What does Burden’s principle “what you don’t know won’t hurt you” mean? Does he believe this at the beginning of the film? At the end?

Is idealism appropriate in politics?

Who is Willie Stark (Sean Penn)?

What is Stark’s view on dignity?
♦ Who is Jack Burden (Jude Law)?

♦ What is the physical/geographic setting?

♦ What is the economic life like?

♦ Who is Tiny Duffy (James Gandolfini)?

♦ What is the 1st office Stark holds?

♦ What other job does Stark have?

♦ What is the issue with the bid for the school building? Why is that controversial? What happens?
What role does race play in this story?

“Time brings all things to light”—what does this mean? Is it true in this story?

What does Stark do after the school episode? Why does the school tragedy propel Stark's career?

Who wants him to run for governor? Why?

What is Stark's philosophy/ideology?

What role does Mrs. Stark play?

Why do the "good old boys" want Stark to run for governor? What is the strategy?
♦ How is Stark being “used”?

♦ What is a “cracker”?

♦ Who is Sadie Burke (Patricia Clarkson)?

♦ Is Stark an honest man?

♦ Is Stark a good candidate? How does he get better? What changes at the carnival?

♦ “If you don’t vote, you don’t matter”—true?

♦ Why does the paper stop printing Burden’s stories on Stark?
Why does Burden quit his job?

How does Stark win? Who votes for him? Who doesn’t?

What does Jack Burden mean by “a declaration of war on the rich”?

How does the legislature react to Governor Stark?

Why does Stark keep Tiny Duffy around? What job does he give him?

Who Is Jack’s godfather, Judge Irwin (Anthony Hopkins)?

How does Stark “solve” the problem Judge Irwin creates?
Can Stark judge good from bad? Should he be trusted with that power?

Why is Stark’s political message so appealing?

Can one be corrupt if one's intentions are good?

Can a politician get good things done without getting his/her hands dirty?

What is Jack's job for the governor?

Why do people want to impeach Stark?

What motivates Stark's behavior?
◆ Is Stark right that a little bit of dirt rubs off on everyone?

◆ Why does Burden work for Stark?

◆ Who is Anne Stanton (Kate Winslet)?

◆ Who is Dr. Adam Stanton?

◆ What does Jack find out about Judge Irwin?

◆ Is Judge Irwin any better than Stark?

◆ Can good come out of bad?
Was Stark ever a good man? When did he turn bad?

Does Stark represent the will of the people? If so, isn't that justification for him to rule, despite any faults he may have had?

What is a populist? What is a demagogue?

What does Dr. Stanton do to Stark? Why?

Could Stark have been president?

Could a Stark-like politician succeed today?

What do you suppose are the last thoughts to go through Stark’s mind? In the original film, he says the following to Jack at the end: “Could have been whole world, Willie Stark, whole world, Willie Stark. Why did he do it to me, Willie Stark? Why?” What might that mean?