

Discussion Questions: God Save Texas

1. Overall, how well do you think Lawrence Wright portrays the state of Texas? Is his assessment fair or unfair? Do you detect a scent of elitism or not? Of what is he critical?
2. In an NPR review of the book, Wright is described as *"a typically Texas storyteller, an anecdotalist who wanders around and stops occasionally to point out the view, but somehow you end up getting where you're going anyway. You can hear the New Yorker in his voice; his prose has a kind of polished informality."* Comment on this from your reading and perspective.
3. Since you live in Texas (native or transplant), how accurate is Wright's depiction of the state? Do you have familiarity with any of the events and landmarks he mentions? What are your favorite and/or least favorite associations and memories of living here?
4. Why do Texas and Texans inspire such strong reactions, often outrage as Wright points out, from non-residents?
5. Talk about the many stereotypes people have of Texans: *"cowboy individualism, a kind of wary friendliness, super-patriotism combined with defiance of all government authority, a hair trigger sense of grievance, nostalgia for an ersatz past that is largely an artifact of Hollywood."* Are those fair attributes, overdrawn, or simply a bunch of tiresome clichés? What would you add to the list and what would you remove from it?
6. What does Wright mean when he talks about a state *"culture that is still raw, not fully formed, standing on the margins but also growing in influence, dangerous and magnificent in its potential?"*
7. Discuss some of the dichotomies that permeate the state – world class cultural institution, for instance, juxtaposed with dire poverty.
8. One of 10 children in the United States is a Texan...One on 4 Texas children live in poverty and Texas is near the bottom of education spending and academic achievement. Comment on the Kinder Institute's Stephen Klinberg's statement *"The question is whether older, wealthy Anglos are willing to invest in a Texas future that is predominately not Anglo, when it's not a mirror of Europe, but a microcosm of the world."*
9. In what ways does Texas, according to Wright, portend American's future? Good thing, bad thing, or what bother it judge?
10. In a NPR Question and Answer session, Wright was asked: "You write about two Texas, what you call AM and FM, rural and city, reactionary and progressive. Do they represent a widening gap in the US as a whole?" His response was *"The political and cultural fissures in Texas are very much like those in the country at large. One can divide it into Trump versus anti-Trump, or city versus rural. Those divisions are more pronounced in Texas, and certainly Texas has contributed to the division. A lot of the political movements that start in Texas tend to move into the national discourse. The demographics are not really reflected in the political delegation we have. People outside look at our politicians and think that's Texas. It doesn't represent the complexity of the state."* **Comment.**
11. Extra Credit Question :Wright says that *"Houston's future depends on how they deal with the flood plain – which is one reason the centre of the US energy industry is going to have to face the problem of climate change."* How do you see that happening?

Sources: Publishers summary, Book Reviews (NYTimes, Houston Chronicle, Publishers Weekly, Booklist and Library Journal. Majority of Questions from LitLovers.com, NPR Book Choice and discussion with the author.