

The first three
chapters of the
omnivores dilemma



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

When first given the assignment of reading a segment of Michael Pollan??

™s, ??? The Omnivore??™s Dilemma??? I found myself feeling disappointed, dreading the task with every bone in my body. The assignment would consist of deciphering the beginning three chapters in the earliest part of the book titled: Industrial/Corn, where it is explained that corn is the main crop grown in America and how farmers growing it are in a vast deal of trouble. My anticipation included a long, drawn-out reading session in which I would be filled with boredom. To my surprise, I could have not been more inaccurate.

While chapters one, two, and three are truly informative of the subject, they are also delightfully insightful and relatable with a relaxing, down to earth tone that grasps and holds the reader??™s interest. Chapter one, The Plant: Corn??™s Conquest begins with a sturdy introduction that leads us to the place where we most commonly encounter this food, the supermarket, a site we are all familiar with. As we read on, we learn the importance of corn as it pertains to the food chain and its involvement in the many uses of our everyday lives. Pollan explains on page 19, ??? There are some forty-five thousand items in the average American supermarket and more than a quarter of them now contain corn.??? Continuing chapter one includes learning why the corn plant is more efficient than most, how it came to colonize our land, and the arrangement in which it grows and adapts. While I admit that chapter one is so very educational that it could be described as tedious, hang in there, it becomes more interesting as chapter two commences.

We take a trip to the birthplace of corn in chapter two, The Farm. In this section of the material we are introduced to George Naylor, a corn farmer

who carries on his family's tradition of growing the plant on the Naylor farm in Iowa. Pollan shares his experience of conversation with George as he expresses how the Naylor farm came to existence, the amount of people he is capable of feeding, why farmers are considered to be the most productive humans, and why these farmers like himself are in such a great predicament.

It is in this chapter that Pollan embarks on a hands-on experience, planting the seed with George, furthering his knowledge of the plant and preparing him for the elevator, a twist in the plant's cycle. It is in chapter three, The Elevator, where questions are answered about the fate of the millions of leftover bushels of corn that overflow the elevators from the previous year's crop. Pollan expresses his amazement on pages 57/58 as he sees the golden kernels everywhere, ground into the mud by tires and boots, floating in the puddles of rainwater, pancaked on the steel rails.

For me it was shocking to learn that about three of every five kernels of commodity corn wind up journeying their way back home, to the farm, their place of birth. I also enjoyed how this section suggests a naturalist's way of looking at the leftover corn-biomass as a renewable energy source-and advantages like ethanol, as well as disadvantages like the contribution to both hunger and obesity. The elevator closes strong, involving the reader in questions regarding the corn's fate and introducing chapter four, The Feedlot: making meat. So, is Michael Pollan's, The Omnivore's Dilemma (chapters one, two, and three) the snooze fest I had originally anticipated No, it is in fact not at all. It is however charmingly edifying concerning an industry we can all in some way relate to, corn.

In these chapters Pollan takes the reader on a food voyage, challenging the way we all look at the meal in front of us on the way, all while remaining humble. He simply ventured out on a mission and shared with us what he found. I highly recommend it for everyone. Whether you are an omnivore, a farmer, an environmentalist, a politician, an educator, or just someone hoping to gain insight regarding the food you consume, you will not be disappointed.