

Conversation Starters

New York Reads: Drawdown

Discussion Questions Based on the Essays in *Drawdown*

Why Bother? By Michael Pollan (p. 52)

- Why bother?
- At the end of "An Inconvenient Truth" Al Gore says to change your lightbulbs. At the end of "Why bother?" Michael Pollan says to plant a garden. What's another easy step you can take to reduce your carbon footprint?
- Is being virtuous perceived as negative? Liberal?
- What case would you make for why we should bother or not bother to shift our food practices in ways that will draw down greenhouse gases?

The Man Who Stopped the Desert by Mark Hertsgaard (p. 118)

- What sustainable practices have been passed on through the generations in your family?
- What sustainable practices have been passed on through the generations in your community?

Hidden Life of Trees by Peter Wohlleben (p. 130)

- What can we learn from trees about community?

On Care for Our Common Home by Pope Francis (p. 190)

- Pope Francis stated, "When we speak of the "environment," what we really mean is a relationship existing between nature and the society which lives in it. Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live." Do you agree with him?
- Is there a balance between faith morals, virtues and teachings with finding common ground to work towards protecting the Earth?

Reciprocity by Janine Benyus (p. 212)

- Facts and scientific proof are always being challenged by other scientist – how do we know what is true?

General Questions

1. What obstacles stand in the way of achieving renewable energy alternatives to the status quo? How will a shift to renewable resources affect the country?
2. Do you think recent changes in climate and weather are more attributed to natural or human causes? Explain your reasons.
3. Can you see a change where you live? Do you notice anything different about your local environment?
4. Before reading the book, did you think of global warming as more of a problem for future generations rather than your own generation?
5. Can you imagine a world where economic growth isn't sought? What do you think would have to happen for that to be feasible?
6. Can you imagine altering your diet to eat locally? Have you already?
7. Do you agree that becoming more neighborly will help us cope with life on Earth? Do you talk with your neighbors now? If not, do you wish that you did? How does modernity – as it stands now – limit or enhance our ability to make friends with those around us?
8. The authors shift the frame of mind from “game over” to “game on,” a hopeful approach designed to stimulate curiosity, ingenuity, and practical wisdom. It describes solutions as “commonly available,” “economically feasible,” and “scientifically valid.” How do you respond to this language of optimism?
9. Does anything about the list of solutions surprise you?
10. Which solutions make sense for our community to focus on? Which solutions make sense for you to focus on personally?

Resources

- **Welcome, Citizens of eaarth: A Guide to Living on a Fundamentally Altered Planet**
<http://billmckibben.com/eaarth/discussionquestions.html>
- Action Book Club, Little Free Library
<https://littlefreelibrary.org/actionbookclubresources/>
- Providing Clean Water, Rotary International
<https://www.rotary.org/en/our-causes/providing-clean-water>
- Global Catholic Climate Movement
<https://catholicclimatemovement.global/>

Further Reading

- **Biomimicry: Innovation Inspired by Nature** by Janine Benyus
- **The End of Nature** by Bill McKibben
- **The Hidden Half of Nature: The Microbial Roots of Life and Health** by David R. Montgomery and Anne Bikle
- **Hidden Life of Trees: What they feel, how they communicate, discoveries from a secret world** by Peter Wohlleben
- **Hot: Living Through the Next Fifty Years on Earth** by Mark Hertsgaard
- **Inventions of Nature: Alexander Von Humboldt's New World** by Andrea Wulf
- **"Why Bother?,"** by Michael Pollen, New York Times, April 20, 2008
[<https://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/20/magazine/20wwIn-lede-t.html>]