

Study & Discussion Questions: Omnivore's Dilemma

Directions: While reading “**Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals**”, answer these “*study and discussion questions*”. A *typewritten copy* of your work will be submitted to your teacher during the first week of school. You may also be asked to submit this work via *Turnitin* during the first week of school. Please organize your answers by chapter and “question number”.

Introduction:

1. What is meant by “national eating disorder”? Do you find the idea credible? Why or why not?
2. Explain the concept of the omnivore's dilemma.
3. Summarize the ideas behind Pollan's four meals.

Chapter 1:

4. In what ways are Americans “corn people”?
5. What sort of problems might arise from having so much of our food/ingredients produced from one crop?
6. How has corn domesticated us?

Chapter 2:

7. How has government policy shaped corn production and, thus, in part, what we eat?
8. Explain the technological advances that led to these changes in farming.

Chapter 3:

9. Explain the differences between corn as food and corn as a commodity. Who had driven this shift to commodity and how?

Chapter 4:

10. Compare the natural and industrial diets for our beef.
11. What effects on human health might be caused by this dietary shift and the accompanying use of medications on beef cattle?

Chapter 5:

12. Explain the concept of an “industrial eater.” How does this compare with your eating habits?

Chapter 6:

13. What health problems are associated with high fructose corn syrup?

Chapter 7:

14. What are the plusses and minuses of such a corn-intensive diet? Taken into consideration our health, the environment, the economy, and even energy independence. Who wins? Who loses? How?

Chapter 8:

15. Explain the concept of “grass farming” – how is this a different understanding of agriculture?
16. Explain the concept of “industrial organic”?

Chapter 9:

17. Explain and give examples of “grocery lit.” Does such “literature” affect the way you think about food and your buying decisions? Why/why not?
18. Compare and contrast the industrial food chain from the first section of the book with the industrial organic described in this chapter. How different are they?

Chapter 10:

19. Summarize the steps and things that must be taken into consideration for successful grass farming.

Chapter 11:

20. As we saw on George Naylor’s corn farm in Iowa, most American farms no longer grow a wide variety of crops, but Joel Salatin’s approach to animal farming shows a deeply interconnected system. Explain the different aspects of the system and how each part contributes to the larger whole.

Chapter 12:

21. What does Pollan tell us here about our food safety regulations? Do you think the regulations & regulatory system make sense? Why/Why not?
22. How safe do you think our food supply is? Why?

Chapter 13:

23. What does Pollan suggest about the cost of industrial food versus Salatin’s food?
24. What do our food choices say about our priorities as a society?

Chapter 14:

25. How does Pollan think his meal produced by Joel Salatin's farm might be nutritionally different from a similar meal grown on a regular, industrial farm? Do you agree? Why?/Why not?

Chapter 15:

26. Do you agree with Pollan that the hunter-gatherer food chain is no longer sufficient for us?

Chapter 16:

27. What are the influences of culture on what we eat? How might this affect our health?
28. According to www.aboutmcdonalds.com, McDonald's is found in 118 countries – what does that say about our globalized food chain versus narrow American eating habits?

Chapter 17:

29. Summarize the various ethical questions discussed with regard to eating meat.
30. What are your own views on the ethical question of animal suffering and your (potential) meat consumption?

Chapter 18:

31. What different emotions does Pollan experience while hunting?

Chapter 19:

32. What does mushroom foraging suggest about the omnivore's dilemma?

Chapter 20:

33. Why does Pollan say that both his first and last meals are "equally unsustainable" (pg. 411)? Do you agree? Why?/Why not? Do you think the industrial organic or locally grown are significantly more sustainable? Why?/Why not?
34. Has reading this book changed the way you think about food or what you choose to eat? Why/How?/Why not?