



Animal, Vegetable, Miracle A Year of Food Life

By Barbara Kingsolver

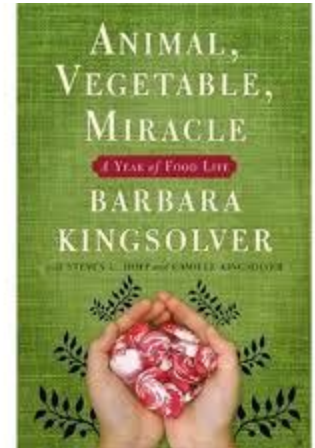
Helen Plum Library

Sunday, March 25 at 2pm

Discussion Leader

Lonnie Morris, Sierra Club

(Borrowed books are due March 25)



Critical Praise

“Homespun, unassuming, informed, positive, inspiring. . . Unstinting in its concerns about this imperiled planet.” ---Seattle Post-Intelligencer

Author Background

Barbara Kingsolver was born in 1955, and grew up in rural Kentucky. She earned degrees in biology from DePauw University and the University of Arizona, and has worked as a freelance writer and author since 1985. Her many books of fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction include the novels *The Bean Trees* and *The Poisonwood Bible*. Translated into nineteen languages, her work has won a devoted worldwide readership and many awards, including the National Humanities Medal. Her highly praised bestselling book, *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* was published in 2007. She lives with her family on a farm in southwestern Virginia.

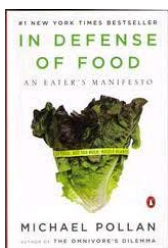
Book Summary

Kingsolver takes readers through the seasons, chronicling the joys and challenges of eating only foods that she, her husband, and two daughters grew in their backyard or purchased from neighboring farms. Part memoir, part cookbook, and part exposé of the American food industry, *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* is one family’s inspiring story of discovering the truth behind the adage “you are what you eat” and a valuable resource for anyone looking to do the same.

Discussion Questions

1. “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?
2. 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 unraveling, and global climate change.” When did we start eating “what we want, when we want?” How did it change the taste, nutrition, or convenience of food? Have these habits become too ingrained to change? Are there benefits to eating seasonally? Locally? Organically?
3. “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.
4. Kingsolver quotes [p.52] Jack Harlan, a geneticist and author of the classic *Crops and Man*, who wrote about the loss of genetic diversity in no uncertain terms: “These resources stand between us and catastrophic starvation on a scale we cannot imagine. . .The line between abundance and disaster is becoming thinner and thinner.” On a global scale, are we seeing that this is true?
5. Has US food security been compromised by the concentration of production in the hands of a few companies? What are some of the problems that have resulted from industrial food production?

Further Reading



Pollan, Michael. *The Omnivore's Dilemma*
In Defense of Food

Lappe, Anna. *Diet for a Hot Planet*

Rider, Tracey & Carole Topalian. *Edible*

