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**Pre-College Guide Questions for *Writing the Land: Foodways and Social Justice***

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**These Pre-College Guide Questions are divided into 2 sections: 1) pre-high school level; 2) high-school level**

1. **Pre-High School Reading Guide**
2. **Sustainable Iowa Land Trust**

Think about *Begin Anywhere* by Rebecca Wee. The poem’s title is telling the reader to “begin anywhere” and it closes with the line “begin with how happy you are” (15). When thinking about connecting with land, why is it helpful to begin with happiness and with gratitude? How does being happy help us care for the wondrous earth around us?

1. **Downeast Salmon Federation**

Haley Stein states that:

“Bringing people together to eat fish from their own rivers, creates a reason for folks to care about the now lesser-known species that were once such an integral part of Maine’s heritage” (27).

What is a part of your heritage, something that is important to your family or your community’s land use that you wish more people cared about? If it’s tricky to think of something, interview a family member or community member and ask them if any traditions or culture have been lost from when they were growing up.

1. **Peconic Land Trust**

In the poem *Laird at the Croft* by Scott Chaskey he writes the line:

“ocean’s strong song”

He is using personification in this line, giving the ocean the sentient quality of being able to sing. This poem has other examples of personification as well. See how many examples you can find, and then try to write your very own line by giving your favorite piece of nature a sentient attribute.

1. **Agrarian Land Trust**

*In Praise of Permaculture* by Leona Sevick “suggests how we live on this land is also how we should live with each other” (61). Create a Venn diagram: on one side writing the ways we should treat other people, and on the other side write the ways we should treat the land. What are the similarities? Are there any differences?

1. **Community Ecology Institute**

“We believe that food justice is when communities are able to exercise their right

to grow, sell, and eat healthy food that is fresh, nutritious, affordable, culturally-appropriate, and grown locally with care for the well-being of the land, workers, and animals” (85).

Discuss with your group if you agree with this definition, and what food justice means to you.

1. **F.A.R.M.S**

14% of farmland used to be owned by african americans in the United States after the Civil War, and now 1.3% is owned. One factor contributing to this disparity is unequal lending benefits and unfairness in real estate transactions.

After reading this chapter, reflect on who has freedom to own land. Some people have lots, and some people have none. In some cultures land is communally owned instead of individually owned. Which system do you prefer and why?

1. **Northeast Farmers of Color**

On page 120 Stephanie Morningstar opens by writing that “plants are magic.” What does magic mean to you? Brainstorm a list of ways that nature feels magical to you. If magical is not the word you would use to describe the natural world, what is a word you choose and why?

1. **Poetry X Hunger**

Feed the bellies by Diana L. Grayer contains the lines, “A void of nutrients because of lack of resources, Or the lack of consciousness and compassion?” (159).

Reflect on this quote. Why do you think so many people live in hunger? Do we grow enough food to feed the world or is there truly not enough? Do you know anybody that does not have enough food to eat? How would you counterbalance that?

1. **AGARTS**

AGARTS has farm to artist residencies where artists come to live on a farm, and create a piece of art relating to its issues and its beauty. Pick a farm near you, and create a piece of art that you feel represents this farm just like the artists at AGARTS do.

**X. The Milk House Rural Writing Collective**

After reading through *The Stories We Tell*, explain in your own words why it is important to tell rural stories. What is the point that Ryan Dennis is trying to make?

**XI. Martin Bridge**

Martin states that many people are now replacing the word “sustainable” with the word “regenerative”. Why might this terminology make more sense? Consult Martin’s reasoning to help expand your answer.

**XII. Seeds of Solidarity**

Discuss with your group a few ways that make the North Quabbin Garlic & Arts Festival unique. How can this model be used for other communities looking to spark such a powerful grassroots movement.

**XIII. Serpentine Art and Nature Commons**

Reflect on why the mission of Serpentine Art and Nature Commons is especially important in such an urban landscape. Think about other effective ways to increase access to nature and biodiversity in places as populated as New York City.

1. **High School level**
2. **Sustainable Iowa Land Trust**

“We live by mantras such as, “Diversity builds resilience” and “All farms need wildness” (3).

Reflect on these mantras and think about why each of them proves to hold importance in its own way.

1. **Downeast Salmon Federation**

Discuss with your group the motif of relationships that occurs in Suzanne Rancourt’s writing. Why does she talk about relationships between others, land, and even herself?

1. **Peconic Land Trust**

This chapter opens with, “Peconic Land Trust works with landowners, community groups, partner organizations, donors, and government at all levels to conserve Long Island’s agricultural, natural, and cultural resources for all to enjoy and experience. What does this mean:” (38).

After reading through it, discuss what you think “this means” in your own words. How are they working together towards their goals?

**IV. Agrarian Land Trust**

“Expanding the Agrarian Commons also means unbinding the concept of “community” to include non-human partners as agents of change and mutual responsibility” (44). Brainstorm the ways in which the needs of “soil, water, plants, birds, and other wildlife co- mingle with humans.” How are these nature-human relationships intertwined?

**V. Community Ecology Institute**

Read through the Community Ecology Institute’s guiding principles on page 73 of your book. Discuss with your group why each principle might be beneficial to abide by.

**VI. F.A.R.M.S**

Reflect on the poem *Country Playground* by Doris Frazier. How does this poem relate to loss of innocence? What emotions did you feel after reading this and why?

**VII. Northeast Farmers of Color**

After reading the “Hyperion Çaca Yvaire and JuPong Lin in Conversation about Tensions in Land Conservation” discuss why the metaphor of knots and kitting is used in this conversation. What role does tension play in understanding different perspectives and their relationship to land?

**VIII. Poetry X Hunger**

One of the efforts of this organization is helping teachers bring poetry into food focused classrooms. Work with your group to think about a few topics related to food justice and hunger that would be meaningful to write poetry about. How can that help others respond to the issues?

**IX. AGARTS**

Listen to the podcast “Agarts from horse and buggy land” and write a paragraph reflection on your thoughts of this organization and its work.

**X. The Milk House Rural Writing Collective**

Ryan Dennis says that the phrase “ties to the land” has always bothered him, but he cannot come up with anything better. After reading his piece, can you think of another way to describe this sentiment? How can we use writing to express such a passionate tending to and connectivity with land?

**XI. Martin Bridge**

Re read the quote: “Don’t worry... just make sure your Handprint exceeds your Footprint” (194).

Think about what this quote means to you, and how to apply its principles to your everyday life.

**XII. Seeds of Solidarity**

“Boston-centric media has portrayed the demoralizing statistics about the North Quabbin as downtrodden and rife with social ills” (200).

Boston is the capital of Massachusetts and North Quabbin is a rural area a few hundred miles from Boston.

Discuss with your group why economically disadvantaged rural communities are often looked down upon, and why rural life is actually important and beneficial to the economy.

**XIII. Serpentine Art and Nature Commons**

Reflect on Maria Perez’s poem *The Realization*. Why do you think it is titled as such? What is the so called “realization” and how does the message relate to the mission of the Serpentine Art and Nature Commons?