

Once Upon a Town: The Miracle of the North Platte Canteen, by Bob Greene
2014 One Book One Nebraska

Discussion Questions

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bob Greene is a journalist. Have you read his column, his CNN blog (<http://us.cnn.com/US/greene.commentaries/archive>), or any other work by him? Did you see him at the 2002 Nebraska Book Festival in Grand Island?

ABOUT THE WRITING OF THE BOOK

Greene begins the book by recounting his journey in a car to North Platte. He relates several negative stories that were Nebraska headlines of the day. Did this beginning grab you? What were your thoughts?

Greene often uses first-hand accounts of the Canteen from either the soldiers or the volunteers. How does this add to/subtract from the story?

The timeline of the book is chronological, from the Canteen's beginning to its closure. How does this aid in the telling of the story?

What might have motivated Greene to choose to write this story?

ABOUT THE THEMES and UNIVERSAL APPLICATIONS

This is a story about the North Platte community and its people. What is your definition of community and is it different from North Platte's?

What is your definition of volunteerism? How are the 55,000 volunteers in North Platte similar?

Can you come up with examples of volunteer efforts that compare to the North Platte Canteen?

Greene often says that North Platte is in the middle of nowhere. What makes North Platte special?

What other themes come to mind in reading this book? For example, the effect of the decline of passenger trains or changes in transportation of military personnel.

APPLICATION TO THE READER

How would today's social media environment change this story?

How does this book relate to you? What community and volunteer efforts have you done that are similar?

Is this just a "feel good" story?