



Pacific Northwest Region Virtual Book Club

Salmon by Mark Kurlansky

7:00 PM PT on October 7th, 2021

Meeting Schedule

Parts	Chapters	Date	# of pages
	Prologue: A Tale of Two Fisheries		
Part One: The Hero	Chapter One: A Family Matter	7-Oct	74
	Chapter Two: A Hero's Life		
Part Two: A Human Problem	Chapter Three: The Original Salmon	21-Oct	64
	Chapter Four: Old Ways in the New Land		
	Chapter Five: A Golden Fish Arrives in the East		
	Chapter Six: When it Was Working	4-Nov	58
	Chapter Seven: The White Man Comes		
	Chapter Eight: Nowhere to Run		
Part Three: The Problem with Solutions	Chapter Nine: Why Not Make More?	18-Nov	56
	Chapter Ten: Sea Cattle		
	Chapter Eleven: The Release		
Part Four: The Dangerous Future	Chapter Twelve: Elegy for the Atlantic	2-Dec	86
	Chapter Thirteen: The Ballad of the Pacific		
	Chapter Fourteen: The Golden Fish Departs		
	Epilogue		

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Prologue: A Tale of Two Fisheries

1. Is the survival of our planet truly and inextricably tied to the fate of salmon? Is there any chance that the author overextended his thesis or are salmon a keystone species?
2. Are salmon really the best barometer for the health and fate of the planet?
3. Why would the author have started his story with two polar opposite fisher“men” (Ole Olson and Thea Thomas) and how does that influence the readers' initial perception/reaction? Are fisher“men” even the best place to start, considering his premise for the purpose of the book?
4. Did anyone make either of the recipes in the book? How were they?
5. As a U.S. society, we have mostly (maybe completely) banned commercial hunting—why do we view commercial fishing differently? Should it be viewed differently?
6. Do you eat salmon? Why or why not?
7. On page 35, Kurlansky provides a list of “actions that need to be taken”. How should the impacts of enacting these actions be considered (e.g., Where does electricity come from if hydropower is eliminated from the Columbia River, fossil fuels are not used, and nuclear power is stopped? How would food production be impacted if farmers no longer use pesticides? etc...)?

Chapter One: A Family Matter

1. Where there any fishy “family members” that were new to you?
2. Did you tie this chapter to your own diet in any way?
3. What the heck is “salmon”? Do you think you could explain this after reading this chapter?

Chapter Two: A Hero's Life

1. In several places the author seems to imply that evolution and nature are intentional in making adaptations and changes. If this is just a literary strategy, should it be used? Here are a couple of examples, did you notice any other examples? (e.g., on p. 67 “Nature...intended for salmon rivers to be full of trees.” and on p. 61 “This is by design and in nature, design is usually about survival.”)
2. In Kurlansky’s discussion about “sexual selection” (pp. 76 – 78) he described how the Victorian culture impacted Darwin and others’ explanations about the role of “useless appendages”.

3. Certainly, our cultures influence scientific (and other) explanations that we develop. What are some ways that this is playing out now? Is it even possible for us to know since we are living in our own cultural bubble? As educators how should we help students understand this as a potential bias?

Additional Resources

Food

- [Seafood Watch](#)
- [Fishwatch](#)
- [Salmon-Safe Certified Products](#)

Beverage

- [Drinking responsibly could now mean drinking 'Salmon-Safe' beer](#)
 - [What is Salmon Safe Beer?](#)
- [Salmon-Safe IPA Fest Beer List](#)
- [Icicle Brewing Company – Let's talk about salmon](#)