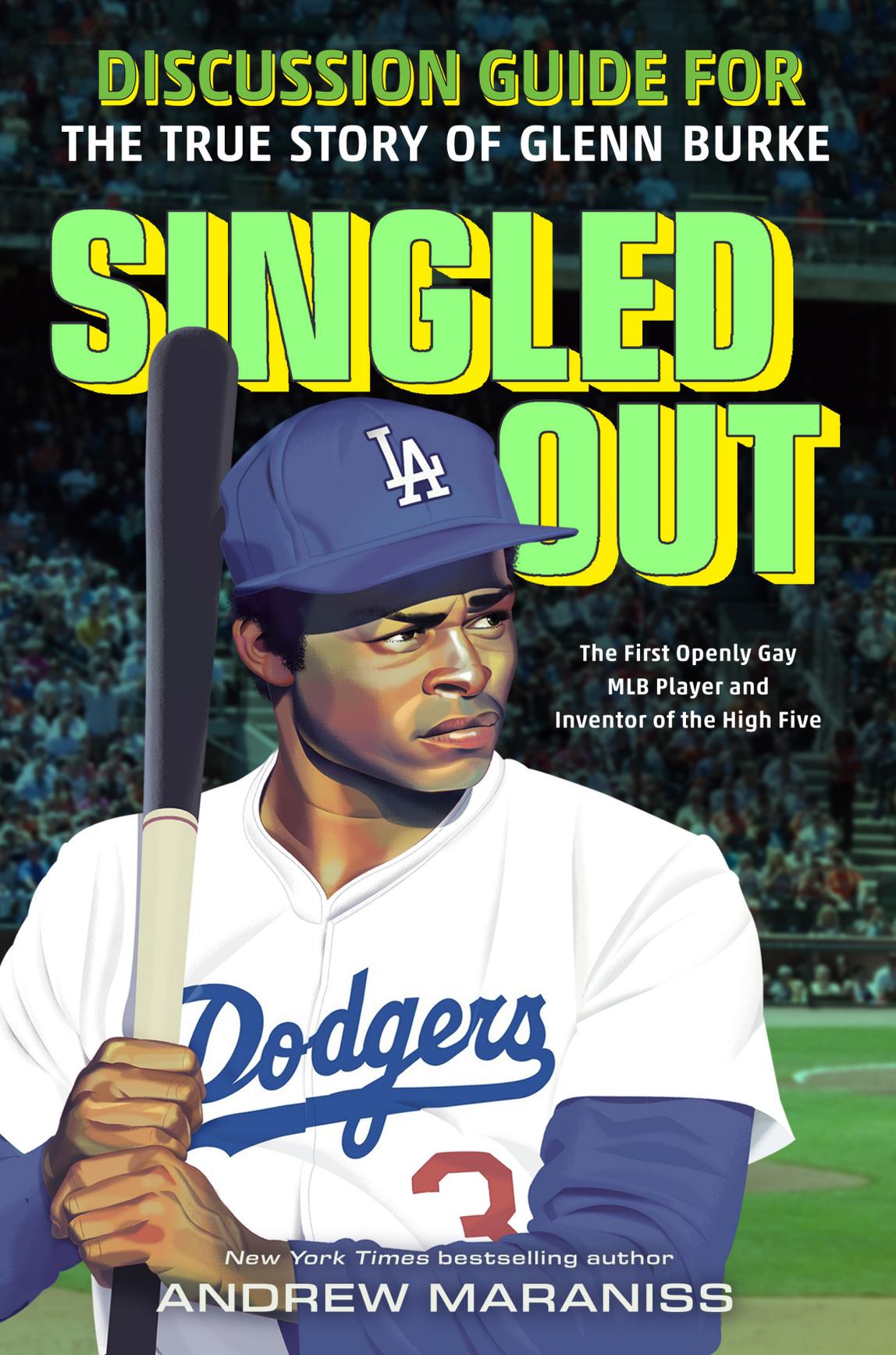


DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR
THE TRUE STORY OF GLENN BURKE

SINGLED OUT

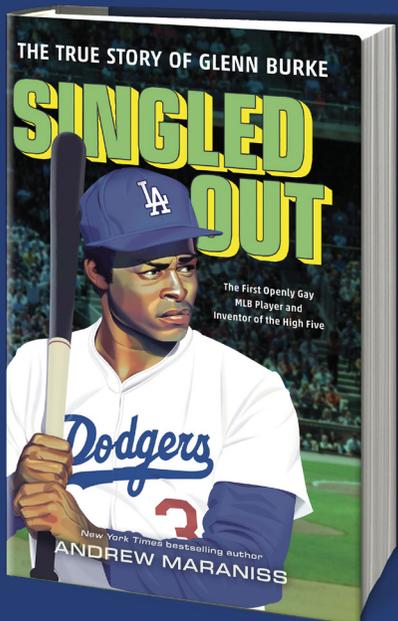
A detailed illustration of a baseball player, Glenn Burke, in a white Los Angeles Dodgers uniform. He is wearing a blue cap with the 'LA' logo and holding a wooden baseball bat. The background shows a blurred stadium filled with spectators.

The First Openly Gay
MLB Player and
Inventor of the High Five

New York Times bestselling author

ANDREW MARANISS

ABOUT THE BOOK



On October 2, 1977, Glenn Burke, outfielder for the Los Angeles Dodgers, made history without even swinging a bat. When his teammate Dusty Baker hit a historic home run, Glenn enthusiastically congratulated him with the first-ever high five.

But Glenn also made history in another way—he was the first openly gay MLB player. While he did not come out publicly until after his playing days were over, Glenn’s sexuality was known to his teammates, family, and friends. His MLB career would be cut short after only three years, but his legacy and impact on the athletic and LGBTQIA+ communities would resonate for years to come.

New York Times bestselling author Andrew Maraniss tells the story of Glenn Burke, from his childhood growing up in Oakland, his journey to the MLB and the World Series, the joy in discovering who he really was, to more difficult times: facing injury, addiction, and the AIDS epidemic.

Packed with black-and-white photographs and thoroughly researched, never-before-seen details about Glenn’s life, *Singled Out* is the fascinating story of a trailblazer in sports—and the history and culture that shaped the world around him.

This guide was written by HAL SCHRIEVE, a children’s librarian in New York City. *Out of Salem*, his debut novel, received starred reviews from *Kirkus Reviews* and *Publishers Weekly* and was longlisted for the National Book Award for Young People’s Literature.

"I can be a plus for gay people by going out and talking about it and being a good representative. I might help where others can't. People admire and look up to athletes. Here I am, an athlete. This might be my mission on Earth as far as God is concerned. I'm real religious in certain ways. I know I'm here for a reason." —GLENN BURKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Glenn Burke grew up in Oakland, raised by Alice Burke, a Black single mother who left her husband Luther Burke after he became abusive [9]. Luther occasionally returned and "roughoused too hard" with Glenn [10–11]. Maraniss later describes moments when Burke resolved conflicts with violence, but also his protective feelings toward younger boys in his neighborhood [17]. **How do you think witnessing domestic violence as a child affected Burke's life?**
2. Burke attended college for several short stretches, but didn't finish his college education [28]. **Why do you think Burke struggled with attending college and maintaining academic achievement? What things might have made Burke's experience of college alienating?**
3. Maraniss describes how Black and Latinx Dodgers were discriminated against in the mostly white town of Ogden, Utah [31–32]. **How do you think the racism that Burke and other Black and Latinx players faced in major league baseball affected their experiences?**
4. During his time with the Dodgers, Burke gained a reputation for being confrontational and unpredictable, sometimes initiating fights, even as he also was well known for jokes, dancing, and encouraging his teammates [52, 63]. The Dodgers' strict rules mandated that players follow "the Dodger way," a code that mandated a squeaky-clean, drug-free image, though many players did drugs under the radar [196]. **Why do you think Glenn spoke up and stood out so much?**
5. Anita Bryant's movement, Save Our Children, attempted to stop efforts by gay people to pass legislation guaranteeing equal rights to housing, employment, health care, and social services [81, 83–85, 94–96]. Bryant alleged that gay people were sexual predators whose existence in public would corrupt or harm youth [84]. The Ku Klux Klan supported her, and Bryant's speeches often also targeted Jews and Muslims [164]. **How do you think Bryant's speeches relate to homophobic, antisemitic, and Islamophobic rhetoric used by politicians today?**
6. After the murder of gay politician Harvey Milk and the subsequent verdict that murderer Dan White was guilty only of unpremeditated manslaughter, gay activists and bystanders converged at City Hall, threw garbage cans, and slashed police car tires. Police retaliated by clubbing patrons who were inside gay bars, and the violence escalated until 120 civilians and 59 officers had been injured and 10 police cars had been set on fire [169–171]. **Why do you think people responded to Milk's death and White's sentence this way? How do you think the police should have handled this situation? Why do you think police chose to physically attack patrons inside gay bars?**
7. Maraniss describes how Burke's partner Michael Smith wanted Burke to come out publicly long before he finally did so in 1982, once bringing gay friends to a game and publicly cheering for Burke as his boyfriend [187]. Maraniss says that part of this was in support of gay liberation—the idea that

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

gay people should live openly in order to force societal homophobia to end—but implies Smith may also have had selfish reasons for pressuring Burke to come out, like seeking fame or money [204]. Burke maintained that his sexuality was his own business and resisted coming out because he was afraid of losing his career; ultimately, his sexuality was the reason he was traded [168, 145]. **Clearly Smith felt that gay public figures including Burke had a duty to come out. Do you think that was fair? Why or why not? What effect do you think it would have had if more gay athletes had come out during the late 1970s and early 1980s? How might it have affected their careers? How do you think homophobia in sports has changed since the 1980s? It what ways hasn't it changed?**

8. When Glenn Burke was no longer a major league baseball player, he played softball for the Gay Community Softball League and the Gay Games. He also enjoyed enormous popularity in the Castro District in San Francisco and acted as friend and role model to younger Black gay men [191]. However, his vision of a future blurred—his lack of college degree prevented him from coaching college or high school, and he had few nonathletic skills, and he couldn't tolerate low-paying desk jobs [195]. Over time, his problems abusing cocaine became worse [196]. **How do you think Burke's gay community, family, or former teammates should have helped support him in finding a new vocation? What would Burke have needed?**
9. Burke was arrested in 1991 for drug possession at a party and served six months at San Quentin prison and then was sent back for a parole violation a year later [230]. In prison, he was sexually harassed by other inmates. His drug ad-

diction continued afterward. **Why do you think lawmakers imprison people for drug possession? What effects do you think it has on drug users' lives to be imprisoned? Why do you think Burke's short-lived engagements with rehab programs did not succeed in ending his addiction?**

10. Even though Burke had been a major league baseball player, he was only able to receive medical care and support through the last part of his life because Jack McGowan found him living on the streets and arranged for him to be placed at a shelter and receive medical care [239-243]. **Do you think professional sports leagues have an obligation to support retired players? Do you think the government should provide housing for houseless people?**
11. In 1991, 40,000 people became HIV positive in the US; at the time, HIV was associated with gay men, who were often blamed for contracting the disease through dangerous, "immoral," or careless behavior [234]. Despite years of work from groups like ACT UP to get the government to respond to the pandemic, it was straight athlete Magic Johnson's HIV diagnosis that was part of a cultural shift in how the disease was perceived by the American public, even though it happened ten years into a pandemic that had already claimed hundreds of thousands of lives [Roser and Ritchie, "HIV/AIDS," Our World In Data, 2019]. Both HIV and COVID-19 disproportionately affect people of color in the US [Centers for Disease Control, 2018]. **Does the victim-blaming of people dying of AIDS resemble conversations you have heard about people who become sick with COVID-19? How are the two pandemics different?**

CREATIVE WRITING EXERCISES

1. Imagine that you are the interviewer for *Inside Sports* and are interviewing Burke in 1982. What questions would you ask him?
2. Write a letter to Burke in the past about what you think has and hasn't changed in sports around racism and homophobia. Are there other modern athletes you could let Burke know about that he could relate to?
3. Identity was a significant impact on Burke's life and career. Think of one of your favorite athletes, musicians, actors, or artists. How does their identity impact their public persona and how they engage with the world? Do you think it's fair?

FURTHER READING

1. NONFICTION

Viral by Ann Bausum

This history of the AIDS pandemic for teen readers traces the stories of activists, allies, loved ones, long-term survivors, and even those who lost their lives during the early years of the AIDS epidemic—but also takes readers up to the present day.

Dynastic, Bombastic, Fantastic: Reggie, Rollie, Catfish, and Charlie Finley's Swingin' A's by Jason Turbow

Sports journalist Turbow focuses on Charlie Finley (1918–1996), the owner of the Oakland Athletics franchise, and the key players on his flamboyant championship teams of the early 1970s.

Running With Lions by Julian Winters

Sebastian just got dumped by his girlfriend, but is looking forward to becoming team captain during his final summer at soccer training camp and spending time with friends he sees as family. When Emir, his former best friend, shows up with a bad attitude, it threatens his team's dynamics—not least because Sebastian still feels attracted to Emir.

Queer Icons from Gay to Z: Artists, Activists & Trailblazers by Patrick Boyle

This collection of short biographies pays tribute to LGBTQ+ activists, artists, comedians, writers, musicians, Olympic gold medalists, philosophers, poets, drag queens, and more. These icons have championed civil rights, radically increased visibility, and offered release through their art.

Fair Play: How LGBT Athletes Are Claiming Their Rightful Place in Sports by Cyd Zeigler

Zeigler, an expert in LGBTQ athletics and cofounder of the online magazine *Outsports*, revisits key moments that have shaped sports participation for openly LGBTQ+ athletes.

FICTION

Like a Love Story by Abdi Nazemian

Reza, who has just moved to the United States from Iran, knows he's attracted to men—but in the mid-1980s, the images he sees of gay life are overwhelmed by the suffering and death of people with AIDS, and coming out seems terrifying. When he makes friends with Judy and Art, two teenagers involved in AIDS activism, a new world opens up to him—but can he be honest about his own desire?

PRAISE FOR SINGLED OUT

★ "Maraniss does an extraordinary job of recording this memorable life in black-and-white photographs and fluid, compelling writing that is both biography and de facto history of gay rights and the depredations of homophobia."

–Booklist, starred review

"A compelling narrative . . . This is a meticulously researched history of the ways queer culture in the '70s intersected with baseball, Blackness, and larger culture wars, with one man at their center."

–Kirkus Reviews

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