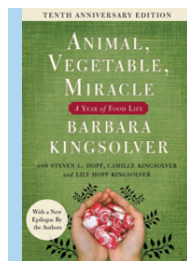


Discussion Guide



Animal, Vegetable, Miracle
Barbara Kingsolver

Harper Perennial
2017 10th Anniversary Edition
432 pages
ISBN: 978-0062653055

Food and Nutrition

Summary

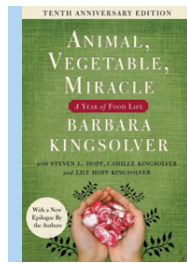
When Barbara Kingsolver and her family moved from suburban Arizona to rural Appalachia, they took on a new challenge: to spend a year on a locally produced diet, paying close attention to the provenance of all they consume. Concerned about the environmental, social, and physical costs of American food culture, they hoped to recover what Barbara considers our nation's lost appreciation for farms and the natural processes of food production. Since 2007, their scheme has evolved enormously. In this new edition, the entire Kingsolver family, Barbara's husband, Steven, and two adult daughters, Camille and Lily, describe their lives since the first telling of the family's story of living off the land. With Americans' ever-growing concern over an agricultural establishment that negatively affects our health and environment, the Kingsolver family's experiences and observations remain just as relevant today as they were ten years ago. *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* is a modern classic that will endure for years to come.

Questions

1. What was your perception of America's food industry prior to reading *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*? What did you learn from this book? How has it altered your views on the way food is acquired and consumed?
2. In what ways, if any, have you changed your eating habits since reading *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*? Depending on where you live—in an urban, suburban, or rural environment — what other steps would you like to take to modify your lifestyle about eating local?
3. "It had felt arbitrary when we sat around the table with our shopping list, making our rules. It felt almost silly to us in fact, as it may now seem to you. Why impose restrictions on ourselves? Who cares?" asks Kingsolver in *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*? Did you, in fact, care about Kingsolver's story and find it to be compelling? Why or why not? What was the family's aim for their year-long initiative, and did they accomplish that goal?
4. The writing of *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* was a family affair, with Kingsolver's husband, Steven L. Hopp, contributing factual sidebars and her daughter, Camille Kingsolver, serving up commentary and recipes. Did you find that these additional elements enhanced the book? How so? What facts or statistics in *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* surprised you the most?
5. How does each member of the Kingsolver-Hopp family contribute during their year-long eating adventure? Were you surprised that the author's children not only participated in the endeavor but that they did so with such enthusiasm? Why or why not?

Terms of use: This discussion guide is contributed to [LitLovers](#). It is reformatted by the Network of the National Library of Medicine (NNLM) for educational use and does not reflect the views or opinions of the sponsoring agencies of the National Library of Medicine (NLM) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

Discussion Guide



Animal, Vegetable, Miracle
Barbara Kingsolver

Harper Perennial
2017 10th Anniversary Edition
432 pages
ISBN: 978-0062653055

Food and Nutrition

6. "A majority of North Americans do understand, at some level, that our food choices are politically charged," says Kingsolver, "affecting arenas from rural culture to international oil cartels and global climate change." How do politics affect America's food production and consumption? What global ramifications are there for the food choices we make?
7. Kingsolver advocates the pleasures of seasonal eating, but she acknowledges that many people would view this as deprivation "because we've grown accustomed to the botanically outrageous condition of having everything always." Do you believe that American society can—or will— overcome the need for instant gratification to be able to eat seasonally? How does Kingsolver present this aspect in *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*? Did you get the sense that she and her family ever felt deprived in their eating options?
8. Kingsolver points out that eating what we want when we want comes "at a price." The cost, she says, "is not measured in money, but in untallied debts that will be paid by our children in the currency of extinctions, economic unravelings, and global climate change." What responsibility do we bear for keeping the environment safe for future generations? How does eating locally factor into this?
9. Kingsolver asserts that "we have dealt to today's kids the statistical hand of a shorter life expectancy than their parents, which would be us, the ones taking care of them." How is our "thrown-away food culture" a detriment to children's health? She also says, "We're raising our children on the definition of promiscuity if we feed them a casual, indiscriminate mingling of foods from every season plucked from the supermarket." What responsibility do parents have to teach their children about the value and necessity of a local food culture?
10. In what ways do Kingsolver's descriptions of the places she visited on her travels — Italy, New England, Montreal, and Ohio—enhance her portrayal of local and seasonal eating?
11. "Marketing jingles from every angle lure patrons to turn our backs on our locally owned stores, restaurants, and farms," says Kingsolver. "And nobody considers that unpatriotic." How much of a role do the media play in determining what Americans eat? Discuss the decline of America's diversified family farms, and what it means for the country as a whole.
12. In the Epilogue, the family members describe what has changed since they book originally was published in 2007. Discuss their observations and insights.