

Braiding Sweetgrass for Young Adults: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants

Robin Wall Kimmerer

Monique Gray Smith

Nicole Neidhardt, Illustrator

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In 2013, Indigenous botanist Robin Wall Kimmerer released the bestselling *Braiding Sweetgrass*, a blend of scientific study and memoir that proposed complementing Western ecological ideas with Indigenous ideologies and practices. Monique Gray Smith adapted this pivotal text for younger readers in *Braiding Sweetgrass for Young Adults*.

Knowing that climate change has become one of the foremost concerns for younger generations, this adaptation speaks to those discouraged by the acceleration of the climate crisis and the inaction of those empowered to curb it. It offers a new perspective and renewed hope. Gray Smith retains much of the original content from Wall Kimmerer's text, but with the addition of digital, sketchlike illustrations and colored text boxes that pull out definitions or quotes for added emphasis and easier at-a-glance comprehension. These adaptations, along with prompts for discussion questions and resources for further reading, make the text ideal for the classroom.

The Indigenous lore and rituals described are among the most compelling aspects of the text; Nicole Neidhardt's beautiful illustrations, particularly those accompanying a story of the formation of Turtle Island and the Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving Address, enhance these elements. There are recountings of basket weaving, salmon ceremonies, and the experiences of young adults at a remote biological station, where the bemoaning of lost cell service gradually gives way to an appreciation for simpler subsistence.

Wall Kimmerer's personal essays are moving in their reverence for the land and its offerings. Her prose is lyrical, as in her description of the scent of sweetgrass: "the melancholy smell of summer slipping into fall or the smell of a memory that makes you close your eyes for a moment and then a moment longer."

Urging a look toward history and tradition to teach us how to answer the questions of the future, Gray Smith adapts Wall Kimmerer's wisdom for a new, hungry audience.

DANIELLE BALLANTYNE (November / December 2022)

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