

Discussion Questions Braiding Sweetgrass

1. The book lends its title from the sweetgrass that is such a mainstay of indigenous tradition. In what ways does sweetgrass represent the author's beliefs about ecology and the environment?
2. The author, Robin Wall Kimmerer, orients much of the text around her own personal memories, experiences, and research. How did you feel about this?
3. The author's identity as an indigenous woman informs much of the text. In what ways does she explain indigenous culture and tradition to those unfamiliar with such beliefs? Did you come away with a better understanding of indigenous culture and tradition?
4. Kimmerer uses a story about strawberries to introduce the reader to the notion of the "gift economy." What are the pros and cons of the gift economy or in other words, what do you like or not like about this concept? Is Kimmerer's view of the gift economy compatible with your lifestyle?
5. Does the concept of trees having a community relationship, and the scientific explanations of their possible means of communications change how you view your relationship with the forest? If so, how?
6. Do you see the earth as property or as a gift? How does this perspective change the way in which you view the value of what you take from the earth?
7. 'An Offering' (pg. 33-38) provides insight into Kimmerer's understanding of the meaning of ceremony that is "fed from the same bond with the land, founded on respect and gratitude." (pg. 36) How can we express our gratitude and responsibility for the gifts of the land? What can we offer earth in return?
8. What action can you take within your community to bring about positive environmentalism and ecological restoration/preservation?
9. "The Onondaga people still live by the precepts of the Great Law and still believe that, in return for the gifts of Mother Earth, human people have responsibility for caring for the nonhuman people, for stewardship of the land." (pg. 319) What do you believe are the responsibilities of our government and our society in aiding the Onondaga Nation in its efforts to restore Onondaga Lake to a healthy state?
10. Are there practical insights and wisdom you will take from this book and incorporate into your everyday life? Do you already practice some?

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