

## The Bone Tree

William Morrow

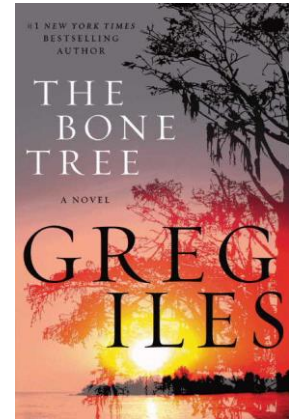
By Greg Iles

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### Introduction

The highly anticipated second installment in #1 *New York Times* bestselling author Greg Iles' epic trilogy featuring Penn Cage.

Southern prosecutor Penn Cage is caught in the darkest maelstrom of his life. The heartbreaking, but seemingly straightforward death of his father's African American nurse has fractured Penn's family and turned Dr. Tom Cage into a fugitive from justice. And in the search for his father and his reasons for running, Penn has unwittingly started a war with a violent offshoot of the KKK called the Double Eagles, whose members seem to know much more about Tom's past than Penn or his mother ever did.



### Questions for Discussion

1. What real history does Iles use to set the stage for events in *The Bone Tree*?
2. Iles's *Natchez Burning* trilogy has been compared to Stieg Larsson's *Millennium Trilogy*, which also features a journalist. What role does journalism play in Greg Iles's work, and how does it affect the behavior of the various characters?
3. Mayor Penn Cage and his father, Dr. Tom Cage, appear to be on separate paths in this story, though we know they probably agree on many things. Discuss their individual journeys and the moral choices they have to make.
4. Are the residents of Natchez, Mississippi, still living in the past? And are past sins taking their toll on those living in the present?
5. Describe the relationships among the Double Eagles, the Mafia, and the assassinations of JFK, RFK and MLK.
6. One antagonist in this novel is Lieutenant Colonel Forrest Knox, and he spent part of his career working in New Orleans. Is there a difference between the law and sense of justice in New Orleans and in Natchez?
7. Both *The Bone Tree* and *Natchez Burning* begin with a quote from Robert Penn Warren's *All the King's Men*. How do Iles's novels compare with that classic of Southern politics and justice?
8. We see more of FBI Special Agent John Kaiser in *The Bone Tree*. How do his goals differ from Penn's and Tom's?

9. How does Tom's history converge with the events leading up to the assassination of JFK? Does Tom know what's happening around him during this time?
10. Sins of the past that have enshrouded Natchez for decades appear to be impenetrable. What does Penn really think can be done to save those he loves? And is justice even possible in such a place?
11. Where does the Double Eagles history of crime and hate play into the many assassinations that took place in the 1960s?
12. Much of the novel is centered around what Tom has done—or is suspected of doing—in the past. There is an old saying to the effect that the sins of the father will be put upon the son. If that's true in this story, what sin is Penn guilty of and how does that affect his family?
13. Describe Caitlin Masters' role at *The Bone Tree*. Is she driven by journalistic pursuit or some higher form of justice? Ultimately, why does she choose to take this journey alone and not with her fiancée, Penn?
14. *The Bone Tree* is an epic novel that fills over 800 pages. What do you think the final novel in the trilogy, *Unwritten Laws*, will uncover? Do you think Penn Cage will come out unscathed?