



## Pacific Northwest Region Virtual Book Club

**Salmon** by Mark Kurlansky

7:00 PM PT on November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021

### Meeting Schedule

Parts	Chapters	Date	# of pages
<b>Part Two: A Human Problem</b>	Chapter Six: When it Was Working	4-Nov	58
	Chapter Seven: The White Man Comes		
	Chapter Eight: Nowhere to Run		
<b>Part Three: The Problem with Solutions</b>	Chapter Nine: Why Not Make More?	18-Nov	56
	Chapter Ten: Sea Cattle		
	Chapter Eleven: The Release		
<b>Part Four: The Dangerous Future</b>	Chapter Twelve: Elegy for the Atlantic	2-Dec	86

### Chapter Six: When it Was Working

1. On p. 152, Kurlansky proposes that to the European settlers, the “virgin state” represented backwardness—“clean and beautiful but undeveloped and therefore poor”. I’d like to think that this view has evolved among the non-indigenous inhabitants of the U.S. Has there been a change? Are there any holdouts? Is there a notable turning point?
2. Following up on the previous question/thought, has anything really changed? How do “we” think of people in the 3<sup>rd</sup> World—we even call those countries “developing”, if not undeveloped.
3. Is it hypocritical of Kurlansky (or us) to criticize development and agriculture while we are living in our very pampered and developed settings, drinking our Salmon Safe beer, going to the grocery store, and expecting fresh tropical foods in the winter?
4. On p. 154 Kurlansky downplays the population numbers of Native Americans as being important in terms of those peoples being able to live sustainably. However, it is estimated that in 1800 the population in North America was about 7 million vs 150 million in Europe.  
  
Is it reasonable to just throw out the impacts of population numbers on how it will affect sustainability, especially as we grapple with a global population of over 7 billion?
5. On p. 160, Kurlansky references indigenous knowledge.
  - a. As a science (or other discipline) teacher how can/should I merge indigenous knowledge into my instruction?

- b. If I do, does that mean I should also include other “non-traditional science” ways of viewing the world?
6. On pp. 162-3 Kurlansky says Native Americans did not think of themselves as separate from nature. How does modern environmentalism view man and nature? As separate or as one entity?
7. With respect to indigenous North American languages versus the English language, does perception inform language or does language inform perception? (see pp. 162-3)

### Chapter Seven: The White Man Comes

1. On p. 174, Kurlansky states “The fatal error from the beginning was that Native Americans did not understand European Americans or what they wanted. They didn’t understand that these people, who did not even know how to fish, thought of themselves as superior.” Do you think the author is suggesting ownership of the “error” or do you view this statement in the larger context of the chapter?
2. Do you think the final sentence of this chapter (p. 191) is delivered to shock the reader or is it intended to deliver a deeper message?

The chapter ends describing the Indian Wars and the surrender of Chief Joseph—“...among those taken prisoner after the surrender were Halahtookit (Daytime Smoke) and his daughter and granddaughter. [Halahtookit](#) was a son of Captain William Clark, born in better times.”

3. In this chapter we have a recipe where, “neither pepper, salt nor butter were allowed...the delicate and delicious flavor would have been spoiled by the addition of either.” (p. 173) Do you think that you might be able to taste the difference between salmon from this time period (1830-1860) and a modern-day plate of salmon?
4. It has been years (ok...decades) since I (Kirk) read the Journals of Lewis and Clark. What I remember was that they felt that the Native Americans along the Columbia were unhealthy and poor, compared to the tribes they had encountered to the east.

This is certainly a different perspective than Kurlansky presents. For those of you have read the journals is my memory failing me, what do you remember about Lewis and Clark’s views of those peoples?

5. On p. 168, we have now seen several recipes for boiling salmon. I have never eaten or heard of boiling salmon (but I did smoke some salmon this weekend - Kirk).

Who has tried boiled salmon and how was it?

6. Throughout this chapter and the rest of the section I keep getting the feeling that Kurlansky is anti-agriculture and anti-development, yet he lives in NYC.

- a. Is he just setting the stage and trying to create empathy, anger, outrage about the past, concern for the future?
  - b. Should anyone not growing their own food really be anti-ag?
7. Is Kurlansky using a double standard when he criticizes the Europeans for collecting timber, fish, and furs to trade (see p. 171)? Note that he praises the Native Americans for trading with other tribes from across the western half of the continent and for being able to catch and store tens of thousands of pounds of salmon to trade with the Europeans, and with other tribes and praises their “thriving commercial economy”.

### **Chapter Eight: Nowhere to Run**

1. On p. 198, Kurlansky states that “taking the long historical view, it can be demonstrated that protecting the environment guarantees jobs and that destructive practices cost them.” The economic crisis of the Depression Era led to short-term thinking that neglected the long game of protecting the environment in favor of projects that led to immediate job creation. Are there any examples you can think of in the U.S. where long-term thinking has been prioritized and positive outcomes have been realized instead of short-term (and destructive) gains at the expense of the environment?
2. On p. 203, what thoughts and emotions does the picture and the accompanying text of Celilo Falls evoke?
3. On p. 203, the last sentence says that we should think of ways to reduce energy use, not just seek alternative energy sources.  
  
Is this realistic when in the global context, where billions of people in the undeveloped (there’s that word again) are rapidly trying to become developed?
4. What do you think the PNW would be like now without all the dams? How might the region’s economy be different if the dams were never built?

### **Final Thoughts**

1. For those of you who teach social studies or U.S. history, how is this history addressed in curricula? How is it taught? How does the portrayal of the events of Westward Expansion, the Indian Wars, treaties, the development and industrialization of the U.S., etc. compare to Mark Kurlansky’s description of the events of this time period in these three chapters?