

**Book club discussion questions for:
Growing Up Country: Memories of an Iowa Farm Girl**

Overview

In this memoir, author Carol Bodensteiner shares stories about growing up on a family dairy farm in middle America, in the middle of the 20th Century. In the late 1950s time frame of this book, a family could make a good living on 180 acres. In these pages you step back and relish a time simple but not easy, a time innocent yet challenging.

Would you like the author to join your discussion?

Carol enjoys sharing stories with book clubs. Though it's not always possible to be there in person, Skype and speakerphones are the next best thing. Email Carol at: carol.bodensteiner@gmail.com to see what's possible.

Discussion questions

1. Bodensteiner shares stories of everyday life living on a dairy farm. How does her experience growing up compare or contrast with your own? What are benefits/detriments of "Growing up Country," compared to growing up in the city or the suburbs?
2. Few Americans grow up on farms today and the culture of farm life in the 1950s may seem foreign. What do you find most surprising, intriguing or difficult to understand?
3. In "I bet you a million bucks," the author faces moral and ethical dilemmas when she loses a bet to a classmate. What tools did she have to handle this challenge? How effective were those tools?
4. Growing up on a dairy farm, the author spends a lot of time doing chores in the barn and in the house. Do you find her attitudes about hard work realistic? What happenings in her life made such an attitude possible?
5. When the author turns 10, her parents expect her to take on more responsibility, including cooking and carrying milk. Are their expectations reasonable? What do these expectations say about farm life? Childhood?
6. In today's society, some have felt the amount of work these children were expected to handle bordered on abusive. Do you agree or disagree? Why?

7. Bodensteiner tells her stories of "Growing up Country" in the 1950's. How have advances in technology (i.e. television, computers, the Internet) changed the inner workings of the family as a unit? Have those changes had a positive or negative impact on the childhood experience?
8. Food played a major role in the author's family. Meals brought the family together several times a day and were part of the expected hospitality for guests. How have meals and family interaction changed since the 1950s? What role does food play in how you entertain guests?
9. In "Options" we see the author's parents' attitudes and approaches to healthcare. How do you react to her father's comment about education, "paper don't care what you print on it"? How do you respond to her mother's apparent lack of concern regarding the doctor's advice?
10. Participation in groups like 4-H was intended to teach many things. The author's shirt ironing demonstration taught her an unexpected lesson about fairness. What life lessons did you learn as a young person by participating in groups? How might you share these lessons with your children/grandchildren to help guide them through life's challenges?
11. Most chapters illustrate some value the author learned as a result of her childhood experiences. Were the values she learned growing up similar or different than your own?
12. Talk about specific passages that struck you as significant – or interesting, amusing, illuminating, disturbing, sad. Why were these passages memorable?
13. What have you learned from reading this book? Has it broadened your perspective of the time period or farming or rural culture? Would you like to have experienced this lifestyle, including the wholesomeness and benefits of hard work?