

Braiding Sweetgrass Book Summary, by Robin Wall Kimmerer

by Allen Cheng

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Want to learn the ideas in Braiding Sweetgrass better than ever? Read the world's #1 book summary of Braiding Sweetgrass by Robin Wall Kimmerer here.

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Video Summaries of Braiding Sweetgrass

We've scoured the Internet for the very best videos on Braiding Sweetgrass, from high-quality videos summaries to interviews or commentary by Robin Wall Kimmerer.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7D8m5Pjg8L4>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cumEQcRMY3c>

1-Page Summary of Braiding Sweetgrass

Overall Summary

In 2013, Braiding Sweetgrass was written by Robin Wall Kimmerer. It is a book that explores the connection between living things and human efforts to cultivate a more sustainable world through the lens of indigenous traditions. The author reflects on how modern botany can be explained through these cultures.

The book begins with the story of Skywoman, who brought plants to Earth. The author uses this story to teach her students about sustainability. Next, the author discusses pecans and how they fed people during difficult times and helped them connect with their culture. She talks about gifts and points out cultural differences between indigenous people and modern Western societies.

The author first arrives in college and is very excited about it, but she has a problem; her indigenous identity clashes with her scientific instincts. However, the author manages to resolve these issues. She learns about her traditional language, but it is difficult for her to learn. Later in life, the author makes maple syrup with her children. After lots of effort they only produce little syrup because of problems with their equipment.

The author moves to an upstate New York home after her husband leaves. She meets a neighbor named

Hazel and tries to clear the algae from a pond. The process takes decades and is never truly finished, just like her marriage was not really over. When her daughters grow up and move out, she takes up kayaking as a hobby. Her daughter once refused to say the Pledge of Allegiance at school because she disagreed with it, so the author sympathizes with her decision.

The author tells the story of three plants that grow well together. She explains why they do so, using scientific terms. The sweetgrass baskets were used by indigenous people and are still made today. A student tried to study the sweetgrass cultivation, but was criticized for it. Eventually, he completed his project with great acclaim from faculty members who previously scorned him for studying something different than what is commonly studied at universities. The Honorable Harvest involves taking only what you need from nature and respecting your surroundings instead of destroying them all in a quest for more material wealth or power.

The author recalls a story of Nanabozho, who is an embodiment of life forces. He strives to bring balance in the world and teach humans how to be human. In the beginning of her teaching career, she worries that she has failed to teach her Christian students about respect for nature because they sing hymns on their field trip instead. However, as time goes by, they build cattails together and learn more about indigenous culture through building wigwams.

The author remembers an annual salmon harvest in her hometown, which was destroyed by settlers. The salmon have not returned to the area yet, but efforts are being made to restore them and the indigenous culture. The author talks about lichen and how people are trying to save cedar trees from extinction. One man in particular dedicated his life's work towards re-growing cedar forests before he died.

The Windigo is a myth about cannibalism that warns people of the dangers of overconsumption. It reminds us to avoid the greediness within ourselves and not overindulge in consumption. One example is pollution, which has been addressed recently by efforts to clean up Lake Superior, where there was once an incredible amount of pollution.

The author acknowledges the importance of stories in trying to restore the land to what it once was. She thinks about the Mayan creation stories and dreams of a world in which stories guide people while remaining rooted in science and framed by an indigenous view of the world. While listening to radio reports of the Iraq invasion, she drives out to a dark road and tries to protect migrating salamanders. Her father taught her how to light a fire, so she thinks about various fire ceremonies and prophecies from her people; humanity will have a choice, but she hopes that we haven't already passed that moment when we could make decisions for ourselves. The author is confronted by "the Windigo," which is another word for cannibalism at one point or another during history (it's not just something from Native American tribes). She confronts it with medicinal knowledge as well as knowledge about its own story: sometimes you need someone else's help before you can do things yourself—and sometimes you don't even know what kind of help you need until someone shows up who knows better than you do!

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