

BRAIDING SWEETGRASS DISCUSSION QUESTIONS¹

DISCUSSION MARCH 4, 2022

Part 3: Picking Sweetgrass (pp. 121 - 204 in Milkweed Editions, 2013)

Read chapters twelve through seventeen and write reflections on each of the following:

The reciprocity theme continues in this section with an emphasis upon the gifts the land provides, finding our unique gifts to give in return, how our gifts can be used to foster the sense of community, and how "plants teach in a universal language: food." (p. 129) 'The Three Sisters' (pp. 128 - 140) story is especially poignant and informative. The reader learns that "... the lessons of reciprocity are written clearly in a Three Sisters garden. Together their stems inscribe what looks to me like a blueprint for the world, a map of balance and harmony." When corn, beans, and squash are planted together, their "organic symmetry of forms belongs together... Respect one another, support one another, bring your gift to the world and receive the gifts of others, and there will be enough for all." (p. 132)

'The Honorable Harvest' (pp. 175 - 201) "... asks us to give back, in reciprocity, for what we have been given." (p. 190) The Guidelines of the Honorable Harvest are presented as rules that "... are based on accountability to both the physical and the metaphysical worlds." (p. 183) Kimmerer discusses the culture of gratitude as a springboard for a culture of reciprocity, and the differences between reciprocity and the modern ecological movement towards sustainability.

1. What does each of The Three Sisters - corn, beans, and squash - bring to their reciprocal relationship? How can this partnership create a stronger community? Can you think of other examples of such win-win situations?
2. In our consumer-driven society, how can we put into realistic practice the covenants of The Honorable Harvest? How can we teach people to "remember that what's good for the land is also good for the people"? (p. 195)

¹ From the Longwood Gardens Discussion and Question Guide for [Community Read 2015](https://longwoodgardens.org/education/community-read/community-read-2015) (<https://longwoodgardens.org/education/community-read/community-read-2015>) in Kennett Square, PA