



Braiding Sweetgrass

Robin Wall Kimmerer

A botanist and Potawatomi citizen weaves Indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge, and gratitude into luminous essays about our relationship with the living world.

Reading level: Moderate

Best for: a thoughtful, nature-loving club that enjoys slow reads and heartfelt sharing

Discussion

WARM-UP

1. Which essay or chapter felt like a warm hug when you read it, and where were you when you read it?
2. Did this book change how you noticed plants, weather, or small living things in your daily life this week?

DIGGING IN

1. Kimmerer writes about gifts and gratitude as a way of living. What is one small everyday thing you have felt more thankful for since starting the book?
2. The idea of reciprocity, giving back to what gives to us, runs through the book. How does that idea sit with you in your own home, garden, or neighborhood?
3. Which of Kimmerer's stories about her daughters, her garden, or her teaching reminded you of someone in your own family?
4. She braids together science and Indigenous knowledge so tenderly. Which pairing of the two moved you most, and why do you think it landed?

GOING DEEP

1. Was there a passage that quietly unsettled you or made you want to change something, even in a small way? What feeling did it leave behind?
2. If you could carry just one teaching from this book into the rest of your year like a pocket stone, which would you choose and why?

On the table

🍽️ **Three Sisters stew (corn, beans, squash)**

A warm nod to the Three Sisters chapter, hearty and nurturing in a single bowl

🍽️ **Warm cornbread with honey butter**

Comforting, a little indulgent, and echoes the book's reverence for corn and sweetness

🍽️ **Maple-roasted apple and pecan crumble**

Inspired by the sugar maple chapters, cozy dessert that fills the room with autumn smells

To sip

☕ **Sweetgrass and chamomile herbal tea (no alcohol)**

Calming, fragrant, and a gentle tribute to the title plant

☕ **Hot maple-cider toddy**

Warm cider with a splash of bourbon and a cinnamon stick, like a fire in a mug

☕ **Steamed cinnamon milk with honey (no alcohol)**

A bedtime-soft option for the tea-and-blanket crowd

Run of show

7:00 Arrivals and tea

Greet guests with herbal tea and let them settle into blankets and floor cushions

7:15 Gratitude go-around

Each person names one small thing in nature they noticed this week, to ease into the book's spirit

7:30 Soup and warm-up questions

Serve the Three Sisters stew and cornbread while easing into the first two questions

8:00 Theme conversation

Move through the theme questions slowly, no need to answer all of them

8:45 Dessert and deeper sharing

Bring out the crumble and toddies, soften the lights, and dip into the deeper questions

9:30 Closing gift

Hand out bookmarks and invite one parting word about what each person is taking home

HOST TIPS

- Set out blankets, candles, and a few houseplants or pinecones to ground the space
- Let silences breathe, this book invites pauses and you do not need to fill every gap
- Keep questions visible on cards so quieter guests can choose what speaks to them

Playlist

Soft acoustic and earthy folk for candlelight and slow conversation

01 Holocene - Bon Iver

03 River - Joni Mitchell

05 Wildflowers - Tom Petty

07 Harvest Moon - Neil Young

02 The Trapper and the Furrier - Regina Spektor

04 Saint Honesty - Sara Bareilles

06 Bloom - The Paper Kites

08 Down to the River to Pray - Alison Krauss

Trivia

1. What is Robin Wall Kimmerer's profession alongside being an author? (Botanist (and professor of environmental biology))
2. Of which Indigenous nation is Kimmerer an enrolled member? (The Citizen Potawatomi Nation)
3. In what year was Braiding Sweetgrass first published? (2013)
4. Which small publisher first released the book? (Milkweed Editions)
5. What are the Three Sisters that Kimmerer celebrates? (Corn, beans, and squash)
6. What is the scientific term for the study of mosses, a subject of Kimmerer's earlier book? (Bryology)
7. Sweetgrass is traditionally prepared in what form for ceremony and gifts? (A braid)
8. What earlier book by Kimmerer focuses on mosses? (Gathering Moss)

Rate the book

Coziness ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

Heart ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

Beauty of language ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

Lingering thoughts ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

Reread-ability ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

One word for how this book made me feel: _____

A passage I want to keep close: _____

Something small I want to do differently: _____

YOU'RE INVITED

A Cozy Night of Sweetgrass and Slow Talk

Bring your softest sweater and your favorite passages. We are gathering for warm bowls, herbal tea, and gentle conversation about Robin Wall Kimmerer's Braiding Sweetgrass.



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