

Braiding Sweetgrass Discussion Questions

Kimmerer tells the story of cleaning up her backyard pond by clearing out the algae. Have you ever undertaken a big project involving nature? OR: Have you ever grown something from seed?

Do you (or did you) think of plants as inanimate objects? Is it possible plants have domesticated us rather than the other way around?

“Plants tell their stories not by what they say, but by what they do.” What was your favorite plant story in *Braiding Sweetgrass* and what lesson did you learn from it?

In our society, we think about time in a linear way—past, present and future. But many indigenous people see time as circular with stories both retelling history and prophesying the future. What challenges does that create in understanding each other? Have you ever had an experience in which your way of seeing the world clashed with mainstream ways of thinking?

This book has been a surprise best seller for the publisher, Milkweed— The book has sold more than 1.6-million copies, has been translated into 20 languages, has spent three years on the *New York Times* Bestseller list, and this year has been adapted into an edition for young readers. Why do you think it’s been so popular?

Is species loneliness a real thing? Can humans lead fulfilling lives even if they are not deeply connected to the natural world? What did you think of the Pledge of Interdependence?

Besides sources of food and materials we can use, what is the value to us of non-human species to us? What do we owe them? Should rivers or trees have legal rights?

Kimmerer talks about an “honorable harvest,” taking only what we need or purchasing items harvested honorably. What do you think counts as honorable

harvesting? How realistic is honorable harvesting or reciprocity for those of us who don't grow our own food? Do you have any principles you follow in your own shopping for food or other items?

What did you think of the way the book was organized? Did you have a favorite chapter?

Kimmerer took her botany students on some interesting study trips. Would you have enjoyed digging for roots or wading in the muck? During your academic career did you ever have a professor who took you into a real world setting and made it come alive?