

BOOK CLUB in a bag

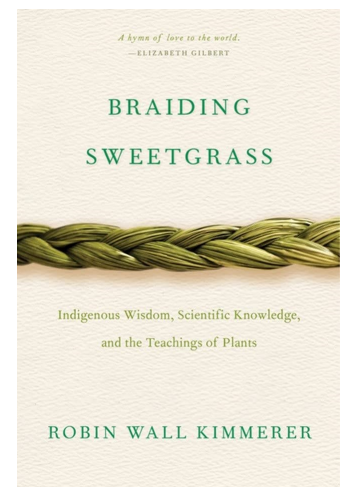


Braiding Sweetgrass

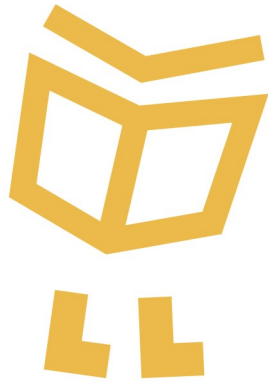
Robin Wall Kimmerer

Discussion Questions

1. “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?
2. Is there a plant like the fragrant “wiingashk” that is as special to you or holds value for you? Why?
3. Throughout *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Kimmerer writes about how her experiences in traditional academic settings has been influenced by her knowledge and Potawatomi heritage. Have you had similar experiences where your background and way of seeing the world clashes with the mainstream way of seeing and thinking?
4. “The more something is shared, the greater the value,” Kimmerer believes. Reciprocity is heavily mentioned in the book, exchanging things with others or nature for mutual benefit. In what ways can we incorporate gift economy in our jobs or personal lives? How would this practice shift our thinking?
5. Kimmerer challenges us to see a more positive relationship between people and the environment, like the generosity of geese or the gift of strawberries or pecans that nourished her and her family in time of need. We can shift our focus on the negative impacts of people on the land like “brownfields, factory farms, suburban sprawl” to opportunities for reciprocity and renewal. What is your knowledge of positive interactions between people and land?
6. Scientific knowledge and indigenous ways of knowing are complimentary, just like goldenrod and New England asters, do you think there’s a need for objectivity (science) and subjectivity to mesh together for there to be a fuller appreciation of plants, animals and the natural world?
7. In “The Grammar of Animacy,” Kimmerer posits that the word It “robs a person of selfhood and kinship, reducing a person to a mere thing.” What would change if the English language reflected the animacy of plants and animals?



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About the Author

Robin Wall Kimmerer is a mother, scientist, decorated professor, and enrolled member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. She is the author of *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teaching of Plants*, which has earned Kimmerer wide acclaim. Her first book, *Gathering Moss: A Natural and Cultural History of Mosses*, was awarded the John Burroughs Medal for outstanding nature writing, and her other work has appeared in *Orion*, *Whole Terrain*, and numerous scientific journals. She tours widely and has been featured on NPR's *On Being* with Krista Trippett and in 2015 addressed the general assembly of the United Nations on the topic of "Healing Our Relationship with Nature." Kimmerer lives in Syracuse, New York, where she is a SUNY Distinguished Teaching Professor of Environmental Biology, and the founder and director of the Center for Native Peoples and the Environment.

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