

## About Kristin Kimball



Kristin was born in 1971, and grew up in central New York. She graduated from Harvard in 1994, then moved to New York City, where she worked at a literary agency, taught creative writing, and freelanced

for magazines and travel guides. In 2002, she interviewed a farmer named Mark, and took more than a professional interest in both him and his vocation. They founded Essex Farm together in 2004 – the world’s first full-diet CSA. Mark and Kristin have two daughters.

Since the publication of *The Dirty Life*, Kristin has written for *O Magazine* about what it’s like to change your life completely; for *Vogue* on physical work, and for *Gourmet Live* on all sorts of farm and food related subjects.

Listen to Kristin Kimball discuss *The Dirty Life* on NPR’s *All Things Considered* by going to [www.npr.org/2010/11/15/131268939/](http://www.npr.org/2010/11/15/131268939/)

Learn about how Kristin came up with the title, the best way to eat a potato, and see pictures of Essex Farm!

MEET

KRISTIN KIMBALL

on September 13 at  
Ledyard High School

For details  
call 860.441.6750  
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# THE DIRTY LIFE

by  
Kristin Kimball

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DISCUSSION GUIDE



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## BOOK DESCRIPTION

Single, thirtysomething, working as a writer in New York City, Kristin Kimball was living life as an adventure. But she was beginning to feel a sense of longing for a family and for home. When she interviewed a dynamic young farmer, her world changed. Kristin knew nothing about growing vegetables, let alone raising pigs and cattle and driving horses. But on an impulse, smitten, if not yet in love, she shed her city self and moved to five hundred acres near Lake Champlain to start a new farm with him. *The Dirty Life* is the captivating chronicle of Kristin's discovery of the pleasures of physical work, that good food is at the center of a good life, and ultimately of love.

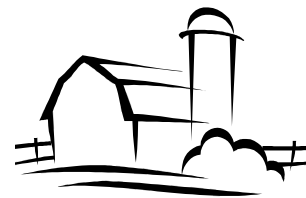


## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Kristin was a freelance writer in New York City, which gave her the opportunity to travel around the world. When she first met Mark on his farm, she felt like a for-eigner. In what ways do you think this feeling comforted her? Were you surprised when the situation flipped and Kristin felt foreign to the life she used to lead in the city?
2. In what ways did Kimball's yearning for a home sway her decision to leave the city and start a new life with Mark? If you were put in a similar situation, do you think you would have made the same decision? Why or why not? What is your own personal definition of "home"?
3. Mark and Kristin start a farm that aims to provide a whole diet for their year-round members. If a farm in your area did the same thing, would you become a member? How would it change the way you cook and eat?
4. The first year on Essex Farm was full of trial and error. Kristin had never farmed before and much of her knowl-edge came from her neighbors and from books. In what ways did all of the mishaps shape Kristin and change her perspective?

5. One of the biggest adjustments Kristin has to make when moving to Essex Farm is learning to live with the absence of instant gratification. She finds that a farmer must continuously put forth effort in order to reap benefits. How does Kristin respond to this new kind of work? How does her definition of "satisfaction" change? Would you be able to accommodate a similar change?
6. *The Dirty Life* is segmented into seasons. What are the underlying issues that take place within each season and how do they relate to the year in full?
7. Have your views on sustainable farming changed after reading about the trials and triumphs of Essex Farm? Have your views on farm-fresh food versus supermarket food changed?
8. Kristin repeatedly finds that her prior assumptions about farming and farmers are false. Do you think her stereo-types were the same as those of most Americans or just people who live in urban areas?
9. As a new farmer, Kristin struggles with where she fits in the socioeconomic spectrum. It bothers her when a neighbor brings over some kitchen things because she thinks Kristin is needy. Later, Kristin writes that farming makes her feel rich even though she's not. What makes people feel poor or rich? How much is the feeling related to money?
10. Why do you think Kristin goes from being a vegetarian to an omnivore after helping Mark slaughter a pig?
11. Kristin writes that there are two types of marriages: the comfortable kind and the fiery kind. Do you agree?

Discussion questions courtesy of Simon & Schuster.



Essex Farm is a 500 acre draft horse-powered farm that produces a full diet for 200 people. It is located in Essex, NY at 2503 NY State Route 22, a mile from the Essex/Charlotte ferry.