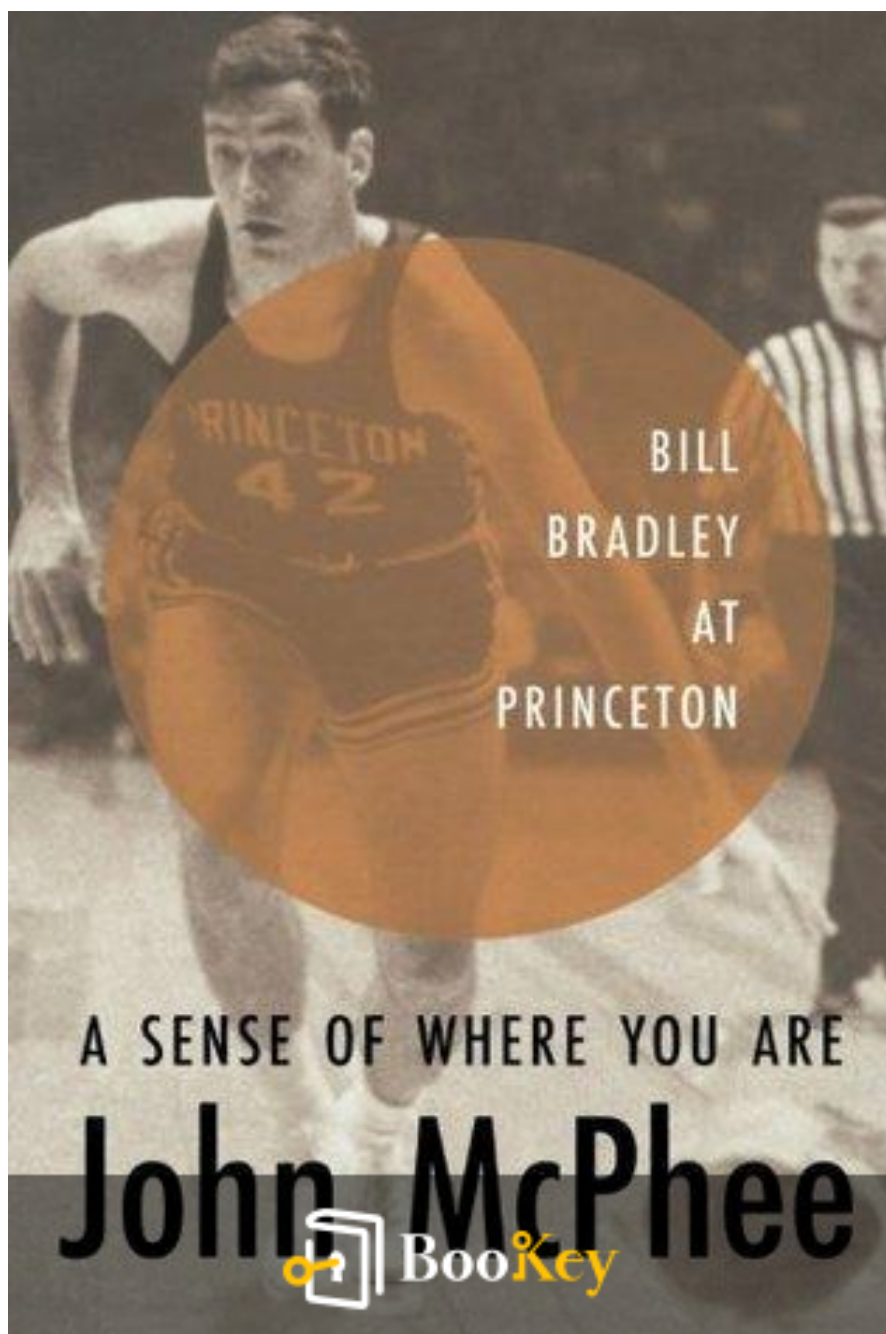


A Sense Of Where You Are PDF (Limited Copy)

John McPhee



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A Sense Of Where You Are Summary

A Journey into the Mind of a Basketball Genius

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About the book

In "A Sense of Where You Are," John McPhee takes readers on an intimate journey through the mind of Bill Bradley, a young basketball prodigy and future NBA star, as he navigates the delicate interplay of talent, preparation, and identity. This captivating memoir delves into the essence of what it means to truly understand oneself and engage with the world through the lens of competitive sports. McPhee's elegant prose captures the rhythm of the game and the intricacies of Bradley's thoughts, offering profound insights into the formation of character and the pursuit of excellence. As the narrative unfolds, readers are invited to reflect on their own paths and the ways in which place and perspective shape our experiences. Dive in to discover how a singular passion can illuminate not only the court but also the larger arena of life.

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About the author

John McPhee is an acclaimed American nonfiction writer and a pioneer in the genre of narrative journalism, celebrated for his meticulous research and engaging storytelling. Born on March 8, 1931, in Princeton, New Jersey, McPhee has contributed significantly to the literary landscape through his compelling essays and books, many of which explore the intricate relationships between people, nature, and the environment. With a distinctive ability to convey complex subjects with clarity and vividness, he has authored numerous works, including the Pulitzer Prize-winning "Annals of the Former World", and has been a staff writer for The New Yorker since 1956. He is regarded not only as a master of form but also as a profound thinker, whose work invites readers to consider the worlds around them with fresh insight and appreciation.

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Summary Content List

chapter 1: Incentive

chapter 2: Profile

chapter 3: Ivy League

chapter 4: Eastern Tournament

chapter 5: National Championships

chapter 6: Points and Honors

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chapter 1 Summary: Incentive

In the first chapter, "Incentive," we are introduced to the narrator's father, a physician with deep ties to collegiate athletics, particularly basketball. Having served as a doctor for the United States Olympic teams and decades as a physician at Princeton, he has always admired athletic excellence but expresses this through a celebrated stoicism, rarely offering direct praise. This changes when he calls the narrator from Princeton, excitedly proclaiming that a freshman basketball player, Bill Bradley, is exceptionally talented, perhaps the best he has ever seen.

Surprised by his father's enthusiasm, the narrator attends a game against Pennsylvania, where he witnesses Bradley's extraordinary skills on the court. As the game unfolds, it becomes clear that Bill Bradley is not just another player; he's a fundamentally graceful athlete, capable of making every move seem effortless. Previously, the narrator had lost interest in basketball due to its evolution, characterized by a focus on scoring over strategy, but Bradley's performance rekindles that passion. His commitment to the game—even during less critical moments—demonstrates a profound understanding and love for basketball that stands apart from mere entertainment.

The narrator's desire to write about Bradley grows, especially following a pivotal game in the national tournament. However, it isn't merely Bradley's

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basketball prowess that captivates the narrator; it's the athlete's ability to excel in multiple facets of life. In the summer of 1964, with Bradley back in Princeton for his senior thesis, the narrator initiates an in-depth exploration of both Bradley as a player and as a person, emphasizing the need to convey the essence of the game through his perspective.

As they collaborate, Bradley's enthusiasm builds, and he immerses himself in sharing his deep knowledge of basketball, from intricate game strategies to basic techniques. Even as he prepares for the upcoming Olympic Games, he dedicates hours to helping the narrator understand and articulate the game in a meaningful way. Their interactions are characterized by a blend of camaraderie and mentorship, leading to a rich exchange that informs the narrative to come.

By the end of this chapter, the groundwork is laid not just for a biography of an impressive athlete, but also for a deeper investigation into the interplay between athleticism, passion, and personal growth, as both men share and learn from each other. The stage is set for an exploration of Bill Bradley not only as an exceptional basketball player but as a multidimensional individual whose life will transcend the confines of the sport itself.

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chapter 2 Summary: Profile

The chapter delves into the life and experiences of Bill Bradley, a basketball prodigy at Princeton University, highlighting the unique aspects of his character, upbringing, and basketball skills.

Setting the Scene:

The chapter opens with a vivid description of the less-than-ideal basketball facilities at Princeton, illustrating a rudimentary gym with quirky features, yet it serves as a backdrop for Bradley, touted as one of the best amateur basketball players in the United States. Despite coming from a privileged background—often seen as a disadvantage in the sport—Bradley breaks the mold by choosing Princeton for its academic rigor over athletic prowess, foregoing numerous scholarship offers.

Bradley's Early Life:

Born in Crystal City, Missouri, Bradley's upbringing was shaped by his affluent family, specifically his father, a bank president who encouraged hard work and discipline. His mother, a high-energy school teacher who also played basketball, nurtured his interests and cultivated a competitive spirit. He navigated the challenges of fitting in as the "banker's son" while honing his basketball skills and developing friendships through the sport. His

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obsession with basketball began early, with hours of solitary practice that showcased his dedication and tenacity.

Basketball Achievements:

As a player, Bradley's skills are exceptional and well-rounded; he is not only an outstanding scorer but also a versatile playmaker. The chapter highlights key moments from his college career, illustrating his prolific scoring average and ability to perform under pressure, including his notable records. Far beyond his point totals, Bradley's gameplay is characterized by precision and a deep understanding of basketball mechanics. He absorbs techniques from other players, elevating his game without sacrificing personal style.

Transition to the National Stage:

The narrative transitions into Bradley's rise to national prominence, especially his performance in the Olympics where he showcased his skills on an international platform. His understanding of basketball allows him to adapt and excel, defending against formidable opponents and seamlessly integrating playmaking within scored points.

Philosophy and Values:

Bradley embodies the ideals of hard work and moral integrity. He

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emphasizes discipline, not just in sports but in life, often reflecting on how basketball relates to broader life lessons. This philosophy is deeply entwined with his identity, which he balances with rigorous academic pursuits, including a Rhodes Scholarship application, much to the surprise of NBA scouts anticipating his professional debut.

Community Impact:

Beyond the court, Bradley's involvement in campus life and community initiatives highlights his commitment to personal growth and his desire to positively impact others. He is recognized as a moral compass and leader at Princeton, challenging the norms of athlete celebrity.

The Climactic Game Against Michigan:

Towards the end, the chapter builds up to a critical showdown against Michigan, described as a monumental match against a significantly larger and more experienced team. The media frenzy surrounding the game pits him against fellow star Cazzie Russell, adding pressure to Bradley's already high stakes. Despite his brilliance throughout the game, he is ultimately sidelined after a crucial foul, leading to an emotional moment where he receives immense applause for his contributions to the game, symbolizing the lasting impact of his performance and legacy.

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Conclusion:

Bradley stands out not merely for his sporting brilliance but as a complete athlete, embodying a blend of skill, intellect, and character that earns him the admiration and respect of both peers and coaches. This chapter encapsulates the essence of his journey, illustrating how he transcends the typical athlete stereotype, illuminated by his understanding of basketball as a metaphor for life. This rich tapestry of his experiences sets the foundation for his future endeavors in sports, politics, and beyond.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: The importance of discipline and hard work

Critical Interpretation: Imagine yourself standing on the court, where the air is thick with the scent of polished wood and the echoes of bouncing basketballs. You realize that the skills you aspire to are not merely endowed; they are earned through countless hours of practice, just like Bill Bradley. His relentless dedication teaches you that true success is forged in discipline and hard work, not just talent. As you reflect on your own journey, you understand that whatever your passion—be it sports, academics, or personal goals—it requires the same level of commitment that Bradley displayed on and off the court. His story inspires you to put in the effort, embrace challenges, and cultivate a work ethic that will propel you toward your own dreams.

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chapter 3 Summary: Ivy League

Chapter 3: Ivy League

The chapter opens with a reflection on Bradley's varying performance as a key player for Princeton's basketball team, emphasizing that his play often mirrored his emotional state. As captain of the team, he faced both academic and athletic pressures, particularly during the Ivy League season.

The narrative centers on Princeton's first Ivy League game of 1965 against Yale on January 8. Leading into this game, Bradley was overwhelmed by academic stress, having spent the night before completing a difficult paper. His anxiety translated onto the court, resulting in a dismal first half where he failed to score from the field except for a couple of free throws. Despite a poor performance overall—missing nearly all his shots—he remarkably turned the game around in overtime, scoring seven crucial points that led to a tie, showcasing his ability to rally when needed.

After relieving his stress with much-needed sleep and some unexpectedly favorable academic news, Bradley came back stronger in the next game against Brown, scoring an impressive thirty-eight points, demonstrating how mood and focus can influence performance.

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However, the challenges continued. A critical stretch of games against Columbia and Cornell tested the team's dynamics. In the Columbia game, Bradley scored his two-thousandth career point, marking a significant milestone and emphasizing his reputation as a prolific scorer. Following that, they faced a blizzard en route to play Cornell. The game itself turned chaotic as Princeton waited to ensure alumni could witness the match; tensions rose as Bradley struggled, missing many shots and putting the team at a disadvantage.

After a dismal first half trailing by sixteen points, Bradley found his rhythm against defenseman Dave Bliss, eventually scoring thirty points in total but still seeing his team lose in a tight finish. This loss shrouded Princeton's hopes for an undefeated season in the Ivy League.

As they resumed after exams, Bradley faced further challenges. A game against Pennsylvania showcased the often-unpredictable nature of officiating and how it can unsettle a team. Poor calls led to multiple players, including Bradley, facing foul trouble, prompting Coach van Breda Kolff to switch to a zone defense against his usual preferences. This change proved strategic and allowed Princeton to claim a victory, with Bradley scoring thirty-six points.

The team's struggles persisted, compounded by Bradley's injury following a collision with a Yale player. Although his presence on the court was still

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impactful, his mobility and skills declined due to pain and loss of conditioning, pushing the rest of the team to step up. The loss of their star player forced teammates to coalesce and discover their own capabilities, uncovering the potential of sophomores like Ed Hummer, Robbie Brown, and others.

Amid struggles, the team continued winning against less competitive teams like Harvard and Dartmouth, with Bradley playing a more limited role. An unexpected highlight came from senior Ken Shank, who delivered an impressive performance after being sidelined, capturing the crowd's affection and proving his worth beyond his earlier underdog status.

The chapter culminates in anticipation for a decisive game against Cornell, with much at stake following a buildup that showcased the buzz around Princeton basketball. The team's solid performance ultimately led to a resounding victory, confirming their status as Ivy League champions. As Bradley took his last shot at Princeton—a hook shot that swished through the net—he was honored by fellow students who recognized his remarkable journey and contributions to the sport. The chapter closes on a reflective note, highlighting Bradley's legacy at Princeton, his record-breaking achievements, and the emotional farewell as he prepared to transition from college basketball to a professional career.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Emotional resilience can lead to triumph despite adversity.

Critical Interpretation: In moments where you feel overwhelmed, like Bradley before the Ivy League game, remember that your emotional state directly impacts your performance. Just as he negotiated through academic pressures and anxiety only to rise in crucial moments, you too can harness your stress to fuel your determination. Embrace challenges as opportunities for growth and self-discovery, for it's during these trials that you may find your true strength and capabilities, turning setbacks into remarkable comebacks.

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chapter 4: Eastern Tournament

Chapter 4: Eastern Tournament

The Eastern Tournament is one of the five tournaments that constitute the National Collegiate Championships, managed by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). This organization encompasses about six hundred colleges and fifteen thousand basketball players across the United States. The importance and prestige of the NCAA tournament evolved significantly in the late 1940s, rivaling the National Invitation Tournament held in New York, which was the premier post-season event at that time. The NCAA, aiming to bolster its reputation, mandated that teams could only compete in one tournament—a change that solidified its position as the preeminent championship.

As the NCAA tournament gained importance, modern basketball began to flourish, marked by high-scoring games and the introduction of the jump shot. Record-breaking performances started to emerge post-1950, with players like Oscar Robertson and Jerry West setting new benchmarks through their exceptional skills. The Eastern Regionals feature a competitive field, including seven teams that battle through preliminary rounds in cities like New York and Philadelphia, before heading to university campuses for later stages.

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In his sophomore year, Bradley's Princeton team played against Penn State in a highly anticipated first-round game, notable for Penn State's strong zone defense. Despite the tension, Princeton narrowly secured a victory, winning 60-58, marking a significant achievement for any Ivy League team, which had a history of struggling in national tournaments. Following this rare triumph, Bradley felt invigorated about the team's potential, especially considering they performed below their best.

As Princeton advanced to the next round in College Park, Maryland, they were set to face North Carolina State, known for their formidable zone press defense. Aiming to instill confidence, Bradley rallied his teammates for an improvised practice session before the big game. During the match, North Carolina State's players displayed a surprising lack of intensity, allowing Princeton to seize control of the game. Bradley's impressive defensive play and overall performance, scoring 27 points, propelled Princeton to a convincing 68-48 victory, much to the delight of their supporters.

In the subsequent game, Providence defeated St. Joseph's, setting them up against Princeton. Leading up to this face-off, Bradley garnered critical remarks, suggesting he was overrated, fueling his drive to prove critics wrong. Recognizing the need to trust their own capabilities, Bradley urged his teammates to believe in themselves after their stellar performance against North Carolina State.

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The game against Providence began evenly, but quickly transformed into a showcase of Princeton's teamwork and strategy. Each player contributed to an impressive display of passing and scoring, leading to a substantial halftime lead, 47-34. Following halftime, Providence's attempts to

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chapter 5 Summary: National Championships

Chapter 5: National Championships

In the climactic setting of the Memorial Coliseum in Portland, Oregon, four college basketball teams—Princeton, U.C.L.A., Wichita State, and Michigan—prepared to compete for the national championship. The rematch between Princeton and Michigan was particularly charged, as Michigan had narrowly defeated Princeton at Madison Square Garden in December. Princeton's star player, Bill Bradley, who had rallied his team to success after their previous loss, was determined to turn the tide this time.

As the game unfolded, Princeton initially held the lead, but Michigan quickly gained control. Despite Bradley's impressive performance, scoring twenty-nine points, Princeton fell to Michigan with a score of 93-76. This victory, however, was not as satisfying for Michigan as they had hoped. They wanted a definitive win over Princeton, and struggles in officiating, particularly concerning foul calls against Bradley, clouded their triumph.

Michigan's coach, Van Breda Kolff, had a deep understanding of officiating challenges, especially in high-stakes games involving stars like Bradley. The inconsistencies in foul calls forced Princeton to adjust their strategy, playing a zone defense to keep their key player on the court. The game showcased

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the skill of both teams, but Michigan outperformed Princeton on the boards, securing 56 rebounds compared to Princeton's 34, a statistic that usually correlates with winning.

Reflecting on the loss, Bradley felt he had let his team down by not inspiring them adequately at halftime. As Princeton prepared for their next matchup against Wichita, Van Breda Kolff, recently honored as Coach of the Year, motivated them to finish strong for Bradley, ensuring his last game was memorable.

In their game against Wichita, Princeton quickly established dominance, leading 16-4 in the opening minutes. They demonstrated remarkable agility and precision, with a shooting percentage of 62%. At halftime, they led 53-39 and continued to outpace Wichita throughout the game. With Bradley's contributions, scoring thirty-two points, Princeton affirmed their skill and resilience.

As the game drew to a close, Bradley was encouraged by both his teammates and the crowd to seize his final moments on the court. With just under five minutes left, he began an incredible scoring spree, demonstrating both his skill and the dramatic flair of a seasoned performer. As he sank shot after shot, the crowd erupted in cheers, chanting "I believe! I believe!" Each successful basket was not only a personal triumph for Bradley but also an unforgettable spectacle of collegiate basketball.

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In an exhilarating four-minute stretch, Bradley broke records that had stood the test of time. He scored a total of fifty-eight points in the game, eclipsing Oscar Robertson's previous scoring mark and contributing to a record-breaking team performance. Princeton triumphed over Wichita 118-82, setting numerous records for points scored, field goals made, and overall tournament achievements, forever etching Bradley's name in the history of college basketball.

With his extraordinary display, Bradley transformed his final game into a legendary performance, solidifying his legacy alongside Princeton's remarkable season. As they celebrated their victory, it was clear that the partnership between Bradley and his team had culminated in unprecedented success, a tribute to their hard work and determination in the crucible of national championship competition.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Resilience in the face of adversity can lead to extraordinary achievements

Critical Interpretation: Imagine yourself standing on the precipice of defeat, feeling the weight of expectations pressing down as you face overwhelming odds. Just like Bill Bradley, who after a crushing loss, rallied back to deliver a historic performance in his final game, you too can find the strength to rise above challenges. This chapter inspires you to embrace resilience, understanding that even in moments of failure, your actions can redefine not only your journey but also the legacy you leave behind. With every setback, an opportunity to learn and innovate awaits, allowing you to transform obstacles into remarkable milestones in your life.

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chapter 6 Summary: Points and Honors

In Chapter 6, titled "Points and Honors," we follow Bradley's tumultuous return to Princeton after his remarkable career in college basketball. The chapter opens with Bradley addressing a crowd of undergraduates from atop the team bus, expressing his sense of disappointment despite his extraordinary performance that culminated in a national championship. His staggering achievement of fifty-eight points in the final game, along with his high scoring average and impressive free-throw record, had earned him the title of the most valuable player, placing him among the top scorers in college basketball history.

Rather than basking in the glory, Bradley seeks solitude shortly after his arrival back at Princeton. He chooses to live alone in a vacant house, distancing himself from the chaos of reporters and admirers trying to reach him. This seclusion allows him to focus intensely on completing his senior thesis, which he diligently writes over thirty days, culminating in a substantial thirty-three thousand-word document that earns him top marks upon graduation.

While he immerses himself in academic work, the community at Princeton celebrates his achievements by initiating the process to rename a street in his honor, indicative of his impact on the university. The New York Knickerbockers draft him as their first pick to secure his future in

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professional basketball. Meanwhile, his peers prepare for graduation by participating in a light-hearted "1965 Senior Class Poll," which reveals mixed sentiments towards him. Although he doesn't claim categories like "Biggest Swindler" or "Most Brilliant," he does secure titles such as "Most Popular" and "Most Likely to Succeed." Alongside a posthumous tribute, the Class of 1965 acknowledges him as "Princeton's Greatest Asset" and recognizes him as someone they respect deeply.

Through this chapter, the juxtaposition of Bradley's personal humility with the adulation he receives illustrates his character—one that values hard work and dedication while sometimes feeling overwhelmed by the expectations of others. Ultimately, his journey reflects a complex mix of athletic triumph and academic achievement, as he prepares for the next chapter of his life.

Key Points	Details
Chapter Title	Points and Honors
Bradley's Return	Bradley returns to Princeton following a successful college basketball career.
Initial Disappointment	Despite winning a national championship and being the MVP, he feels disappointed.
Scoring Achievements	Scored fifty-eight points in the final game, notable free-throw record.
Desire for Solitude	Chooses to live alone, away from media frenzy.



Key Points	Details
Thesis Completion	Writes a thirty-three thousand-word thesis in thirty days, receiving top marks.
Community Response	Princeton initiates renaming a street in his honor; he is drafted by the New York Knickerbockers.
Senior Class Poll	A mixed reception, titles include "Most Popular" and "Most Likely to Succeed."
Acknowledgment by Peers	Class of 1965 recognizes him as "Princeton's Greatest Asset" and shows deep respect.
Themes	Juxtaposition of personal humility and public adulation, hard work versus overwhelming expectations.

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