, eyeliner, and earrings while playing a tournament, Nick publicly shamed him and added chores to his already exhausting schedule. Andre unsuccessfully tried to leave. When Andre won a giant stuffed panda at a theme park, Nick wanted to buy it for his young daughter, so Andre, on the advice of his best friend, Perry Rogers, used the panda to negotiate with Nick to quit school and enter more tournaments.

Andre turned professional at age 16, feeling he had no other options, and Philly, his older brother and confidante, accompanied him to tournaments. A lucrative sponsorship deal with Nike made Andre infamous for his rebellious image and long hair. Fans started to dress like him, while the media accused him of attention-seeking. In reality, Andre's long hair (and a hairpiece) disguised premature balding. His external bravado masked an internal struggle with self-identity.

During 1986 and 1987, Andre traveled worldwide, playing in three of the major Grand Slam tournaments: the US Open, French Open, and Wimbledon. He adapted to playing on clay and grass but disliked Wimbledon's formal regulations. In Paris, at the Louvre, he identified with a painting of a young man on a cliff edge carrying an old man with a sack of money on his back. In late 1987, 17-year-old Andre won his first professional tournament in Brazil, and in 1988 he was on the winning Davis Cup team. Ranked fourth in the world, he consistently reached the quarterfinals or semifinals in major tournaments. When he appeared in a 1989 Canon "Image is Everything" ad (130), the press suggested the slogan summed up Andre as a player. His deluge of fan mail included photos of naked women.

Andre's fitness vastly improved under trainer Gil Reyes, who became a close friend and father figure and an integral member of his support network. Andre beat his two major professional rivals, Jim Courier and Michael Chang, in the 1990 French Open, making the final for the first time. However, just before the match, his hairpiece disintegrated. Philly clipped strands into place, but Andre lost in the final, distracted by the possibility of his hairpiece falling off. In the US Open final, he lost to Pete Sampras, a player he had never considered serious competition.

Andre's achievements reflected his vacillation between a desire to win matches and a lack of motivation. He lost to Courier in the 1991 French Open final but won the Davis Cup final, wearing Oakley sunglasses to disguise a hangover. In 1992, he wor his first major title as Wimbledon champion. He was briefly elated, but the effects did not last. He missed the hard-court season due to a wrist injury and was devastated when his girlfriend, Wendi, broke up with him. In 1993, he was Wimbledon's lowest-seeded defending champion ever and lost in the second round. The press focused on his new girlfriend, Barbra Streisand, who was 28 years his senior. After his wrist surgery, Andre began dating actor Brooke Shields.

In 1994, Andre hired coach Brad Gilbert, who focused on his psychological approach to matches. Entering the US Open unseeded, Andre won the tournament. After Brooke persuaded him to shave his head, he also won the 1995 Australian Open, beating Sampras and achieving the number-one world ranking. In 1995, after defeating Andre in the Wimbledon final, Boris Becker claimed in an interview that other players on the tennis circuit disliked Agassi. Vowing revenge, Andre

experienced a winning streak, successively winning 20 matches and four tournaments. He beat Becker in the 1995 US Open semifinals. However, when he lost to Sampras in the final, all his former achievements seemed worthless.

Convinced that Sampras would always beat him and plagued by injuries, Andre experienced many early-round losses in 1996 and 1997. He failed to reach any Grand Slam finals and was repeatedly penalized for swearing and skipping compulsory press conferences. He hit a career low when his ranking slipped to 141st and he was dropped from the Davis Cup team. At the time, Brooke's career resurged after a guest appearance in the sitcom *Friends*. Andre watched the episode being recorded but stormed off and smashed his trophies when Brooke was required to lick the character Joey's hand. With his assistant, Slim (a regular drug user), Andre used crystal methamphetamine. Despite having reservations about his relationship with Brooke, he proposed to her, and they married in 1997.

Brad insisted that Andre either quit or dedicate himself to winning. He recommitted to his career but faced likely suspension after failing a drug test. He lied to the Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP), claiming he inadvertently drank a soda spiked with crystal methamphetamine. The ATP accepted his explanation. Andre resumed his tennis career from the bottom, entering Challenger tournaments. He and Perry founded a charity to establish a school for underprivileged inner-city children, and the desire to raise money for it remotivated his career. He and Brooke attempted to save their failing marriage by vacationing to islands but eventually divorced.

The most successful period of Andre's career was 1998-2003. In 1999, he reclaimed the number-one world ranking and won the French Open, the Grand Slam title that had eluded him. At the 2001 Australian Open, he won his seventh Grand Slam. After pursuing German women's tennis champion Steffi Graf, Andre married her in 2001. They had a son, Jaden, in 2002 and a daughter, Jaz, in 2003.

Between 2004 and 2006, because of recurrent injuries and excruciating pain from herniated discs in his spine, Andre increasingly relied on cortisone injections between matches. His contemporaries Courier, Chang, and Sampras retired, but Andre dismissed suggestions that he should do so. Though newcomers like Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer increasingly defeated him, he accepted losses stoically, since his family and charitable work were his priorities. In 2006, at age 36, Andre announced he would retire after the US Open. His second-round match against Marcos Baghdatis was a grueling five-set battle, but Andre eventually won. Observing Andre's pain, Mike Agassi begged him to withdraw from the tournament. However, Andre insisted on continuing and lost in the third round. Upon his retirement, commentators observed how Agassi's persona had changed. However, Andre reflected that he had simply learned who he was.

Background

Critical Context: Praise as a Sports Memoir

As a memoir, *Open* features many of the ingredients readers expect from the genre. Agassi provides an account of his rise to success, his most momentous losses and victories, and his eventual retirement. However, the book has also been widely acclaimed for transcending the typical sports biography. Critics and readers admire the author's unflinching honesty, his depth of psychological insight, and the book's literary quality. The memoir presents a man's journey through life and sport while also providing a broader commentary on personal growth, identity, and the often unseen pressures of professional sports.

Critics have praised *Open* for subverting readers' expectations of the genre in several ways. Carrie Battan highlights how the memoir avoids "the litany of clichés about the love of the game that's typically espoused by professional athletes" (Battan, Carrie. "Revisiting 'Open,' Andre Agassi's Classic Memoir About the Loneliness of Tennis." *The New Yorker*, 6 Sep 2019). Indeed, Agassi's frank admission that he hated tennis and the internal conflict this caused him is a core takeaway from the text. While many memoirs present a sanitized version of the author's life, *Open* predominantly features Agassi's personal and professional lows. His controversial and searingly honest revelations include his admission of using crystal methamphetamine and lying to the ATP about his failed drug test. Furthermore, the author lays bare his vulnerability and insecurity, revealing the anxiety his premature balding and subsequent hairpiece caused him.

Agassi's memoir also undercuts the civilized reputation of tennis as a sport. Michael Mewshaw praises how the book exposes the "game's seamy realities," which other athletes have chosen to gloss over (Mewshaw, Michael. "Book Review: *Open* by Andre Agassi." *The Washington Post*, 8 Nov. 2009). Agassi emphasizes the ruthless and lonely nature of the professional tennis circuit, revealing the personal resentments that often underlie professional rivalries. He also details the brutal regimen that many child tennis prodigies endure before reaching the professional circuit. His account of the Nick Bollettieri Academy highlights not only the prison-like environment but also the meager education that students received, leaving them unequipped for any other profession.

In addition, critics have pointed to the literary quality of *Open*, which makes it stand out among the sports memoir genre. Agassi successfully captures the intense sensations of playing professional tennis in his accounts of games. For example, the description of his match against Baghdatis uses staccato sentences to mirror the

effect of a ball being struck back and forth: “We ride a seesaw, a pendulum of high-energy points. He makes a mistake. I give it back. He digs in. I dig in deeper” (19). The author’s use of figurative language, comparing the game to a seesaw or pendulum, adds to this effect, highlighting the unpredictability and fluctuations of tennis. Sam Tanenhaus likewise commends the novelistic structure and tone of *Open*, stating that it is “not just a first-rate sports memoir but a genuine bildungsroman, darkly funny yet also anguished and soulful” (Tanenhaus, Sam. “Andre Agassi’s Hate of the Game.” *The New York Times*, 20 Nov 2009). Several critics suggest that Agassi’s collaboration with Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist J. R. Moehringer contributed to the memoir’s fine quality.

Chapter Summaries & Analyses

Prologue-Chapter 5

Prologue Summary: "The End"

Content Warning: The source material addresses child abuse, mental health, substance misuse, and the pressures of professional sports.

Waking up on the floor, 36-year-old Andre Agassi felt disoriented. In addition to congenital spondylolisthesis, he had two herniated discs and bone spurs in his spine and would often lay on the floor at night due to excruciating back pain. Lying next to the bed, Andre focused by reviewing the facts of his life: He was married to Steffi Graf; they had a five-year-old son, Jaden, and a three-year-old daughter, Jaz. They lived in Las Vegas but were staying in a New York City hotel while Andre played in the 2006 US Open, the final tournament of his tennis career.

In preparation for the match, Andre had a cortisone injection—the 13th of his career. Though he hated tennis, he did not want his career to end. He was scheduled to play a second-round match against 21-year-old Marcos Baghdatis, who grew up idolizing him and studying his game. Andre drank "Gil Water," a concoction his trainer made to hydrate and energize him. He traveled to Arthur Ashe Stadium with his trainer, Gil, and his coach, Darren. Watching Baghdatis adjust his long hair in the locker room, Andre was momentarily envious.

Andre won the first two sets easily but tired and lost the third and fourth. In the fifth set, he wrenched his spine, and shortly afterward Baghdatis fell to the ground with leg cramps. Andre won the final set 7-5, reflecting that he would not have had the energy to play another point. In the locker room, he collapsed. Darren and Gil lifted him onto a table, while Baghdatis's team did the same for him. Side by side on the treatment tables, they awaited medical help and held hands as they watched TV highlights from their match. Andre's mind replayed his entire career.

Chapter 1 Summary

Seven-year-old Andre lived in Las Vegas. He played tennis all day, though he longed to do something else, and hated the ball machine he thought of as "the dragon." Andre's father, Mike, an Iranian-born Armenian, modified it to fire at 110 mph and tower over his son. Consequently, Andre had to hit balls on the rise before

they flew over his head. His father shouted and cursed, urging him to hit them harder and earlier. Mike Agassi believed that if his son hit 2,500 balls daily, he would become a tennis champion.

Located in the Nevada desert, the Agassi family home had barred windows and was surrounded by a green concrete wall. The roof was covered in dead hawks that Andre's father shot when they flew over the property. Mike worked as a casino captain in Las Vegas but bought a home in the desert so that he had room to put in a tennis court, which he built himself with no prior experience.

Mike decided Andre would be a tennis player before he was born. Hanging a tennis ball mobile over his son's crib, he taped a ping-pong racket to Andre's hand. When Andre was four, Mike strung Jimmy Connors's rackets when he was in town and had Andre deliver them to the tennis star. Connors made fun of Andre and his father, and his companions laughed. Mike sometimes took his children out of school to play at Cambridge Racquet Club. Andre's older siblings (Philly, Rita, and Tami) were good players, but Andre was the best and got most of Mike's attention. Andre loved his father and wanted to please him but also feared his mercurial temperament. An aggressive man, he often experienced road rage. He once reached across Andre in the car, pulled a gun out of the glove compartment, and pointed it at another driver. Another time, he fought with a truck driver, leaving him unconscious in the road, and instructed Andre not to tell his mother.

When Andre was almost eight, he entered junior tournaments, winning seven consecutively. In one match, his opponent, Jeff Tarango, claimed that Andre's winning shot was out and insisted that he was the winner. Andre refused to shake Tarango's hand.

Chapter 2 Summary

Andre's father, Mike, grew up in Tehran. His mother often beat him, and he learned to fight when she sent him to school in girls' clothes. He came to love tennis while watching American and British soldiers play. Mike became a boxer and was a member of the 1948 Iranian Olympic team. Shortly afterward, he emigrated to the US, working as an elevator operator and fighting in boxing matches at night. When Andre was young, Andre's Uncle Isar arrived at their home after fleeing Iran. He was gentle and kind, and Andre liked to jump out and surprise him. One day, however, he mistakenly surprised his father instead. Mike reflexively punched his son, knocking him to the floor, and sent him to his room. Andre wished his mother, Betty, would stand up to his father.

Mike saw tennis as a route to wealth. He took Andre to the Alan King Tennis Classic, where a wheelbarrow full of silver dollars was the tournament prize. When Andre was nearly nine, Mike got him a job as a ballboy at the tournament, where he fell for a ball girl named Wendi. Mike often asked the players to hit balls with his son. Björn Borg graciously agreed, Jimmy Connors was begrudging, and Mike pretended not to hear Ilie Nastase's refusal. While playing against Andre, Nastase taunted him about his crush on Wendi. When Andre stormed off mid-play, his father did not reprimand him.

One day, Mike challenged famous football player Jim Brown to play against nine-year-old Andre. Andre feared losing the $10,000 his father wagered on his victory. Brown changed the bet to $500, and Andre won. Shortly afterward, Andre played against his father. When Andre was winning, Mike petulantly abandoned the game. Andre was jubilant, ranking it as his best win so far.

Chapter 3 Summary

When Andre was 11, he lost in the semifinals at Nationals. However, he was awarded a trophy for the player with "the most grace on the court" (54). He was secretly pleased but told his father he did not want the trophy, so Mike smashed it and threw it in a dumpster. Andre considered team sports less lonely than tennis and enjoyed football. However, after he injured his leg in a football game, his father ordered him never to play again.

Mike was determined to make Andre the world's number-one tennis player, a plan that failed with his other children. Rita rebelled against her father and ran off with Pancho Gonzalez, a tennis player 30 years her senior. Tami failed to improve, and Philly lacked "the killer instinct" (56). Although Philly remained a good player, Mike often called him a "loser." Nevertheless, Philly showed no resentment toward Andre's talent, and the brothers were friends and confidantes. Philly warned him not to take any pills their father gave him at a tournament, revealing that he would progress from caffeine tablets to speed. As Philly predicted, Mike gave Andre a new pill at Nationals. Andre deliberately played poorly and told his father he felt unwell. Mike looked guilty and said they would not use the pills again.

Chapter 4 Summary

An older boy, Roddy Parks, beat 11-year-old Andre at the Las Vegas Country Club. Afterward, another boy, who introduced himself as Perry Rogers, told Andre not to worry about the loss, but Andre responded rudely. He later discovered that Perry was another player and now had a vendetta against him.

Andre accepted an invitation to the movies when he learned that Perry would be there. After apologizing to him, Andre discovered that Perry was observant, smart, and funny. He too had a tyrannical father, who he believed did not love him. Andre realized that despite his father's faults, he never doubted his love. The boys became best friends and made a pact: They would not be like their fathers, would not use substances or drink alcohol, and would do good in the world. Perry's family was extremely wealthy, so he had his own wing in their mansion and a subscription to *Sports Illustrated*.

Twelve-year-old Andre was selected to play in several Australian tournaments. Each time he won, the coach rewarded him with a beer. He drank it but felt guilty about breaking his pact with Perry. When he returned, he confessed to Perry.

Andre's father told him about a *60 Minutes* documentary on a Florida tennis academy run by Nick Bollettieri. Pupils attended school in the morning and played tennis all afternoon and evening. Mike said he was sending Andre there for three months, dismissing his son's protests. Andre later learned that the *60 Minutes* documentary had exposed the Florida boot camp as a "tennis sweatshop."

Chapter 5 Summary

The Nick Bollettieri Tennis Academy looked like a prison camp with tennis courts. Its 200 students, ages 7-19, slept in barracks. Andre felt intimidated and homesick. The lack of adult supervision meant no repercussions for bullying or getting into fights. Every night before lights out, a student named Jim Courier played the drums.

Nick Bollettieri was in his fifties but looked ancient due to his unnaturally deep tan. Andre's fellow students described Nick as "a hustler" who monetized tennis but had no love or knowledge of the sport. One day, Nick watched Andre play and called Mike Agassi. He told Mike his son was so talented that he would coach him free of charge. Andre was horrified, seeing no end to his imprisonment.

Andre and the other tennis prodigies went to nearby Bradenton Academy in the mornings, but given their heavy tennis schedules, keeping up with the curriculum was impossible. Andre failed all classes except English literature. When the English teacher praised his poetry, he imagined a life in which he could choose to pursue this talent. Andre dreaded school and experienced social anxiety. Most of his classmates were rich and dressed accordingly. He rebelled by piercing his ears and getting a pink mohawk. He drank, smoked cannabis, and disrupted class. When Andre returned home for Christmas, Philly won $600 playing cards and gave Andre half the money to buy new clothes.

During spring break, Mike pushed 14-year-old Andre to enter semiprofessional tournaments with Philly. Andre won his first match, while Philly lost. Afterward, Philly shouted at himself, calling himself a loser and repeatedly hitting the steering wheel before returning to his usual calm manner.

Andre returned to the tennis academy and called Philly to share the news that he was now ranked 610th in the world. He immediately regretted his actions when Philly, who has always craved a ranking, asks how it feels.

Prologue-Chapter 5 Analysis

Agassi's memoir begins with a Prologue ironically titled "The End," which recounts the final tournament of his career (the 2006 US Open) in vivid detail. By placing this event first in the book, the author emphasizes its significance as a life event. His retirement marked the end of an existence entirely devoted to tennis. The story that follows, from early childhood onwards, works toward this point in his life, providing insight into why the end of his tennis career was so momentous.

Agassi thematically introduces **The Physical and Emotional Toll of a Professional Tennis Career**. The image of the 36-year-old waking up feeling "ninety-six" after moving from bed to the floor due to back pain conveys the adverse effects of his career on his body and how playing tennis exacerbated a congenital spine condition. He notes that repeated steroid injections only briefly relieved the relentless pain. Agassi's account of his match against Baghdatis emphasizes how they both pushed themselves to the limits of physical endurance, playing through the pain barrier and collapsing afterward. The author notes how his body was increasingly unwilling to perform the feats he demanded of it, using the analogy that his body had retired but his mind had not. Continuing to play meant "negotiating with my body, asking it to come out of retirement for a few hours here, a few hours there" (3). Agassi also highlights the emotional toll of tennis. His initial uncertainty about where he was when he woke up illustrates the disorienting effects of constant travel, while his pre-match nerves demonstrate the regular stress and anxiety he experienced as a professional athlete.

In addition, "The End" establishes the memoir's central paradox: Agassi's hatred of tennis and his concurrent compulsion to keep playing. His inner turmoil over retiring from a profession he hated is evident in the repeated refrain, "Please let this be over. I don't want it to be over" (8). Agassi presents his grueling match against Baghdatis as a battle against his younger self. He emphasizes the irony of their similarities: Baghdatis had the kind of long hair he once sported and played in a similar way, having idolized Agassi. The comparison metaphorically symbolizes the author's ongoing conflict with himself.

Agassi's account of his early life introduces another central theme: **The Journey of Self-Discovery and Authenticity**. The anecdote about his father taping a ping-pong racket to his hand as a baby illustrates the pressure he faced from birth to become a tennis champion. Young Andre had no sense of agency; his father dictated his life's path and identity. The modified ball machine, "the dragon," induced anxiety in Andre because its relentless pace represented the pressure his father placed on him. The author uses imprisonment imagery to underscore his powerlessness and lack of life choices, describing the family home's barred windows and surrounding concrete wall. This motif extends to the Nick Bollettieri Tennis Academy, which the text describes as "a glorified prison camp" (72). The academy resembled a prison in its appearance and regimen and also because Andre was sent there against his will. Furthermore, it prioritized tennis over a well-rounded education, essentially limiting students' freedom to make life choices. At this stage of Andre's life, a rebellious appearance and small acts of insurrection became a form of protest against a lack of agency in every other area.

These chapters introduce the key relationships in the author's early life. Andre's fear of his father and desire to please him emerge as his formative motivating factors. Meanwhile, his relationships with his brother Philly and best friend Perry provided vital support and comfort. The text describes how the boys bonded over their shared trauma. Like Andre and Philly, Perry had a tyrannical father, and Philly had already suffered the insidious paternal pressure that Andre experienced. While Philly could not protect his younger brother from their father, he tried to prepare him for their father's worst excesses, such as the use of caffeine and then speed to improve his performance. Andre and Perry's pact to do good in the world was a response to the psychological harm their fathers had inflicted on them. As the memoir later describes, they eventually realized this pact by establishing a charitable foundation together.

Chapters 6-11

Chapter 6 Summary

Wearing torn dungarees, eyeliner, and earrings, 14-year-old Andre won a tournament. When Nick publicly shamed him for disgracing the academy, Andre packed and tried to hitch a ride to the airport, but a member of Nick's staff picked him up. Andre told his father he wanted to leave, but Mike insisted he stay,

instructing Nick to confiscate his credit card. Andre performed punishment chores by day. At night, he and other boys committed minor acts of vandalism around the academy. The ringleader, Roddy Parks, was caught and expelled. Nick organized a tournament to attract new pupils, and Andre recommended Perry. Perry was sent a plane ticket and arrived at the academy.

On a trip to Busch Gardens, Perry and Andre cheated at a fairground game, winning a giant stuffed panda. On the bus back to the academy, Nick's young daughter admired the panda, and the next day Nick announced that he wanted to buy it for his daughter. At Perry's suggestion, Andre used Nick's request to negotiate wild cards for tournaments and immunity from attending school. Nick agreed to these demands, and Andre left the panda in Nick's chair, bottom-up.

Chapter 7 Summary

In March 1975, Philly drove his brother to a tournament at La Quinta in his old car. They subsisted on potatoes and soup, and Andre won the first game in the main draw. As an amateur, he was entitled only to reimbursement of his expenses. Consequently, he and Philly created a fictional list of costs totaling $2,600. Pointing out that the expenses equaled the prize money, the tournament director gave him $2,000. Andre insisted on splitting it with Philly.

Chapter 8 Summary

In the spring of 1986, Andre reached the final of a Florida tournament. The prize was $1,100, but Andre would officially become a professional player if he accepted it. Andre called his father, who pointed out that he had dropped out of school and had no other options. He turned professional on his 16th birthday, and Philly became his full-time tournament companion. Andre accepted a lucrative sponsorship deal with Nike and was ranked among the world's top 100 players.

Sporting a spiky two-tone mullet, Andre entered his first US Open in 1986. He was knocked out in the first round and then lost several successive tournaments. Perry assured Andre that he would soon be on the cover of *Sports Illustrated* and would date Brooke Shields (recently voted the world's most beautiful woman). Andre reached the quarterfinals of the Japan Open and the finals in Seoul. Upon returning to Vegas, he hugged his father; Mike froze, and Andre vowed never to hug him again.

Playing for the first time at the Italian Open, Andre disliked the clay surface. He repeated his second-round loss at the French Open. At the Louvre in Paris, Andre and Philly admired a painting of a naked young man clinging to a flimsy branch on a

clifftop while holding onto a woman with two children and carrying an old man with a sack of money on his back. Andre commented on how tight the old man's arm looked around the young man's neck. Philly told him to hang on.

In June 1987, Andre played Wimbledon in London. He immediately disliked the formal atmosphere, the requirement that players wear white, and how the slippery grass surface deadened the ball's bounce. In Andre's first match there, Henri Leconte annihilated him on the "Graveyard Court." Andre vowed never to return.

By the time he reached a tournament in Washington, DC, Andre was exhausted from travel and again lost in the first round. After the match, he gave a group of unhoused men his tennis rackets, worth hundreds of dollars each. Later, realizing he had little money left, he accepted a request to play in an exhibition match for $2,000. He bought new rackets. In the exhibition match, Andre beat Michael Chang but noted that his opponent's game had significantly improved. He continued to Vermont, where he defeated Luke Jensen, the top-ranked junior in the world. His next opponent was recent Wimbledon champion Pat Cash, and Andre was astonished to win again. When he reached the semifinals against Ivan Lendl, his father came to watch. Beforehand, Lendl strutted around naked in the locker room. Andre lost the match but won a set and felt happy with his performance. Afterward, Andre read Lendl's description of him in a newspaper: "A haircut and a forehand" (110).

Chapter 9 Summary

At the end of 1987, 17-year-old Andre won his first professional tournament in Brazil, where he was treated like a hero. He returned to his parents' home in Vegas and bought a $37,000 Corvette. His father insisted on accompanying him to the dealership and was furious about the $50 paperwork fee, threatening the manager and beating his fists on the desk. Mike's behavior spoiled the excitement of the purchase, and Andre resolved to control his money and life going forward.

Noticing how fans dressed like him in denim shorts and with mullet hairstyles, Andre was both flattered and embarrassed. Newspapers criticized his attire, claiming that he was trying to draw attention to himself. However, like any teen, Andre was experimenting with his image. More importantly, he was prematurely balding and wore his hair long to conceal this. Philly, who had the same issue, wore toupees, and Andre asked his brother to buy him one.

Andre celebrated his 18th birthday while playing at the Isle of Palms tournament and won. Next, he played in the Tournament of Champions in New York City and again faced Chang. Chang's habit of thanking God when he won, suggesting that God had favored him, irritated Andre. After beating Chang, Andre won the tournament. In May

1988, Andre was defeated in the third round of the Italian Open. At the French Open in Paris, the smell of smoke during matches distracted him: The venue allowed the crowd to smoke cigars and pipes. Andre reached the semifinals but had cramps and lost to Mats Wilander. Skipping Wimbledon, he hired Pat, a Chilean trainer, to improve his stamina and conditioning.

In July, Andre was a US Davis Cup team member in Argentina. During a game against an Argentinian opponent, he reflexively caught a serve with one hand. The crowd booed him, believing he was being deliberately disrespectful. The press criticized him, and instead of explaining that he caught the ball unintentionally, Andre claimed he did it on purpose.

Now ranked fourth in the world, Andre delighted in beating Jeff Tarango in a small New Jersey tournament, exacting revenge for his cheating Andre when he was a junior. At the US Open, Andre reached the quarterfinal, facing Jimmy Connors. Before the game, Andre reminded Connors how he delivered rackets to him as a boy. Connors claimed not to remember and then ignored him. Andre beat Connors but lost to Ivan Lendl in the semifinal.

Andre sought support from Perry, who was studying business at Georgetown. He began attending a nondenominational church with Philly. The pastor, John Parenti, insisted that the congregation call him J. P. and dressed like a “surfer.” One night, Andre had an emotional crisis and told J. P. his life story. The pastor pointed out the contradictions in Andre’s life: He still lived with his parents and did not yet know who he was; meanwhile, strangers interpreted his image as the real Andre Agassi and thought they knew him.

Andre enjoyed playing for his country and invited J. P. to the Davis Cup in Munich. However, he lost to Boris Becker. Back at his hotel, he confided to J. P. that he would rather die than do his best and discover it was not enough. The next day, he played Carl-Uwe-Steeb and lost. A team member and a sportswriter accused Andre of “tanking.”

After easily defeating Pete Sampras in the Italian Open, Andre felt sorry for Sampras and did not expect to play him again. In the final, Andre reached match point against Alberto Mancini but then crumbled and lost. In the French Open, Jim Courier beat Andre in the third round. After the match, Courier went for a run, implying that playing Andre had not provided an adequate workout. Chang won the tournament.

In mid-1989, Andre agreed to appear in an ad for Canon. The final shot showed him getting out of a Lamborghini, and he was required to say, “Image is Everything” (130). A crowd of spectators gathered, including Wendi, his childhood crush. In the following weeks, Canon’s slogan haunted Andre: Newspapers suggested that it

summed up his identity. Angry and resentful, Andre gained a reputation for hostility. He took refuge in the company of Philly and J. P., who had quit his job as a pastor to become a composer. While magazines and newspapers continued to criticize him, Andre received a deluge of fan mail, including photos of naked women. He played up to “the role of villain-rebel” (121).

Chapter 10 Summary

At the University of Nevada, Andre met sports trainer Gil Reyes, who agreed to help him meet his fitness goals. Gil said Andre’s current training regimen would likely injure him and shorten his career. Though not a tennis expert, Gil pointed out that the game involves continually starting and stopping, so the key was to do this efficiently. Gil quickly improved Andre’s fitness and became a father figure to him. He often had dinner with Gil’s family and stayed overnight. In the 1989 US Open quarterfinals, Andre beat Jimmy Connors in five sets.

Chapter 11 Summary

The press criticized Andre for the constant presence of his “entourage” (Perry, J. P., Nick, and Philly), suggesting that it was a sign of egocentricity. Gil carefully monitored Andre’s condition, nutrition, and hydration, making him “Gil Water” to drink before matches for stamina.

In February 1990, Andre was pulled over twice for speeding while driving to Scottsdale with Gil. On the second occasion, the officer instructed him to return to Kingman Municipal Court to face the judge. The judge, a tennis enthusiast, asked Andre for his autograph and instructed him to go to Scottsdale and win. During the tournament, Andre and Gil went to a restaurant and overheard a group of men mocking Andre’s appearance. Before leaving, Gil confronted the men, towering over their table, taking bites from their burgers, and pouring soda on the table. None of the men challenged him.

Chapters 6-11 Analysis

These chapters detail Agassi’s early successes, including his first major title and his rise to fame. However, his increasing professional success coincided with a period of extreme inner conflict and psychological turmoil. Thematically, this section explores **The Journey of Self-Discovery and Authenticity** by describing Agassi’s attempts to abandon his fledgling tennis career, such as fleeing the academy and giving away his rackets, in an attempt to assert agency. However, these attempts to quit were ultimately unsuccessful. Furthermore, Andre’s decisions only solidified the course his father had dictated for him from birth. While negotiating his

nonattendance of school gave him a temporary sense of agency, the author presents it as an immature decision that only sealed his fate. Having negotiated to leave school and knowing only how to perform on the tennis court, he had no choice but to turn professional.

In this section, Agassi depicts his younger self navigating an unforgiving adult world. His purchase of a Corvette as a 17-year-old, marred by his father's overbearing presence, illustrates his awkward stance between childhood and manhood. The author begins a thematic examination of **The Impact of Fame on Mental Health** as he recounts the effects of public scrutiny on his tenuous sense of self. Andre received mixed messages about how others perceived him since the press criticized him but fans idolized and imitated him. These polar responses were echoed in the varied reactions of crowds. For example, he was treated like a hero in Brazil but booed in Argentina. The dilemma of being defined by others continued when the press labeled Andre the rebel of the tennis world. The author's account of how he became synonymous with Canon's marketing slogan "Image is Everything" emphasizes the unfairness of his being publicly judged at an age when few individuals know who they really are (130). Consequently, Andre became complicit in the media's representation of him. The performative aspect of his public image was evident in the hairpiece he wore to conceal premature balding. While the long hair added to his rebellious image, other people had no idea that it concealed deep insecurities about his appearance.

The memoir provides insight into the nature and demands of professional tennis. Agassi emphasizes the adaptability required to adjust from hard court to clay and grass, since each surface plays differently. Additionally, life on tour requires adapting to different environments. As a teen, he found traveling from country to country exhausting, and other cultures presented challenges, such as the formality of English tennis regulations at Wimbledon and, in Paris, the distracting smell of a crowd permitted to smoke. The author also conveys the loneliness of this life and provides a glimpse into the interpersonal rivalries of the tennis world. Outlining his early rivalries with Chang, Tarango, and Courier and his resentment of veteran Jimmy Connors, Agassi lays bare how personal conflict often played out on professional tennis courts. While the press mocked Andre's "entourage," the author highlights how his "chosen family" provided security within an alienating and sometimes hostile environment.

The painting Andre fixated on in the Louvre symbolizes the impact of parental pressure on his mental health. He interprets Anne-Louis Girodet's depiction of a young man clinging to a precipice in *Scene from a Deluge* (1806) as a visual representation of his own position: "Everything depends on the one naked man's strength—his grip"—because the woman and her children and the old man "wrapped around his neck" weigh him down (107). For Andre, the old man with the sack of money figuratively represented the weight of his father's expectation to

make his fortune as a tennis champion. However, Mike's awkward reaction when Andre hugged him after a victory demonstrated that winning would not provide the show of pride he craved from his father. The introduction of Gil Reyes as a key figure marked the crucial introduction of a more benevolent father figure in Andre's life. As his trainer, Gil transformed Andre physically while providing support and guidance that benefited his mental and emotional well-being.

Chapters 12-17

Chapter 12 Summary

In the early rounds of the 1990 French Open, Andre beat Courier and Chang. Newspapers predicted Andre's victory in the final. However, the night before the match, his hairpiece came apart, and though Philly used bobby pins to clip strands in place, Andre lost the final, preoccupied by the fear that his hairpiece might fall off. At the airport, a trolley caught his Achilles tendon, and he bled profusely.

Andre missed Wimbledon again and worked with Gil on building a winner's mindset. At the 1990 US Open, he beat Becker and was confident of defeating Sampras in the final. However, Sampras played an immaculate game, and Andre lost, astonished at his opponent's improvement.

Chapter 13 Summary

Twenty-one-year-old Andre reached his third Grand Slam final in a row when he faced Courier in the 1991 French Open. Andre knew he could win, but his animosity toward Courier made him tense. After Courier broke him in the fifth set, Andre resigned himself to losing.

Wendi, now Andre's girlfriend, encouraged him to play at Wimbledon and accompanied him to London. Andre reached the quarterfinals but was defeated after pulling a hip muscle. At the US Open, he lost in the first round as competitiveness again deserted him.

Andre bought a bachelor pad in Vegas, creating rooms for arcade games, billiards, and a movie theater. At the Davis Cup, he played well in his first two matches, and the night before the final he celebrated, drinking too much. Hungover, Andre won his match, wearing Oakley sunglasses. The following week, Oakley sent him a red Dodge Viper to thank him for the free publicity.

In the 1992 French Open, Andre beat Sampras but lost to Courier in the semifinal. After defeating Andre, Courier again went for a run. Entering Wimbledon as the 12th

seed, Andre defeated Becker in the quarterfinals and McEnroe in the semifinals. His final opponent was Goran Ivanisevic. Andre won the match in five sets, becoming the 1992 Wimbledon champion. Overwhelmed with joy and relief, he called his father after the match. Mike Agassi observed that his son should have won the fourth set. Andre realized his father was crying.

Andre looked forward to the Wimbledon Ball because the male winner dances with the female champion, who this year was Steffi Graf, whose dignity and beauty impressed Andre. He sent her a message after the French Open but received no reply. At the ball, Andre learned that the champions' dance had been canceled because it was unpopular with players. Andre briefly met Steffi at the ball and said he would like to chat sometime. She smiled but did not respond.

Chapter 14 Summary

The press now celebrated Andre as a champion, and fans often asked him for autographs or pictures. Kevin Costner invited Andre and Wendi onto his yacht and to his house for a preview of *The Bodyguard*, and at President George Bush's invitation, Andre spent a night at the White House. However, his satisfaction in winning Wimbledon was transient. He considered proposing to Wendi despite her desire for an open relationship.

While digging his Hummer out of desert sand, Andre injured his wrist. Diagnosed with tendonitis, he missed the hard-court season. Wendi broke up with him, asserting that she would never find herself while they were together. Devastated, Andre stayed home drinking and eating junk food. Gil suggested that he focus on the lead-up to the 1993 Wimbledon tournament and arranged a cortisone injection for his wrist. During a warm-up tournament in Germany, Andre ran into Nick, who was in debt and had sold the academy. Nick suggested that Andre owed him money because he had invested so much in developing Andre's career. Disturbed by the encounter, Andre lost his first-round match.

At Wimbledon, Andre made history as the lowest-seeded defending champion ever. Moderating his serve because of his numb wrist, he narrowly won the first round. The press focused on the 28-year age difference between him and his current girlfriend, Barbra Streisand, who attended the tournament. Andre had met Barbra through mutual friends. He admired her reluctance to sing at a party when urged to do so. When she eventually gave in, her powerful voice filled the room. In the Wimbledon quarterfinals, Andre played Sampras, who won despite a shoulder injury. Returning home, Andre saw a headline in *USA Today* announcing Nick's decision to part ways with him.

Andre reluctantly agreed to wrist surgery in December 1993, fearing that a mistake by the surgeon could end his career. Although Gil was known for squeamishness, he agreed to be present in the operating theater. The operation was successful, and while Andre was recovering, a friend's wife suggested setting him up with Brooke Shields. Brooke was filming in South Africa, so Andre began a lengthy fax correspondence with her and stopped dating Barbra. Once Brooke returned to the US, they met in Los Angeles and discovered they had much in common. Brooke's ambitious mother had managed her career since she was 11 months old, and the two shared a favorite movie, *Shadowlands*.

Chapter 15 Summary

Andre and Sampras agreed to a joint magazine interview. Sampras was surprised at the parrot (rescued from a bankrupt pet shop) in Andre's hotel room. Andre noted that Sampras sounded "more robotic" than Peaches during the interview.

Andre hired Slim, a former schoolmate, as a personal assistant. Meanwhile, Perry, in his second year of law school, agreed to become Andre's manager. Perry suggested Brad Gilbert as Andre's new coach; Brad was a tennis player and the author of *Winning Ugly,* describing how to outthink an opponent and make them play on your terms. Brad advised Andre to focus on his opponents' weaknesses rather than perfectionism. Andre and Perry were convinced that Brad was the right person for the job, and he accepted the position.

At the Key Biscayne tournament, Andre played Becker (now coached by Nick) and comfortably beat him. Just before the final, Andre's opponent, Sampras, lay on the floor groaning from food poisoning. Andre agreed to postpone the match instead of insisting that Sampras forfeit. When Sampras recovered, he was in peak form and won.

Andre struggled to adapt to "winning ugly" and experienced a losing streak. At the 1994 French Open, he lost to Thomas Muster, who tousled his hair at the net, almost dislodging Andre's hairpiece. At Wimbledon, he was defeated in the fourth round. Brad assured him that good things would happen but at the Canadian Open uncharacteristically admitted that Andre was unlikely to win because he had an unfortunate draw. Andre insisted that he would win the tournament and that Brad get his ear pierced when he did. He won, and Brad got a diamond ear stud.

At the 1994 US Open, Andre was unseeded. He dressed inconspicuously for the event in black tennis gear, though Brooke's presence attracted attention. Despite having an upset stomach, Andre easily beat Chang in the fourth round. Interviewed afterward, Chang claimed that Andre got lucky. In the final, Andre faced Michael Stich and won.

Chapter 16 Summary

Andre initially rejected Brooke's suggestion to shave his hair and get rid of the hairpiece. However, after reflecting on the anxiety his hair had caused, he agreed. Newly bald and feeling liberated, Andre played the 1995 Australian Open for the first time and beat Sampras in the final. The victory marked his third Slam. Andre and his team focused on achieving the world's number-one spot, which Sampras currently held.

Gil increased Andre's strength and endurance using homemade training machinery. He also created a new nutrition regimen while allowing Andre to occasionally indulge in the junk food he loved. Andre repeatedly ran up and down "Gil Hill" outside the trainer's house. Sometimes he slept at Gil's, lacking the energy to get home afterward.

At Indian Wells, Sampras was devastated by the recent revelation that his coach had a brain tumor. Meanwhile, Andre's father was about to have open heart surgery. Andre lost to Sampras and immediately visited his father in the hospital. Mike could not speak but wrote that his son should have targeted Sampras's backhand. Andre realized that his father could not help who he was and assured him he would beat Sampras next time. He did so a week later at Key Biscayne. After the tournament, he and Sampras flew to New York for the Davis Cup. Andre took Sampras to the theater to see Brooke playing Rizzo in *Grease*. Sampras fidgeted and yawned throughout.

Perry called, announcing that Andre was now number one in the world. Andre claimed to be pleased but felt nothing.

Chapter 17 Summary

Given that his number-one world ranking did not make him happy, Andre wondered whether he should retire from tennis. However, he imagined the disappointment of his father, Perry, and Brad. Also, at 25, he had no idea what else he could do. He resolved to win the French Open, which would make him the first American to win all four Slams.

Before the 1995 French Open, Andre and Brooke explored Paris. However, Andre struggled to relax because he was thinking of the tournament. One night, they walked along the Seine, and Andre presented Brooke with a diamond tennis bracelet. However, a drunk appeared behind Brooke and urinated in the river, spoiling the moment.

Andre easily won his first four matches at the French Open and noted that fellow players were more respectful. In the quarterfinal, he was confident he could beat Russian player Kafelnikov. However, he injured his hip during the first set and, unable to move, lost the match. He returned to Vegas to recover.

Andre remained the world's number-one player and was seeded first at Wimbledon in 1995. He enjoyed the scandal when Jeff Tarango forfeited his match by storming off the court and Tarango's wife slapped the umpire. Andre reached the semifinals and played Becker. As soon as Becker gained an advantage, Andre's mind wandered, thinking of his sister's husband, Pancho, who had recently died of cancer. Aware that Nick was watching the match from Becker's box, he wondered if his old mentor had given Becker insight into his game. Andre lost and was devastated. Brooke and Andre went to Indigo Island and had the whole island to themselves. Andre did not speak for two days.

Brad showed Andre an article recounting Becker's post-Wimbledon news conference. Becker claimed that Andre was unpopular with other players because he lacked openness. Andre and Brad agreed to dedicate themselves to a "Summer of Revenge" (209).

At a Washington, DC, tournament, Andre experienced heat stroke in the final against Edberg and left the court to vomit. When he returned, he won the match. Afterward, Jeff Tarango criticized Andre for leaving the court. Andre then won 20 matches and four tournaments in a row, defeating Sampras and Chang. The media emphasized the rivalry between Sampras and Andre and their contrasting personalities.

In the 1995 US Open, Andre played Becker in the semifinals. When Andre was two sets ahead, Becker blew kisses to Brooke in the box. Andre was furious and lost the next set. However, he won the match and made Becker wait to shake his hand at the net. In the post-match interview, Andre warned Sampras that he was coming for him in the final.

That night, Andre woke screaming. He realized that he had torn the cartilage between his ribs and could hardly breathe. In the final, Sampras defeated him. Suddenly, all his previous wins seemed meaningless. Brooke gave Andre space and looked sympathetic, but he did not believe she understood his feelings.

Chapters 12-17 Analysis

Agassi's memoir presents winning Wimbledon as a crucial turning point in his career. His victory legitimized him as a serious player in the eyes of the press and other players, and he went from "infamous" to famous. However, Andre discovered that winning did not provide long-term happiness, and after the high of Wimbledon, he soon experienced injury, heartbreak, and a loss of form.

Andre's most fearsome opponent was his own mind: Plagued by a lack of motivation and purpose, he sometimes wanted to lose. The author uses the injury of his Achilles' heel at an airport to reflect on his figurative Achilles' heel: his lack of a consistently positive mindset. Andre's mental obstacles at this point in his career thematically relate to **The Journey of Self-Discovery and Authenticity**. Having always played tennis to please others, he lacked the motivation to win for himself. Furthermore, when he did win, his satisfaction was fleeting or nonexistent. Although he selected various goals that he believed should motivate him, such as becoming number one in the world, these achievements did not make him happy, as they were the dreams of his father and team rather than authentic personal goals. Thematically underscoring **The Physical and Emotional Toll of a Professional Tennis Career**, Agassi emphasizes the relentless nature of pursuing goals in a world where players are only as good as their last result. His Wimbledon victory was soon overshadowed by several losses. Furthermore, the author highlights the role of negativity bias, or the human tendency to dwell on negative events more than positive ones: "A win doesn't feel as good as a loss feels bad, and the good feeling doesn't last as long as the bad. Not even close" (166).

This section foregrounds the importance of Agassi's personal relationships to his quest for authenticity. His temptation to propose to Wendi, despite their youth, suggests that he sought a sense of security from others. Agassi explains that what sparked his subsequent relationship with singer Barbra Streisand was a shared ambivalence about using their talents. His romance with Brooke Shields fulfilled Perry's earlier prediction, and the couple initially seemed compatible. Having been groomed as an actor and model from infancy, Brooke knew how it felt when an ambitious parent dictated one's life. Like Andre, she was required to perform for audiences and had experienced the pressure of fame. Combined with these shared experiences and Perry's earlier prophecy, the discovery that they had the same favorite movie, *Shadowlands*, led Andre to assume they were destined to meet. However, less auspicious omens, such as a drunk urinating in the Seine as Andre presents Brooke with a romantic gift, foreshadow the deterioration of the relationship. The author uses the symbolism of islands to underscore the increasing emotional distance between him and Brooke. Their trip to Indigo Island marked the

first of several attempts to grow closer by spending quality time together. However, the vacation only emphasized their differences. Agassi conveys the loneliness of the relationship as he and Brooke became alienated like separate islands.

Agassi demonstrates a satirical perspective on his younger self as he describes buying his first home. While at the time he viewed the purchase as a sign of adulthood, he recognizes in hindsight that the bachelor pad, with its video games and movie theater, was a “deluxe playpen” for “a boy-man” (160). Nevertheless, these chapters illustrate his small steps toward asserting agency based on maturing in his journey toward self-discovery rather than on negative motivations. His appearance at the 1994 US Open wearing functional black suggests a new seriousness, moving away from the rebellious image he initially became known for, while his decision to shave his head was momentous for its symbolic meaning. No longer hiding his true appearance under a hairpiece, Andre moved toward greater authenticity and openness.

Chapters 18-21

Chapter 18 Summary

During the Davis Cup, Andre pulled a chest muscle while trying to protect his injured rib cartilage. Doctors insisted that he rest. Brad pointed out that Andre would lose his number-one world ranking, but Andre no longer cared, convinced that Sampras would always take the top spot.

Brooke bought a house in Los Angeles and got a guest role on the hit sitcom *Friends*. She compared the role to the US Open. Andre had never seen *Friends* but pretended to be happy for her. He and Perry flew to Hollywood to watch the filming of the episode. Brooke played a stalker, and the role required her to lick the character Joey’s hand. Horrified, Andre stormed out and returned to Vegas. When Brooke pointed out that he would be furious if she behaved the same way during a tennis match, Andre smashed his tennis trophies.

In a match at Stuttgart, Andre was one set ahead when the bottom of one tennis shoe fell off. He lost the match wearing a shoe far too small that a man in the crowd donated. Andre promised himself that he would retire but traveled to Australia for the 1996 Australian Open as the defending champion. On the plane, he took a sleeping pill with vodka, and when he reached the hotel, he fell down a spiral staircase, cutting his kneecap open. Andre resigned himself to becoming the first defending champion to go out in the first round. However, he reached the quarterfinals, beating Courier, who was not in top form either. In the semifinal against Chang, Andre was relieved to lose to avoid facing Becker in the final.

Chapter 19 Summary

Andre received penalties in several tournaments for shouting at himself, swearing, and failing to attend post-match press conferences. He admitted to Gil that he was unmotivated to win after losing to Sampras at the US Open.

Brooke and Andre's favorite restaurant in New York was Campagnola. When the manager confided worries about affording his kids' college fees, Andre put Nike shares in a trust for their education. In helping the restaurant manager, he felt more fulfillment than in any of his tennis achievements.

Brooke regularly received letters from stalkers who threatened to kill her. Gil sometimes traced the stalkers and paid them an intimidating visit. Other times, he guarded the house. Andre's relationship with Brooke was deteriorating, and he worried that he was losing her as well as his tennis career. Perry, Philly, and J. P. were all about to get married. When Andre proposed to Brooke in Hawaii, she accepted, but he felt uncertain that he had made the right decision.

At Wimbledon in 1996, Andre lost in the first round to a qualifier ranked 281st. As Brooke planned their wedding, he looked forward to following in his father's footsteps by participating in the Olympics. He won Gold with his father in the crowd. However, only days later, Andre's elation had faded, and he felt inexplicably angry. At Cincinnati, he won the tournament but smashed his racket during the game. In the first round at Indianapolis, he deliberately hit the ball out of the stadium and swore when the umpire gave him a warning, defaulting the match. The crowd booed as the match was canceled. After Thomas Muster called him "a prima donna," Andre enjoyed beating him in the US Open quarterfinal. However, Chang defeated Andre in the semifinal, and the press accused him of "tanking," while proclaiming Sampras "the best player of his generation" when he beat Chang in the finals (239). Brad advised Andre to withdraw from the Australian Open and spend time with Brooke.

Chapter 20 Summary

Brooke and Andre bought a property in the Pacific Palisades with a view of Sunset Boulevard. She loved the house, but it didn't feel like home to Andre. While he was at the 1997 Golden Globe Awards with Brooke, Gil called, revealing that his 12-year-old daughter, Kacey, had broken her neck in a sledding accident. Andre flew to Vegas and parked his minivan outside the hospital so that Gil could sleep there after visiting hours. Gil insisted that Andre compete at San Jose. He did but lost in the semifinals, feeling unfocused.

Andre contemplated postponing or canceling his wedding. His assistant, Slim, stayed with him in Las Vegas and suggested that they get high. After using crystal methamphetamine for the first time, Andre was euphoric. He manically cleaned the house and didn't sleep for 48 hours. Meanwhile, Brooke was absorbed in wedding preparations, dieting and working out. For inspiration, she put a photo of a woman with "perfect legs" on the refrigerator door. The woman was Steffi Graf.

Andre trained hard for the Davis Cup and won his matches, achieving one of the best Davis Cup scores by an American. Reporters praised his performance while asking why this success did not translate to other tournaments.

In April 1997, Andre married Brooke in a Monterey church as paparazzi circled in helicopters. Brooke, almost six feet tall, insisted that Andre wear lifts in his shoes. He sweated profusely during the ceremony. When a decoy bride left the church to misdirect the paparazzi, Andre wished a decoy groom could have married Brooke.

The wedding reception was at a ranch. In the bridal suite, Andre had arranged for hundreds of lit candles. However, they made the room unbearably hot. When Andre and Brooke blew them out, they triggered the smoke detectors. The next day, Brooke arranged for them to arrive at a celebratory barbecue on horseback. Later, while playing with his nephew, Andre injured his wrist.

Due to his injury, Andre pulled out of the 1997 French Open. However, he intended to play Wimbledon because Brooke had an acting job in England at the same time. Once in London, Andre realized he did not want to play and withdrew.

After losing his game at a tournament in Washington, DC, Andre announced he was taking the summer off. Brooke was in Los Angeles, and Andre remained in Las Vegas, using drugs with Slim. Slim's girlfriend had a premature baby who needed specialist care available only in Phoenix. Andre arranged a medical airplane for the baby and traveled to Phoenix with Slim and his girlfriend. He rented a house for them near the hospital.

Brad persuaded Andre to play at the ATP Championships in Cincinnati. However, when Andre lost in the first round, the Davis Cup team dropped him. At the 1997 US Open, Andre was unseeded and lost to Pat Rafter. Rafter could not hide the pity in his smile when they shook hands at the net.

Arriving at Stuttgart airport for a tournament, Andre immediately saw Sampras. He now realized that the media's representation of them as "polar opposites" was not an exaggeration. Having always scorned Sampras's lack of work-life balance, Andre reconsidered his rival's dedication to tennis and found it admirable. Andre was beaten at Stuttgart in the first round.

Brad had a serious talk with Andre, insisting that he either quit or dedicate himself to training and keeping the right mindset. Andre reflected that he still hated tennis but many people feel that way about their jobs. He agreed to follow Brad's advice.

Chapter 21 Summary

At 27 years old, Andre committed to change. However, a doctor from the ATP called him, revealing that Andre had tested positive for crystal methylene in a recent test. If he admitted to knowingly taking the drug, he would be suspended from professional tennis for three months. Andre wrote to the ATP, claiming that he inadvertently drank a soda spiked with meth belonging to Slim.

Gil helped Andre begin training all over again, drawing up a new regime. In early 1995, ranked 141st, Andre entered a Challenger tournament, the kind he had played at the beginning of his career, in which the matches had no ball boys and the players maintained their own scoreboards. Andre lost in the final but was relieved just to be playing.

A week later, Andre entered another Challenger in a Burbank public park. He played there on Thanksgiving Day, while Chang and Sampras were in the Davis Cup. A tennis official compared Andre's appearance at the Challenger to Bruce Springsteen playing a gig in a corner bar. Brooke was working nearby on her successful new TV show, *Suddenly Susan*, which Perry was producing. Neither Andre nor Brooke asked how the other's work was going.

Andre agreed to a tennis event in South Africa for the Nelson Mandela Foundation. Upon meeting him, Andre was struck by the wisdom in Mandela's eyes and his lack of bitterness after 27 years of imprisonment. Mandela's speech emphasizing the importance of caring for oneself and others resonated with Andre. When Mandela described how he endured captivity by educating himself, Andre felt ashamed of his complicity in his own lack of education given that it meant so much to many others. He suddenly wanted to grow up. With Perry's help, Andre established a charitable foundation to help underprivileged inner-city children and resolved to establish a charter school.

Determined to succeed, in 1998 Andre beat Sampras in the final at San Jose. In the press conference, reporters laughed when Andre announced his intent to be ranked number one in the world again. He won his second straight tournament at Scottsdale, motivated by the thought of raising money to establish the Andre Agassi College Preparatory Academy. His lawyer called to say that the ATP had accepted his explanation for the failed drug test, so he would not be suspended.

During a match at Wimbledon against Tommy Haas, the linesman and umpire refused to consider Andre's claim that a ball was out. He lost the match but saw from the coverage that the ball was out; nevertheless, he laughed about it. He won the final of the Legg Mason in Washington, DC, and the Mercedes-Benz Cup. When he beat Sampras at the du Maurier Open in Toronto, he knocked his rival from the number-one ranking, raising his own to number nine. Richard Krajicek beat Andre in the semifinals, but he accepted the loss stoically.

Brooke, returning home from making a film, revealed a new dog tattoo on her hip. Shocked, Andre suggested that she should have consulted him. She accused him of being controlling. The couple took a delayed honeymoon to Necker Island (one of the British Virgin Islands), owned by Richard Branson. Andre wanted to relax, while Brooke insisted that they take scuba diving lessons. He quit the lessons, and the couple returned home three days earlier than planned.

While Brooke was out with her actor friends, Andre often chose to stay at home. Brooke suggested that Perry, J. P., Philly, and Brad exploited Andre and stopped him from maturing. Brooke and Perry had not been getting along, and he had quit his role as producer on *Suddenly Susan*. The couple's New Year's Eve party was dominated by Brooke's friends. Perry and Andre bought a plot to build the academy in a deprived neighborhood of West Las Vegas. Brooke did not attend the groundbreaking ceremony.

The night before Andre played at the 1999 Australian Open, Brooke called, suggesting they should talk when he returned. Preoccupied by Brooke's call, Andre lost his match. Sportswriters implied that Andre did not know when to retire.

Andre returned home, and he and Brooke went out to eat. She criticized him for always ordering the same thing and started to cry. On the way home, she admitted that she did not think they could be happy together. Andre packed some belongings, including a gift from Brooke: a replica of the Louvre painting depicting the man on a cliff edge. Andre wondered how the man still hung on. Spending the night in a cheap motel, he was surprised at the depth of his distress and realized that he hated losing.

Taking Brooke's advice, Andre saw a therapist. Afterward, he faxed Brooke a long letter stating that he wanted to save their marriage. When Brooke remained adamant that he solve his issues without her, however, Andre requested a speedy divorce. He pawned his wedding ring and donated the money to the academy in Brooke's name.

Chapters 18-21 Analysis

This section of the memoir is notable for the author's honesty as he describes using crystal methamphetamine, lying to the ATP about his failed drug test, the deterioration of his marriage, and a career low, as his ranking drops to 141st. The memoir emphasizes the emotional toll of these experiences. Andre increasingly identified with the man in the Louvre painting, feeling that his own figurative grasp on the cliff edge was slipping. Andre reveals how he expressed his inner turmoil through increasingly self-destructive behavior, abusing his body by misusing substances and indulging in unsportsmanlike behavior that created a negative public image. The text emphasizes the contrast between the hard work it takes to achieve the world's number-one ranking and how easy it is to lose it: "Rock bottom can be very cozy, because at least you're at rest" (238). This assertion reflects the relentless demands of the pro tennis circuit, thematically highlighting **The Physical and Emotional Toll of a Professional Tennis Career**. During this dark period, Andre felt a sense of failure but also experienced perverse relief.

The text depicts Andre and Brooke's increasing estrangement as stemming from their inability to relate to each other's professions. He felt that she did not understand the demands of tennis, while he perceived the acting world as superficial. His proposing to her despite profound misgivings about their relationship signaled his fragile sense of identity and desperation for security. The description of their wedding underscores the inauthentic foundations of the marriage and conveys his sense of playing a role he felt unsuited to. He recounts his discomfort at wearing lifts in his shoes to appear taller and the theatricality of arriving at a barbecue on horseback. His unease extended to their Pacific Palisades house, which did not feel like home to him. The anecdote of his playing a Stuttgart match wearing an ill-fitting shoe belonging to a member of the crowd symbolically illustrates his feeling of living someone else's life. Nevertheless, he feared divorce since it represented another failure. In hindsight, Agassi figuratively compares his final phone call with Brooke to "the brief, curt handshake at the net between two mismatched opponents" (279). The simile is one of several analogies in the memoir comparing life's peaks and troughs to the game of tennis.

Agassi highlights the psychological disadvantages of pursuing a career he did not actively choose, which manifested in his lack of a consistent desire to win, leading to accusations of "tanking." However, he found greater motivation to succeed when playing for his country by focusing on a goal greater than personal achievement. These chapters chart how Andre increasingly found satisfaction in helping others outside the tennis court, such as the Italian restaurant manager, Gil's daughter, and Slim's premature baby. These actions sowed the seeds for later charitable endeavors that gave him professional purpose. He describes his meeting with Nelson Mandela as pivotal in inspiring his commitment to **The Journey of Self-**

Discovery and Authenticity. Mandela's lack of bitterness despite the suffering he endured during his imprisonment placed Andre's own challenges and resentments into perspective and solidified his desire to help others through education. Agassi underscores the irony of his determination to establish an academy in light of his own dismissal of educational opportunities as a teen. His radical change of perspective signals a growing maturity.

Toward the end of this section, the memoir takes on a new tone of optimism and resilience in describing Andre's resolve to turn his life around. His selling his wedding ring and donating the money to the academy in Brooke's name demonstrates his desire to turn their failed marriage into something positive. Additionally, his recommitting to his career from the bottom up required a deeper humility and respect for the game.

Chapter 22-Epilogue

Chapter 22 Summary

Watching Steffi Graf play a match on TV, Brad insisted that she would be the perfect partner for Andre. Andre reminded Brad that Steffi had rebuffed him. However, Brad said he knew Steffi's coach and promised to arrange a practice session between them. At Key Biscayne, Steffi's coach advised Andre to book the practice court after Steffi "spontaneously" suggested that they play together. Steffi unenthusiastically agreed, and afterward, Andre sent her flowers. However, he saw his bouquet abandoned on Steffi's patio table, and she revealed that her boyfriend was with her. Distracted, Andre was defeated in the first round of the tournament. Brad suggested that he make his split with Brooke public so that Steffi knew his intentions were serious. Andre and Brooke agreed on an official press statement while lawyers worked on their divorce. Just before his 29th birthday, Andre saw the headline *Suddenly Split* in a newspaper.

Andre damaged his shoulder in a Hong Kong tournament, but Brad persuaded him to play in Rome and then in Germany, where he was forced to abandon his match. He told Brad to pull him out of the French Open, but Brad refused, pointing out that it was the only Slam he had not won.

Before his first match in Paris, Andre realized that he had forgotten to pack underwear and went commando. He was astonished when he won the match. From then on, Andre never wore underwear when he played. Reaching the round of 16, Andre won against defending champion Carlos Moya. During Andre's two days off, Brad suggested attending a Bruce Springsteen concert. Andre was unsure until he recalled a tennis official comparing Andre's entry in a Challenger tournament to "Springsteen playing a corner bar" (294). At the concert, fans spotted Andre and

chanted his name.

After winning the French Open quarterfinal and semifinal, Andre faced Andrei Medvedev in the final. Just months earlier, Andre had bumped into Medvedev, who was experiencing a losing streak and considering retirement. Andre had given him tips on his game, and Medvedev had transformed, winning everything. Nervous as the match began, Andre made unforced errors, losing the first set. When rain interrupted the match, Andre told Brad he could not beat Medvedev. Brad advised him to forget perfectionism and keep it simple: "See the ball, Hit the ball" (299). Returning to play, Andre took Brad's advice and was overjoyed when he won the match. Afterward, he received a congratulatory call from Björn Borg.

Chapter 23 Summary

Brad suggested that it was "destiny" that Andre was the male French Open champion while Steffi won the women's tournament. He pointed out that only Andre and Steffi had won the four Grand Slams and a Gold medal. Brad predicted that they would marry in 2001 and have their first child in 2002.

Flying to London for Wimbledon, Andre realized he would land on Steffi's birthday and made her an *ad hoc* card. Touched by the handmade card, she called him two days later. When Andre answered, she identified herself as Stefanie, revealing that her mother and the press called her Steffi but she preferred her given name. When Andre clarified his feelings for her, Steffi insisted that they could not meet because she was in a relationship with a racing driver and they had been together for six years. Andre suggested that if the relationship had not moved forward in six years, it may not have a future.

Andre beat Pat Rafter in the Wimbledon semifinals and was due to face Sampras in the final. Brooke was in London and came to see Andre the morning of the match. She saw a copy of *Sports Illustrated* with Andre on the cover and noticed the headline *Suddenly Andre* and apologized, suggesting that the writer had made the article all about her. Steffi lost in the Wimbledon final after pulling a hamstring. During his match, Andre lost in straight sets to Sampras. He called Steffi as soon as it was over, but days passed and she did not respond. Finally, she got in touch, explaining that she was ill after Wimbledon and had to return to Germany. They arranged to meet after Andre's tournament in Los Angeles.

In Los Angeles, Andre lost to Sampras in the final but was too excited to care. As he was about to leave to meet Steffi, Brooke dropped by. He admitted that he had a date with Steffi, and Brooke wished him well. At a restaurant overlooking the ocean,

Andre and Steffi talked about their charitable foundations. The next day, they went to the beach. Steffi was unsurprised when Andre revealed that he hated tennis. She challenged him to a race across the beach, and he was happy to lose.

Chapter 24 Summary

Andre and Steffi remained in contact while traveling to different tournaments. She was astonished to learn they shared the same favorite film, *Shadowlands*. At Montreal, Kafelnikov soundly beat Andre. Meanwhile, Steffi was injured in a Los Angeles tournament. They arranged to meet in New York before the US Open. Steffi planned to go to Germany and end her relationship with her boyfriend. She also revealed that she was retiring from tennis. Andre wondered if he too had reached this stage. However, a week later, he beat Kafelnikov in the final at Washington, DC.

Andre and Steffi stayed at a farmhouse, where they hiked, explored the area, and watched movies. At the US Open, Andre beat Kafelnikov in the semifinals, and cameras spotted Steffi in the crowd. In the final, Andre faced Todd Martin since Sampras had pulled out of the tournament with a back injury. Andre won the first set, but Martin won the second and third. Determined not to let this disadvantage affect his game, Andre won the match.

Andre took Steffi to Vegas, and she stayed with him for a month. When he told Steffi he wanted to have children with her, she left her birth control pills in his shaving kit.

By the end of 1999, Andre ranked number one in the world. His winning the Paris Open and the French Open successively had made history. At the ATP World Tour Championship, he lost to Sampras. However, at the 2000 Australian Open, Andre defeated Sampras in the semifinals and beat Kafelnikov in the final, winning his sixth Slam.

Chapter 25 Summary

Steffi moved in with Andre, and her father, Peter, visited. A tennis-obsessed soccer player, Peter had introduced Steffi to the sport when she was three and managed her career. When they introduced him to Mike Agassi, Peter asked to see the dragon. Mike made Andre demonstrate how the machine worked. When he missed a ball, Peter asserted that Andre lacked the “famous Stefanie Slice” (325). Irate, Mike insisted that Steffi should have used the two-handed backhand he taught Andre. The argument grew more heated, and Peter claimed he could have beaten Mike in the boxing ring. He took off his shirt, and the men circled each other with their fists raised until Andre intervened.

Andre lost in the early rounds at Scottsdale, Atlanta, and Rome and pulled a hamstring. He resolved to select tournaments carefully instead of trying to play them all. He entered the 2000 French Open but lost in the second round. While he played at Wimbledon, Steffi enjoyed exploring London without the pressure of competitive tennis. In the semifinals, Andre faced Rafter, who won in five sets.

When Andre's mother and his sister Tami both learned they had breast cancer, Andre dropped out of the Sydney Olympic team to be with his family. Tami was about to have chemotherapy and asked Andre to proactively shave her head. Meanwhile, his mother handled her treatment calmly and urged Andre to return to tennis. Andre was the number-one seed at the US Open but had no motivation to win. In the second round, his game fell apart, and he lost. Sportswriters predicted the imminent end of his career.

In January 2001, Andre refocused and won the Australian Open, marking his seventh Grand Slam. He then beat Sampras in the Indian Wells final. Afterward, Sampras revealed that he was marrying actress Bridgette Wilson. He laughed when Andre claimed he was "allergic" to actresses. Andre wished he could talk more intimately with Sampras but accepted that they would never be close. In a TV interview, Andre gave the answers expected of him, claiming he had loved tennis since he was a young boy. Afterward, he regretted missing an opportunity for honesty and promised himself to one day tell the truth.

Steffi discovered she was pregnant. She and Andre celebrated by going out to eat and decided to get married when they had a free day. Afterward, Andre realized that they had celebrated in the restaurant where his split with Brooke began. When they learned they were having a son, Andre and Steffi decided on the name Jaden and the middle name Gil. Andre told Gil he hoped their son took after him.

At the 2001 French Open, the presence of Steffi and their unborn child in the box energized Andre. When he lost in the quarterfinals, reporters asked if he was distracted by Bill Clinton's arrival. Andre was unaware that the President was even there. At Wimbledon, Andre was close to winning a five-set match against Rafter when he missed an easy shot. The lineswoman reported him for swearing, and the umpire gave him a warning. Fixated on the lineswoman's actions, he lost the match. He was disappointed, but his mind was filled with thoughts of Steffi, their baby, and his academy, which was due to open soon.

In the US Open, Andre played well, motivated by raising money for his school. He faced Sampras in the quarterfinals. Sampras was off-form and considering retirement but nevertheless won the match. Andre felt at peace with the result.

In October 2001, Andre and Steffi married at their house. Only their mothers and a judge were present, and Steffi and Andre went barefoot, wearing jeans.

Chapter 26 Summary

Jaden was born a few weeks after the Andre Agassi Academy opened. The first time Steffi left Andre alone with Jaden, he sat his son on the bathroom counter as he shaved his head. Noticing that Jaden's hair looked untidy, Andre tried to trim it but used the wrong shaving attachment, leaving his son with a bald head. Steffi was horrified but saw the funny side.

Andre won the Tennis Masters Series against Rafter, but a wrist injury forced him to withdraw from the 2002 Australian Open. Brad suggested that Andre hire a new coach to remotivate him for the last years of his career. Darren Cahill, Lleyton Hewitt's former coach, took on the role.

Andre was a few days away from his 32nd birthday when he entered the Key Biscayne tournament. He was struck by the youth of promising new players like Andy Roddick and Roger Federer. Andre beat Federer in the final, achieving his 51st tournament victory.

Darren persuaded Andre to try playing with new racket strings. Many of the best new players used elastic polyester strings to create a topspin that transformed their play. Using the strings Darren recommended, Andre won the Italian Open. However, at Wimbledon, the new strings worked to his disadvantage on grass courts. He lost his first match, and Sampras experienced the same fate. Darren experimented with a combination of strings, and Andre won the Mercedes-Benz Cup. However, he lost his next two tournaments to younger players. At the 2002 US Open, Andre defeated Hewitt (that year's Wimbledon champion) in the semifinals. In the final, he faced Sampras, who defeated him in four sets.

Andre, who once saw a valet fetch Sampras's car, bet that Sampras tipped the valet at least $10, while Brad guessed $5. The valet revealed that Sampras gave him $1.

Chapter 27 Summary

Andre had started keeping a journal for Jaden to read in the future. He woke and remembered he was in Shanghai, China. If he won, he would be the world's oldest number-one player at year's end, breaking Connors's record. When he lost the

Shanghai match, Andre was tempted to go home. However, he forced himself to stay and play a consolation match. Hewitt was the number-one ranked player at the end of the year.

After Gil devised a new training regimen for Andre, he won the 2003 Australian Open in straight sets, achieving his eighth Slam. Newspapers reported he was the oldest player in 31 years to win a Grand Slam and again questioned him about retirement. Courier had recently retired, and Chang had announced his intention to do so. Andre became the oldest number-one-ranked player in history when he won the Key Biscayne tournament and the US men's clay court Championships in Houston.

Andre had a shoulder injury as he entered the 2003 French Open. In the second round, on a court where he had experienced devastating losses, he played 19-year-old Mario Ancic. Andre defeated Ancic in five sets, but it was a close and grueling match. Before the quarterfinal, Andre's opponent, Guillermo Coria, stated that Andre was his idol. When Andre lost the match, overwhelmed by Coria's speed, he also lost his number-one ranking. He entered Wimbledon, but Mark Philippoussis beat him in the fourth round. In pain and too exhausted to continue, Andre was relieved to lose.

At the 2003 US Open, Sampras announced his retirement. He was emotional during his press conference, and Andre felt moved and suddenly lonely. He realized he was the last of his generation of American Grand Slam winners to still be playing. Andre reached the semifinal, but his young opponent, Juan Carlos Ferrero, easily beat him. However, his disappointment disappeared when he saw Steffi, who was eight months pregnant with their second child.

Andre and Steffi's daughter, Jaz, was born in October 2003. At the 2004 Australian Open, Andre was sleep-deprived, while the other players looked rested. When he lost in the semifinals to Marat Safin, Andre wondered if this was the end of his career. Gil advised Andre to rest more and save himself for the major tournaments. However, at the French Open, Andre was under-practiced and lost in the first round to a player ranked 271st. He withdrew from Wimbledon, and Gil advised him to consider retirement.

Meanwhile, Steffi was voted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame. Anxious about the awards ceremony, she asked Andre to introduce her at the event. In his speech, Andre introduced her as "the greatest person I have ever known" (355).

Chapter 28 Summary

Andre won the ATP final, beating Roddick and then Hewitt. Reporters were skeptical when he declared that he had a chance to win the US Open. Steffi was understanding of the demands of tennis even though this meant that much of the childcare would fall to her. She always had a hot meal waiting for Andre after a match. In the quarterfinals of the US Open, Andre faced number-one seed Federer, who won in five sets. Andre predicted that Federer would be the greatest player ever. When sportswriters asked why Andre hadn't retired, he said he continued to play to support his family and his charitable foundation, for which he had raised $40 million. Furthermore, he still believed he could win.

At the 2005 Australian Open, Andre reached the fourth round and was interviewed by Jim Courier, now a TV commentator. Andre regretted his old resentment of Courier, which in retrospect seemed childish. When Courier asked about his son, Andre lied, saying he hoped Jaden would love tennis as much as he did. In reality, both he and Steffi hoped that neither of their children would play tennis. Afterward, Andre felt ashamed at having extended his dishonesty to his son. He had his third cortisone shot of the year for the quarterfinals. However, Federer beat him easily.

Shortly after his 35th birthday, Andre traveled to Rome for the Italian Open. He won the first four matches and received a standing ovation from the crowd. At the press conference, reporters again asked him about retirement.

The 2005 French Open marked Andre's 58th Slam—the most any player had entered in the Open Era. However, the effects of the cortisone shot on his back had worn off. Despite taking eight Advil pills before his first-round match, he lost. Andre pulled out of Wimbledon, and Gil designed a training regimen to build his core strength while protecting him from injury. After Andre won the Mercedes-Benz Cup, Jaden ran onto the court during the trophy ceremony. At Montreal, newcomer Rafael Nadal beat Andre in the final.

Andre entered the 2005 US Open for the 20th year in a row. After his fourth cortisone shot of the year, he won the first round easily. In the second round, he faced Ivo Karlovic, who was 6'10". Andre beat him in three sets, taking advantage of Karlovic's difficulty in reaching low balls. In the third round, he defeated promising 18-year-old Tomas Berdych. In his next match, against Xavier Matisse, Andre exploited his opponent's relatively weak backhand, winning in five sets. In the semifinals, Andre was fatigued. He played aggressively to avoid running around and defeated Robby Ginepri in five sets. In the final, Federer beat Andre in three sets. During the post-match press conference, Andre declared that Federer's game had no weaknesses.

Chapter 29 Summary

Andre pulled out of the clay season to prepare for Wimbledon 2006, deciding it would be his farewell to the tournament. He announced the forthcoming US Open would be his last tournament, telling reporters that his body would not allow him to play anymore. Sportswriters and commentators reflected on Andre's transformation over his career. However, he felt that he had not changed but simply discovered who he really was. Nadal knocked Andre out of Wimbledon in the third round. Ordinarily, only the winning player was interviewed on the court immediately after the match. However, Wimbledon officials broke this convention and interviewed Andre as well.

Andre's family and friends traveled to New York to watch him in the US Open. He won the first round despite severe back pain and had a cortisone shot before his second-round match against Marcos Baghdatis. After Andre's victory, both players held hands as they watched the match highlights and awaited medical treatment. At the same time, Andre relived his life in his mind.

The next morning, Andre's father begged him to quit the tournament, saying he could not bear to see his son suffer any longer. However, Andre refused to give in. In the third round, Benjamin Becker beat him in four sets. After the match, Andre thanked his fans for their support as he received a standing ovation.

Epilogue Summary: "The Beginning"

A year later, Andre's Academy had 500 students. Most pupils were African American and from low-income backgrounds. The school was designed to be inspirational, with corridors featuring pictures of Martin Luther King Jr., Mahatma Gandhi, and Nelson Mandela. Famous people, such as President Clinton, Muhammad Ali, and Elton John, often dropped in to talk to students. One of the students stopped Andre and told him that since his father was murdered a year ago, the school had given him purpose and hope.

Andre and Steffi rented the center court at the local public tennis facilities. Since neither had played for a while, they were rusty but soon loosened up and played competitively. It started raining, but they continued, and a crowd gathered to watch. Steffi gestured that it was time to stop, but Andre called her back to "play just a little while longer" (385).

Chapter 24-Epilogue Analysis

The memoir's final section recounts Agassi's career revival and some of his greatest professional achievements, including gaining the previously elusive French Open title and winning all four Grand Slam titles on three different surfaces. These achievements coincided with personal happiness as Brad's predictions came to pass: Andre married Steffi in 2001, and she had their first child in 2002.

Having previously compared his unsuccessful attempts to impress Steffi to the French Open—"I just can't get across that particular finish line" (283)—Andre demonstrated that tennis and life both require fortitude, an attribute he acquired as he matured. Like Brooke, Steffi had several crucial things in common with Andre, including the improbable revelation that her favorite film was *Shadowlands*. The encounter between Mike Agassi and Peter Graf humorously illustrates the aggressive ambition of the fathers who drove Andre and Steffi's careers from a young age. Steffi's revelation that she preferred her given name, Stefanie, demonstrates that the press misrepresented her identity, just like Andre's. In addition, Steffi understood the psychological and physical demands of tennis through personal experience. The simplicity of their barefoot marriage ceremony sharply contrasts with the theatricality of Andre's wedding to Brooke, highlighting the harmony and authenticity of their relationship. Andre's contentment allowed him to see his life from a more balanced and positive perspective. Noting that he and Steffi celebrated her pregnancy at the same restaurant where his split from Brooke began, he observes, "The same court on which you suffer your bloodiest defeat can become the scene of your sweetest triumph" (332). His comparing the vicissitudes of life to a game of tennis underscores the importance of resilience both on and off the tennis court.

Finding happiness and security in his family life, Andre increasingly took professional disappointments in stride. The journal he wrote for his son, Jaden, illustrates the transformative impact of parenthood. Andre's consciousness that he was now a role model for his children prompted greater responsibility toward his obligations. His resolution to play the Shanghai consolation match, despite his urge to return home, contrasts with his earlier skipping of the press conferences professional players must attend. A further sign of his coming of age was his relinquishing old personal resentments, as evident in his revised attitude toward Courier. However, despite achieving a less-conflicted sense of self, Andre still could not be honest about his troubled relationship with tennis in interviews, providing answers that he knew the public expected and wanted. The publication of *Open* fulfilled his promise to himself to tell the world the truth one day, thematically overcoming **The Impact of Fame on Mental Health** by claiming the agency to control his own narrative.

In the final chapters, the author charts the years leading up to his retirement. The dynamics reversed: As Mike Agassi begged his son to quit, 35-year-old Andre resisted pressures to end his career. As contemporaries such as Chang and Sampras retired, Andre made history as the oldest player to achieve certain milestones. The memoir emphasizes the physical toll of playing with a new generation of tennis stars such as Roddick, Nadal, and Federer: Andre's old injuries caused him constant pain. At the same time, his victories in the 2005 US Open demonstrate the psychological advantage of maturity: He played more tactically, exploiting younger opponents' weaknesses. Ultimately, the memoir presents Andre's retirement not as a choice but as a decision that his failing body forced on him, again thematically underscoring **The Physical and Emotional Toll of a Professional Tennis Career**. In Chapter 29, the story comes full circle, returning to the US Open match against Baghdatis that begins the memoir. Thus, Agassi marks his final tournament as the end of one life and the beginning of a new one.

"The Beginning" concludes with Agassi reflecting on his life and legacy. Agassi's journey from a reluctant prodigy to a family man and philanthropic role model underscores his growth, thematically resolving **The Journey of Self-Discovery and Authenticity**. The final lines in which he begs Steffi to "play just a little while longer" echo his lifelong bittersweet relationship with tennis (385).

Key Figures

Andre Agassi

Born in 1970, Andre Agassi, the central figure and author of *Open*, is a former professional tennis champion. He was once ranked first in the world, and his career spanned more than 20 years. He was the first man to win all four major tennis tournaments on three surfaces (hard court, clay, and grass). His achievements include the coveted Golden Slam of tennis, which means winning each of the four Grand Slams and an Olympic Gold medal. On July 9, 2011, Agassi was inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame.

Through his introspective narrative, Agassi offers an intimate look into his life. A deeply complex individual, his life and tennis career were marked by internal conflicts, personal struggles, and eventual fulfillment. The memoir provides a raw and honest depiction of his experiences, thematically depicting **The Journey of Self-Discovery and Authenticity** he experienced as he evolved both as an athlete and as an individual.

Agassi's demanding father, Mike Agassi, dominated his early life. Mike's obsession with making his son a tennis champion shaped Andre during his formative years. The grueling training regimen to which his father subjected him instilled in Andre a hatred of tennis. A lack of agency characterized his life as he embarked on a career in which he excelled but did not choose.

The memoir thematically highlights **The Impact of Fame on Mental Health** , deconstructing the media's representation of Andre as a brash disruptor of traditional tennis. The author reveals that behind his rebellious image, long hair, and flamboyant clothes was a vulnerable and insecure individual who grappled with issues of identity and purpose. He recounts significant struggles, even admitting to using crystal methamphetamine. His honesty about this dark period in his life underscores the extent of his inner turmoil and the stress that public scrutiny and professional expectations placed on him.

In addition, Agassi's life story thematically illustrates **The Physical and Emotional Toll of a Professional Tennis Career**. Although chronic injuries and pain marked the later years of his career, his determination to continue playing demonstrated his resilience and ability to triumph over adversity. Ultimately, *Open* charts Agassi's coming-of-age journey from a disaffected tennis prodigy to a mature athlete and philanthropist who dedicated himself to his craft until he could no longer play.

J. R. Moehringer

Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, celebrated memoirist, and ghostwriter J. R. Moehringer collaborated with Agassi on the memoir. Moehringer's own memoir, the critically acclaimed book *The Tender Bar* (2005) was adapted into a movie starring Ben Affleck. In addition to his collaboration on Agassi's *Open*, Moehringer was the ghostwriter of Prince Harry's 2023 memoir, *Spare.* While Moehringer chose to be uncredited for his work on *Open*, Agassi emphasizes Moehringer's vital role in the book's acknowledgments. Agassi's assertion that he "asked [Moehringer] to show me my life through a Pulitzer Prize-winner's lens" suggests that the author contributed to shaping and editing Agassi's life story into a satisfying and engaging narrative (386). Agassi's decision to work with Moehringer reflects a desire to create a memoir that goes beyond a simple recounting of events to delve deeply into the psychological and emotional aspects of his life.

Moehringer spent extensive time with Agassi while working on the memoir. They became friends as he conducted in-depth interviews, gaining a comprehensive understanding of Agassi's life story. This immersive approach enabled Moehringer to capture Agassi's voice authentically and to convey his experiences with depth and nuance.

Mike Agassi

A pivotal figure in *Open*, Andre's father, Mike Agassi, embodied the fraught dynamics of a parent-driven pursuit of athletic success. His domineering and obsessive presence loomed large over Andre's childhood and early career, shaping his son's experiences and attitudes toward tennis. The memoir depicts the former Olympian boxer as an overly demanding figure with an authoritarian approach to parenting and coaching. Andre's struggle with his identity, his feelings of inadequacy, and his turbulent relationship with tennis trace back to his father's overbearing presence and high expectations. Nevertheless, the author asserts that he never doubted his father's love.

Mike's construction of a tennis court in his backyard and creation of the high-octane ball machine "the dragon" demonstrate both his obsession with tennis and his determination. The love of money that drove his ambition for his son was evident in Mike's fixation with the wheelbarrow full of silver dollars at the Alan King Tennis Classic tournament. His decision to send Andre to the Nick Bollettieri Academy was based on the discovery that the tennis school shared his relentless approach to training.

Andre's relationship with his father was characterized by a mix of fear and the

desire to please him. The bodies of hawks shot by Mike on the roof of their family home were a constant reminder of his aggressive nature. Agassi's shocking revelation of the road rage incidents he witnessed as a child demonstrates his father's violent propensities. However, he balances his portrait of his father's avarice and brutality through exposition describing Mike's childhood in Tehran, where he endured poverty and parental abuse. The text portrays Mike, like his son, as a product of his upbringing.

As Andre grew older and achieved success, his relationship with his father remained strained. Although Mike was proud of his son's achievements, he was able to express only criticism. Ultimately, the author learned to accept his father's shortcomings, asserting, "My father is what he is, and always will be" (201).

Philly Agassi

Andre's older brother, Philly (Phillip) was born in 1961. Having already experienced their father's rigorous training methods firsthand, Philly understood the pressure Andre experienced. He assumed a supportive role for Andre, providing guidance and encouragement and helping him navigate the challenges of early competitions. This bond with his older brother was an essential part of Andre's emotional support system.

Mike Agassi labeled his oldest son a "loser" who lacked the killer instinct required of a tennis champion. Philly internalized his father's criticism, as evident in his tirade of self-abuse after losing a match. To Andre, Philly was an inspirational example of perseverance and determination because he continued to strive for success while lacking his younger brother's competitive edge.

Perry Rogers

Andre's close friend and business manager, Perry Rogers, played a role in Andre's life that extended beyond professional responsibilities. His personal support and guidance significantly impacted his friend's career and personal journey. Perry and Andre's close childhood friendship was based on their shared experience of living in the shadow of tyrannical fathers. The boys established a deep bond of trust and loyalty that persisted throughout their lives as Perry became a member of Andre's chosen family. His role as a confidant was crucial during the many highs and lows of Andre's career, providing a safe space for him to express his fears, doubts, and frustrations.

In addition, Perry was central to Andre's philanthropic projects, helping him establish the Andre Agassi College Preparatory Academy. His dedication to this initiative reflected his commitment to their shared childhood goal of giving back to the community and making a positive impact on the lives of others.

Nick Bollettieri

The memoir paints a largely unflattering portrait of the owner of the Nick Bollettieri Tennis Academy, emphasizing Nick's unnaturally deep tan, his serial marriages, and his grating voice, which he compares to "sandpaper on Velcro" (75). Nick represents the intense dynamics of high-level sports coaching. He took on a similar role to Mike Agassi, enforcing a grueling training regimen on Andre in the belief Andre had moneymaking talent. However, the author suggests that, unlike his father, Nick lacked a passion for tennis. His mercenary nature is evident in his attempts to extract money from Andre after experiencing bankruptcy.

Brad Gilbert

A significant figure in *Open*, Brad Gilbert filled a crucial role in the resurgence of Andre's career and his personal growth. When Brad became Andre's coach, he was already an established figure in the tennis world, known for his strategic mind and his book *Winning Ugly* (1993), which emphasizes the mental and tactical aspects of tennis. He taught Andre to play smarter by exploiting opponents' weaknesses and maintaining mental resilience on the court. One of Brad's key strategies was to simplify Andre's game, encouraging him to focus on consistency and patience rather than trying to hit winners on every shot. This approach helped Andre develop a more measured and strategic playing style, which became a cornerstone of his later success.

Brad's influence extended beyond the technical aspects of tennis; he helped Andre navigate the game's psychological challenges. He encouraged Andre to stay calm under pressure and to believe in his ability to win, even in difficult situations. This mental fortitude became crucial in reviving Andre's career. Brad's role in Andre's success underscores the importance of the right mentorship and a positive approach to challenges.

Gil Reyes

A former strength and conditioning coach at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV), Gil Reyes is an imposing figure in the memoir, which describes him as looking “like the statue of Atlas fronting Rockefeller Center” (132). As a trainer, he became an integral part of Andre’s team and chosen family. He served as Andre’s mentor, unofficial bodyguard, and friend while positively influencing his physical and personal development.

Gil’s holistic and personalized approach to training was a welcome change for Andre. Instead of asking him to adhere to a fixed regimen, he tailored workouts to suit Andre’s unique needs. Gil’s assertion, “There’s a difference between a plow horse and a racehorse” (147), highlights his respect for Andre’s physical and mental well-being. Under his guidance, Andre experienced significant improvement in his physical condition, helping him achieve greater consistency and longevity in his career.

Beyond his role as a trainer, Gil became an alternative father figure for Andre. The memoir emphasizes the contrast between the training techniques of Mike Agassi and Gil: “Gil likes to yell at me when I’m working out, but it’s nothing like my father’s yelling. Gil yells love” (153). Their relationship was built on mutual respect and trust. Gil’s unwavering support for Andre is evident in the author’s assertion that “he’s never once taken a bathroom break during one of my matches” (353). His presence gave Andre stability and confidence when he struggled with self-doubt. In the memoir, Agassi often notes his deep gratitude to Gil for helping shape the man he became.

Brooke Shields

Actor and model Brooke Shields entered Andre’s life at a time when he was searching for stability and meaning beyond tennis. The memoir first mentions her in describing how Perry half-jokingly predicted that his friend would end up dating the woman recently voted the world’s most beautiful. By the time they met and started dating, Brooke and Andre were both prominent public figures.

The memoir depicts Andre’s relationship with Brooke as complex and turbulent. On the surface, their union appeared glamorous, drawing significant media attention. In addition, the couple shared an emotional connection, as both experienced parental pressure and the scrutiny of fame at a young age. However, Agassi also describes the incompatibility of their lifestyles and aspirations. Their differing professional

demands and personal priorities led to misunderstandings and emotional distance because Andre's craving for authenticity clashed with the performative aspect of Brooke's career.

Agassi reflects on this period and his eventual divorce from Brooke with a mix of regret and introspection. While acknowledging the love and connection they shared, he recognizes the fundamental incompatibilities and personal issues that contributed to their breakup. The end of the marriage ultimately propelled him toward a renewed focus on his tennis career and personal growth.

Steffi Graf

Andre depicts his second wife, fellow tennis champion Steffi Graf, as a transformative force in his life. While he pursued other romantic relationships, Steffi was always present in the background because her grace and quiet dignity fulfilled his ideal of femininity. He therefore presents their eventual relationship as destined.

Steffi's relationship with Andre was marked by love, professional respect for each other's achievements, and shared experiences. As former child prodigies, both understood the pressures and demands of professional tennis. This shared background allowed them to support each other in ways that few others could. The author highlights how Steffi's insights and experiences helped him navigate his own career and eventual retirement. In addition, her commitment to charitable work aligned with Andre's own philanthropic goals.

The memoir portrays their marriage as a harmonious and deeply fulfilling partnership. The couple's family life became a central source of joy and stability for Andre as they had two children together. The author depicts Steffi's support as instrumental in his successful career revival, providing him with the emotional and mental strength he needed to compete at the highest level.

Pete Sampras

Open depicts Andre's professional rivals as a series of antagonists, highlighting the intense personal dynamics that define professional tennis. His portrayal of competitive resentments and animosity between players provides insight into the ruthless nature of the professional tennis circuit. The author refers to rivalries, many based on personal slights, such as Boris Becker's public claim that Andre was unpopular with other players. However, Pete Sampras emerges as his most consistent competitive rival and foil.

As contemporaries at the top of the tennis world in the late 1980s and 1990s, Sampras and Agassi's relationship was marked by contrasts in style, personality, and approach to the game, making their encounters some of the most memorable in tennis history. Pete Sampras was known for his powerful serve and calm demeanor, while Andre was famous for his return of serve and more volatile personality. Their matches served as a clash of opposites, adding to the drama and intensity of their encounters. While their professional rivalry was fierce, the personal relationship between Agassi and Sampras was more complex. The author envied Sampras's ability to perform consistently and his calmness under pressure. At the same time, he suggested that his rival's single-mindedness limited him as a person. Agassi's assertion that he wished to possess "Pete's dullness" paradoxically flatters and insults Sampras simultaneously, while his anecdote about Sampras giving a valet a meager tip implies a lack of generosity.

Andre's frustrated sense that "in the end I always lose, because there is always Pete" plagued his career (216). However, he ultimately acknowledged Sampras's pivotal role in shaping him as a player. Competing against his greatest rival forced him to elevate his game and develop greater mental resilience. Their rivalry pushed Andre to some of his greatest successes as he strove to match and surpass Sampras's achievements.

Themes

The Physical and Emotional Toll of a Professional Tennis Career

Open gives a raw and honest portrayal of the sacrifices and challenges that elite tennis players face. Agassi provides a detailed account of the sport's relentless demands, the chronic pain and injuries that players suffer, and the profound emotional struggles that accompany a life in professional tennis. His memoir highlights the perseverance necessary to compete at the highest level, offering insight into the true cost of athletic excellence.

Andre's tennis journey began with an intense training regimen that his father imposed, setting the stage for a lifetime of physical and emotional strain. Symbolizing the relentless pressure that he experienced is the memoir's description of young Andre's traumatic daily encounters with "the dragon." The high-speed machine, which his father created to constantly fire balls at him on the home court (which his father likewise constructed) embodies the incessant pace of his future career. The Nick Bollettieri Academy ran an equally harsh training regimen while also fostering a socially stressful environment among its pupils. Agassi's description of the academy as "*Karate Kid* with rackets, *Lord of the Flies* with forehands" captures its ruthlessly competitive atmosphere (73).

The memoir conveys how the pressure to perform, both from external expectations and his own high standards, created a constant mental burden. It affected his marriage to Brooke Shields because he felt that only other professional tennis players could understand the emotional pressures of his career and how it dominated every area of life. He underscores how the relentless nature of the professional tennis circuit compounded the emotional and physical toll, providing little time for relaxation or recovery. The text details the exhausting and disorienting effects of traveling from one country to another, experiencing the various hotels he stayed in as "just another version of what I call Not Home. The non-place we exist as athletes" (5). He also reveals the mental energy required to adapt to different cultures and languages, as well as the varying seasons and surfaces of the tennis calendar.

In exploring the physical toll of a tennis career, Agassi recounts how rigorous training led to a series of chronic injuries, including back and wrist problems, prompting a continual battle with pain. Significantly, he begins the memoir by detailing the shocking physical impact of his career on his 36-year-old body.

Describing the excruciating back pain that drives him to lie on the floor most nights, he claims that he can "feel every set" he has played in his spine (361). To remain competitive, he had to undergo frequent cortisone shots and extensive physical therapy.

Agassi's determination to push through the pain barrier highlights the resilience and endurance that his sport requires. His resolve to delay retirement as long as possible illustrates the relative brevity of professional tennis careers because of the physical toll they take. The memoir underscores the irony that at 36, Agassi was at his peak psychologically, while his body was failing him. Revealing the often-unseen challenges that professional athletes face, Agassi shows how a life devoted to professional tennis affects both body and mind.

The Impact of Fame on Mental Health

In *Open*, Agassi explores the impact of public scrutiny on one's well-being. His candid revelations of his mental health issues illustrate the impact of living under a constant spotlight. The memoir reveals that the root of his unhappiness was an inability to reconcile his public persona as a rebellious tennis prodigy with his private discontent and confusion about his identity.

As Andre rose through the ranks of professional tennis as a teen, the pressures of intense media attention became increasingly burdensome. While the author explains that his flamboyant style was a form of teen experimentation, the media focused on his rebellious image as a definitive statement about his identity. Thus, Agassi lists the various negative labels that were ascribed to him: "I'm a punk, I'm a clown, I'm a fraud, I'm a fluke" (120). Meanwhile, the more positive response of fans who dress like him at matches and send him intimate photographs proved equally disconcerting. Both villainized and idolized, Agassi underscores the lack of nuance in public perceptions and the confusing effects these judgments had on his teen psyche. He illustrates that behind his public persona was a young man struggling with self-doubt and insecurity. The constant need to live up to his public image only exacerbated his internal conflicts.

Throughout the memoir, the author challenges the traditional association of fame with success and happiness. When Perry predicted, early in Andre's career, that he would appear on the cover of *Sports Illustrated* and date Brooke Shields (voted the world's most beautiful woman), he evoked symbols of success. However, Agassi's account of his largely unhappy marriage to Brooke demonstrates the emptiness of the accolades of fame. The memoir notes how the strain in their relationship intensified when Brooke began receiving regular death threats after her appearance in *Friends* propelled her back into the public eye. Significantly, Andre's mental health reached its lowest point at this time, and he turned to substance misuse as a

coping mechanism. The author attributes the pressure in his high-profile marriage to Brooke as a contributing factor in his use of crystal methamphetamine during this dark period.

Agassi's memoir ultimately presents fame as an unwanted additional pressure in an already stressful career. *Open* emphasizes the challenges of balancing personal well-being with public expectations. The author's mental health issues vividly illustrate the harmful psychological effects of public scrutiny on young players who have not yet established a secure sense of self.

The Journey of Self-Discovery and Authenticity

The exploration of Andre's struggles with identity and purpose in *Open* offers insight into his journey from a troubled prodigy to a self-aware individual. Throughout the book, Agassi provides an intimate look at his struggles to find his true self amid the pressures of professional tennis, familial expectations, and public scrutiny. His path to self-discovery was marked by several transformative experiences and relationships that ultimately led him to a place of authenticity and personal fulfillment.

Despite his success, Andre often felt a disconnect between his public persona as a tennis champion and his private dissatisfaction with the sport. This conflict arose from his perception of tennis as a career chosen for him rather than by him. The expectations set by his father instilled in young Andre a deep-seated resentment and ambivalence toward tennis, leading to a complex relationship with the sport that was central to his identity. Grappling with a sense of emptiness and a lack of autonomy, he felt like a performer playing a role.

As a teen, Andre identified rebellion as his only form of autonomy. Essentially trapped at the tennis academy, he asserted his will through infractions of the regulations. However, these rebellions were largely confined to his appearance, ultimately demonstrating the limits of his agency. Agassi charts how his flamboyant style, characterized by flashy clothes and earrings, started as a way to assert his individuality but became a mask, hiding his true feelings of inadequacy and confusion. His candid revelation that he grew his trademark long hair to conceal premature balding and embellished it with a hairpiece underscores the inauthenticity of his public persona.

Andre's inability to express his true self on the tennis court frequently caused a lack of motivation, leading to accusations of tanking. Ambivalent about the goal of becoming a tennis champion, he lacked the will to win for his own sake. Consequently, he sought fulfillment in his personal life. His eagerness to marry Wendi and then Brooke expressed his desire for stability and a significant other to

complete him. However, during his relationship with Brooke, he became further alienated from his true self. His discomfort when he was made to wear lifts in his shoes at their wedding demonstrated his uneasiness at the artificiality of his role.

A significant step in Andre's journey toward authenticity was his shift from self-centered pursuits to a focus on giving back. Establishing the Andre Agassi College Preparatory Academy provided a sense of personal fulfillment as well as the professional purpose he previously lacked. Motivated by the desire to make a positive impact on the lives of others, he wanted to play and win. Thus, he finally found a way to align his career with his authentic self and values. In addition, several key relationships played pivotal roles in his development as an individual. Andre's chosen family (Philly, Perry, Gil, Brad, and J. P.), consistently provided the emotional support and perspective he needed to navigate his self-doubt. The memoir presents Andre's marriage to Steffi Graf, marked by understanding and mutual respect, as a vital source of emotional stability, helping him find fulfillment beyond the tennis court.

Agassi's candid exploration of his struggles, relationships, and eventual growth provides insight into the complexities of identity and being true to one's self. His journey from a reluctant tennis prodigy to a self-aware individual committed to making a positive difference underscores the importance of authenticity.

Symbols & Motifs

The Dragon

As a child, Andre thought of the ball machine his father modified as “the dragon,” conveying the anxiety it induced in him. Describing his feelings of powerlessness as the dragon towered over him, the author depicts the machine as a fearsome beast, stating, “As pressure builds inside its throat, it groans. As the ball rises slowly to its mouth, it shrieks” (26). For Andre, the dragon was as intimidating as his “fire-breathing” father. The continual onslaught of tennis balls that the machine fired at him symbolizes the relentless emotional and physical pressure that Mike Agassi placed on his son to become a tennis champion.

Later in the memoir, Andre was forced to relive his traumatizing encounters with the dragon when his father proudly demonstrated the machine to Peter Graf. Agassi also references the dragon in his match against Medvedev, whose game significantly improved because of his advice. Comparing Medvedev’s transformation to his father’s modified ball machine, he describes battling against “a fire-breathing dragon that I helped to build” (296).

Imprisonment

Agassi uses the motif of imprisonment to underscore his lack of agency as his father and the tennis academy molded the young boy for a career in tennis. Prison imagery first appears in the author’s description of his childhood home in Vegas. The barred windows of the house, its concrete surrounding wall, and its physical isolation in the Nevada desert added to his perception that he was perpetually chained to his father’s homemade tennis court. Describing how he helped create the tennis court, he ironically observes, “I’d helped feed the chain gang that built my cell. I’d helped measure and paint the white lines that would confine me” (31).

When Andre’s father sent him to the Nick Bollettieri Tennis Academy against his wishes, he again encountered a prison-like environment, highlighting his lack of choice in being there. Noting “outbuildings that look like cell blocks,” he claims that he was “half expecting to find a guard tower and razor wire” (72). His later attempt to leave the academy, only to be retrieved by a staff member, confirms the involuntary nature of his incarceration.

The Hairpiece

Agassi uses the motif of his hairpiece to thematically elaborate on **The Journey of Self-Discovery and Authenticity**. The author's revelation that he wore a hairpiece in the early years of his career highlights his inability to be his authentic self at that stage of his life: "Hair has been the crux of my public image, and my self-image, and it's been a sham" (197). The memoir illustrates Andre's deep insecurities as he concealed his premature balding while feeling equally anxious that he would be exposed for wearing a hairpiece. The text illustrates the extent of his anxiety by describing the time that he lost a match because he was preoccupied with the possibility that his battered toupee would fall off. Andre's decision to shave his head and discard the hairpiece signaled an early step toward a more authentic existence.

Islands

Open uses islands as a recurring symbol of loneliness. The imagery first occurs when Agassi describes his love of football as a child. He explains that he preferred team sports to tennis because "in tennis you're on an island. Of all the games men and women play, tennis is the closest to solitary confinement" (8). The author highlights the loneliness of a profession that relies entirely on individual performance rather than on working with others.

In addition, Agassi uses island imagery to convey how his childhood friendship with Perry made him feel less isolated: "I feel as if I've been on a desert island, with no one to talk to but the palm trees, and now a thoughtful, sensitive, like-minded castaway […] has come stumbling ashore" (65).

In the later chapters of the memoir, the author returns to the symbolism of islands to convey the growing emotional distance in his relationship with Brooke. While the couple escaped to island retreats to spend quality time together, their isolation from other people only emphasized the differences between them.

Open

The title of Agassi's memoir is a recurring motif that has several connotations. The title alludes to the Open Era—the period from 1968 onwards in which professional tennis players have been able to compete against amateurs in Grand Slam tournaments. In addition, *Open* refers to Agassi's intention to provide an unflinchingly honest account of his life, including his hatred of tennis, his mental health issues, and his substance misuse. Throughout the memoir, the author admits that he was not always open and honest during his professional career, claiming a

lifelong love of tennis in interviews and providing an untruthful account of the reason for his failed drug test to the ATP. *Open* therefore addresses Agassi's regret about his former lack of candidness.

Important Quotes

1. “I’m a young man, relatively speaking. Thirty-six. But I wake as if ninety-six. After three decades of sprinting, stopping on a dime, jumping high and landing hard, my body no longer feels like my body, especially in the morning. Consequently my mind doesn’t feel like my mind.”
(Prologue, Page 2)

In the opening pages of the memoir, Agassi thematically emphasizes ***The Physical and Emotional Toll of a Professional Tennis Career****. His actual age, 36, dramatically contrasts with the age he feels, 96. The observation underscores the irony that the physical fitness and endurance demanded of professional athletes inevitably lead to premature deterioration of their bodies. Furthermore, the physical pain this causes has a detrimental effect on emotional well-being.*

2. “I play tennis for a living, even though I hate tennis, hate it with a dark and secret passion, and always have.”
(Prologue, Page 2)

The author articulates the central contradiction of identity and career. Although his life has been devoted to tennis, he has always disliked and resented the sport. Agassi’s repetition of the verb “hate” underscores the strength of his feelings. This controversial statement distinguishes Open *from most sports biographies, which celebrate the subject’s love of their profession. In addition, Agassi’s admission signals his determination to be honest and open in his account.*

3. “It’s no accident, I think, that tennis uses the language of life. Advantage, service, fault, break, love, the basic elements of tennis are those of everyday existence, because every match is a life in miniature.”
(Prologue, Page 6)

Agassi uses analogies throughout the memoir to compare life to tennis. He highlights how the unpredictable nature of the game, in which a player’s performance tends to peak and trough, mirrors life’s highs and lows. The battles Agassi describes experiencing on the tennis court echoed the misfortunes and triumphs of his life, and the author emphasizes that resilience is a key factor in both.

4. “The dragon has a brain, a will, a black heart—and a horrifying voice. Sucking another ball into its belly, the dragon makes a series of sickening sounds. As pressure builds inside its throat, it groans. As the ball rises slowly to its mouth, it shrieks.”
(Chapter 1, Page 26)

The memoir conveys young Andre’s childhood fear of the modified ball machine he thought of as the dragon. His vivid description of its terrifying attributes, including its mouth and voice, shows that he perceived the machine as a monstrous living entity. The text emphasizes the terrifying specter of the dragon to symbolize the relentless emotional and physical pressure of professional tennis and the toll it took on the author.

5. “The warden has tacked several years to my sentence, and there’s nothing to be done but pick up my hammer and return to the rock pile.”
(Chapter 4, Page 76)

Imprisonment is a recurring motif in the memoir, representing Andre’s lack of agency and how his father decided his career. The author uses vocabulary related to prison life to describe the extension of his stay at the Nick Bollettieri Tennis Academy. Ironically, his talent meant that his “sentence” was indefinitely increased.

6. “The system is rigged, guaranteed to produce bad students as quickly and efficiently as it produces good tennis players.”
(Chapter 4, Page 77)

Agassi’s account of the Nick Bollettieri Tennis Academy draws attention to the practice of hothousing child prodigies in tennis while neglecting their general education. The author points out that this system ultimately leaves young players with no options other than to turn professional. While Agassi was relieved to give up regular schooling, it was a decision he deeply regretted later in his life.

7. “I’m an adolescent who’s seen too much, a man-child without a checking account.”
(Chapter 8, Page 111)

The memoir highlights how, as an 18-year-old, Andre occupied an indeterminate space between childhood and adulthood. The author’s account reveals his conflicted sense of identity during his late teens. While he still lived at home and his father

controlled his finances, he was also a professional tennis player who had won significant prize money. These contradictions highlight his struggle to achieve autonomy and a sense of authenticity.

8. “I notice something on the faces of fans too. The way they watch me and ask for my autograph, the way they scream as I enter an arena, makes me uncomfortable, but also satisfies something deep inside me, some hidden craving I didn’t know was there. I’m shy—but I like attention. I cringe when fans start dressing like me—but also dig it.”
(Chapter 8, Page 113)

Thematically supporting ***The Impact of Fame on Mental Health*** *, this passage describes how his sense of identity flagged as fans began to idolize and imitate him. As a teen with little self-esteem, he was both flattered and disconcerted by this response. Ultimately, the author suggests that this level of attention was unhealthy at a time in his life when he had no clear concept of who he was.*

9. “I absorb the role of villain-rebel, accept it, grow into it. The role seems like part of my job, so I play it.”
(Chapter 8, Page 121)

Elaborating on the same theme as the previous quote, Agassi addresses the media’s stereotypical representation of him as the “villain-rebel” of the tennis world. The author explores the impact of this label on his identity and mental health. He suggests that by accepting and playing up to the role, he made the mistake of allowing others to define him, complicating his quest for authenticity.

10. “My life has always belonged to someone else. First, my father. Then Nick. And always, always, tennis. Even my body wasn’t my own until I met Gil, who is doing the one thing fathers are supposed to do. Making me stronger.”
(Chapter 10, Page 139)

The author reflects on his lack of autonomy from birth as his father and then Nick Bollettieri molded him into a tennis player regardless of his wishes. Agassi’s interactions with his trainer, Gil Reyes, contrast with these experiences. While Gil helped him become a better player, he tailored his training program to Agassi’s needs and goals, respecting his individuality. Consequently, Gil became the benevolent father figure he previously lacked.

11. “If I must play tennis, the loneliest sport, then I’m sure as hell going to surround myself with as many people as I can off the court. And each person will have his specific role. Perry will help with my disordered thoughts. J.P. will help with my troubled soul. Nick will help with the basics of my game. Philly will help with details, arrangements, and always have my back.”
(Chapter 11, Page 140)

Agassi emphasizes the importance of his chosen family to his mental well-being. Throughout his life, the author depended on these friends and confidantes to provide stability and a balanced perspective. While the press mocked him for possessing an “entourage,” his chosen family was vital in helping him survive the tennis circuit, which he portrays as a lonely and alienating environment.

12. “It’s the house of an arrested adolescent, a boy-man determined to shut out the world. I walk around this new house, this deluxe playpen, daring to think how grown-up I am.”
(Chapter 13, Page 160)

Agassi reflects on purchasing his first bachelor pad. From the perspective of greater maturity, he realizes that the house, filled with arcade games, was a “deluxe playpen” and not the home of a grown man. The author’s ability to satirize his younger self illustrates the deep introspection and psychological insight for which Open *has received praise.*

13. “I think about the pain my hair has caused me, the inconvenience of the hairpieces, the hypocrisy and the pretending and the lying.”
(Chapter 16, Page 196)

Agassi’s long hair was inextricably linked to his image as a tennis player during the early years of his career. While the public interpreted his hairstyle as an expression of a rebellious character, Agassi created the look to conceal his premature balding, and he also wore a hairpiece. His hair came to represent his inability to be open and honest. Thematically, Agassi’s decision to shave his head was a major step in ***The Journey of Self-Discovery and Authenticity****.*

14. “I’m on my toes, feeling like Wyatt Earp and Spider-Man and Spartacus. I swing. Every hair on my body is standing up. As the ball leaves my racket a sound leaves my mouth that’s pure animal. I know that I won’t ever make this sound again, and I won’t ever hit a tennis ball any harder, or more perfect. Hitting a ball dead perfect—the only peace.”

(Chapter 17, Page 214)

Agassi's description of his sensations as he was immersed in a game illustrates the vivid immediacy of his prose when describing tennis matches. His comparison of himself to iconic figures such as Spider-Man and Spartacus conveys his feeling of absolute power as he hit the ball. The description of his body hairs standing on end evokes the sense that he was intensely alive and alert. While much of the memoir details the mental and physical toll of tennis, this passage conveys the brief transcendental joy Agassi experienced when he hit a ball perfectly.

15. "All that work and anger and winning and training and hoping and sweating, and it leads to the same empty disappointed feeling. No matter how much you win, if you're not the last one to win, you're a loser."
(Chapter 17, Page 216)

Here, Agassi describes the relentless nature of professional tennis. He explains that victories provide only brief satisfaction because if players do not keep on winning, they become "losers." The passage conveys the perpetual emotional pressure involved in the career.

16. "Apart from the buzz of getting high, I get an undeniable satisfaction from harming myself and shortening my career. After decades of merely dabbling in masochism, I'm making it my mission."
(Chapter 20, Page 246)

Agassi's description of taking crystal methamphetamine during his worst mental health crisis is one of the memoir's most shocking revelations. With the benefit of hindsight, the author recognizes his substance misuse as a deliberately self-destructive act. Sabotaging the career that he never chose was his only form of agency.

17. "It seemed too convenient, too important for fans, and Nike, and the game, that Pete and I be polar opposites, the Yankees and Red Sox of tennis. The game's best server versus its best returner. The diffident Californian versus the brash Las Vegan."
(Chapter 20, Page 250)

Agassi discusses the media's representation of him and his major competitive rival, Pete Sampras, as foils. The media's presenting them as "polar opposites" in character and playing style illustrates its need to label individuals in the public eye and create contrast to sell media. Nevertheless, Agassi's attempts to get to know

Sampras revealed that they were indeed very different individuals. The author vacillates between critiquing and envying Sampras's calm manner and single-minded dedication to tennis.

18. "I can't believe the irony. A *60 Minute*s piece caused my father to send me away, to break my heart, and now a *60 Minutes* piece lights the way home, gives me the map to find my life's meaning, my mission."
(Chapter 21, Page 260)

After watching a 60 Minutes *documentary about charter schools, Agassi decided to establish his own for underprivileged children. The decision provided the meaning and purpose that his life lacked, thematically marking a significant development in his experience of* ***The Journey of Self-Discovery and Authenticity****. The author reflects on the coincidence that, years earlier, a* 60 Minutes *documentary exposing the Nick Bollettieri Tennis Academy as a "sweatshop" prompted his father to send him to the.*

19. "Brooke is in the kitchen, sobbing […] She's sitting on a stool at the butcher block island. Always an island. One way or another, we spend all our time together on islands. We *are* islands."
(Chapter 21, Page 277)

Islands symbolize loneliness in the memoir. Here, the author uses this imagery to convey the emotional distance between him and his first wife, Brooke Shields. The couple vacationed at various idyllic islands during their relationship, but these vacations only emphasized their incompatibility. The author presents it as fitting that their marriage ended with Brooke sitting at the island in their kitchen, crying.

20. "A ball feels different off every player's racket—there are minute but concrete subtleties of force and spin. Now, hitting with her, I feel her subtleties. It's like touching her, though we're forty feet apart. Every forehand is foreplay."
(Chapter 22, Page 284)

Here, Agassi describes the first time he played against his second wife, tennis champion Steffi Graf. He presents their union as a perfect match because they have similar backgrounds, admire one another as players, and understand the demands of professional tennis. The passage conveys an additional layer of intimacy in the relationship that only two tennis players could experience.

21. “I sound as though I’ve been hypnotized, or brainwashed, which isn’t new. I say the same things I’ve said before, the same things I’ve mouthed during countless news conferences and interviews and cocktail-party conversations. Are they lies if I’ve come to partially believe them? Are they lies if, through sheer repetition, they’ve taken on a veneer of truth?”
(Chapter 25, Page 332)

The author depicts his frustration with himself as, in interviews, he continued to say what the public wanted to hear: that he had loved tennis all his life. Agassi recognized that the truth would be unacceptable to tennis fans but felt that dishonesty damaged his integrity. His memoir repairs this earlier failure to be open and true to himself.

22. “I play and keep playing because I *choose* to play. Even if it’s not your ideal life, you can always choose it. No matter what your life is, choosing it changes everything.”
(Chapter 28, Page 358)

In the later years of his career, Agassi underwent a radical change of attitude toward tennis. Instead of feeling compelled to play by factors beyond his control, he resolved to choose to play for himself, finally achieving a sense of agency. This shift in psychology dramatically transformed his game, leading to a career resurgence.

23. “Several sportswriters muse about my transformation, and that word rankles. I think it misses the mark. Transformation is change from one thing to another, but I started as nothing. I didn’t transform, I formed. When I broke into tennis, I was like most kids: I didn’t know who I was, and I rebelled at being told by older people. I think older people make this mistake all the time with younger people, treating them as finished products when in fact they’re in process. It’s like judging a match before it’s over, and I’ve come from behind too often, and had too many opponents come roaring back against me, to think that’s a good idea.”
(Chapter 28, Page 360)

Agassi challenges the media’s notion that he “transformed” from a rebel to a mature athlete during the course of his career, suggesting instead that he simply underwent natural maturation. He emphasizes the injustice of being judged and critiqued as a teen, given that few individuals’ characters are fully formed by that time in their lives. Again he employs a tennis analogy, implying that labeling a person in their youth equates to deciding the winner of a match before it ends.

24. “I’m astonished, yet again, by the connection between two players on a tennis

court. The net, which supposedly separates you, actually links you like a web. After two bruising hours you're convinced that you're locked in a cage with your opponent. You could swear that his sweat is spraying you, his breath is fogging your eyes."
(Chapter 28, Page 363)

Open *has received critical acclaim for its literary quality, which elevates the text above many standard sports memoirs. This passage exemplifies Agassi's vivid, engaging writing style as he describes the raw intimacy between tennis opponents as they battle against one another. His use of figurative language, comparing the connection to being in "a web" or "locked in a cage," underscores this intense dynamic, while the hyperbolic description of spraying sweat conveys the physical stamina that such encounters demand. In addition, this description illustrates the view of tennis that claiming agency for his game created, which contrasts with his understandable view during his younger years that it was a game of isolation.*

25. "Can't play, as opposed to won't play. Unwittingly, I've been seeking that moment when I'd have no choice."
(Chapter 29, Page 370)

After struggling for years to find motivation in his tennis career, Agassi ironically struggled later to give up playing professionally. Refusing to give in to pressure to retire, he played until pain and injuries left him no choice. The author's determination to continue until his body gave out illustrates his resilience and endurance.

Essay Topics

1. Reflect on Agassi's decision to title his memoir *Open*. What are the connotations of this term? How does the title reflect the author's intentions and key themes? How does this contrast with his initial entry into the sport? Use textual evidence to explore this topic.

2. Discuss the impact of Mike Agassi's influence on Andre's early development as a tennis player and his subsequent relationship with the sport. Examine the revelations about Mike's childhood in Tehran and whether they justify his behavior.

3. Analyze the role of rebellion in Agassi's life. What did he rebel against and why? What were the unintentional consequences of this rebellion? Use textual evidence in addressing this topic.

4. Discuss the author's behind-the-scenes portrayal of the professional tennis circuit. What insights does Agassi offer into the demands, pressures, and interpersonal rivalries of life on tour? Explore whether any of these revelations were a surprise in reading the memoir and why.

5. Evaluate the role of friendship and mentorship in Agassi's life. How did his chosen family members, such as Perry, Brad Gilbert, and Gil Reyes, contribute to his mental well-being and professional success? Use textual evidence to examine the reason that these relationships were so crucial.

6. Analyze the impact of Agassi's romantic relationships on his personal growth and professional career. Consider how he contrasts his marriages to Brooke Shields and Steffi Graf. How might Brooke's perspective on their marriage differ? Use textual evidence and additional research to explore this topic.

7. Discuss the impact of Agassi's rivalry with Pete Sampras. How did it shape Agassi's game and career? Trace the author's depiction of Sampras throughout the memoir and analyze his perception of his rival.

8. Agassi states that “[t]he same court on which you suffer your bloodiest defeat can become the scene of your sweetest triumph” (332). Evaluate how this assertion applies to both Agassi’s career and his personal life. What life lesson does the author ultimately convey in this statement?

9. Critics have applauded *Open* for elevating the sports memoir genre. Analyze the features of the book that subvert expectations, making it stand out from other books in the genre. Optionally, compare Agassi’s memoir to *Spare* by Prince Harry. To what extent is J. R. Moehringer’s influence evident in both texts?

10. Examine the importance of resilience in *Open*. How does Agassi ultimately demonstrate resilience in the face of physical and emotional challenges?