



KENTUCKY
HUMANITIES

Presents

Our American Story:
Kentucky's Voices

Growing Together

With support from





Growing Together

A Community Conversation Guide

Festivals that honor food, planting, and the harvest are more than just fun events. They remind us that our lives are deeply tied to the rhythms of the land and that as the land changes, so do our communities. The food we grow, cook, and share carries stories of family, faith, and belonging. Those stories also point toward the kind of future we hope to build together. This guide is designed to spark conversation about how your community is *Growing Together*, and to create space for people to share what makes their land and food traditions meaningful to them.

Kentucky Humanities presents *Our American Story: Kentucky's Voices*, a statewide series of community programs and discussions that invite communities across the Commonwealth to share

their unique traditions and experiences with one another and with the nation. Together, these stories help tell a broader story of what it means to be a Kentuckian, reflecting on the past 250 years and looking toward the future.

Our American Story: Kentucky's Voices is part of the national initiative *By the People: Conversations Beyond 250*, a series of community-driven programs created by humanities councils in collaboration with local partners. The initiative was developed by the Federation of State Humanities Councils and the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage. *Our American Story: Kentucky's Voices* is also supported with funding from the America250KY Commission and the Kentucky Historical Society.

Kentucky Humanities Presentations

Growing Together

The following Kentucky Humanities programs connect especially well to the *Growing Together* theme and can serve as conversation starters for your event. More information about each presentation along with presenter contact information can be found [here](#).

Kentucky Chautauqua®



Daniel Boone
The First Kentuckian



Jemima Boone
Life on the Frontier



Lettice Pierce Bryan
Kentucky Homemaker



Alice Lloyd
Stay On, Stranger

Speakers Bureau



Valerie Askren
*Wild Edibles /
Arches, Waterfalls, and
Wildflowers of Kentucky*



Stephen Allten Brown
Let the Earth Breathe



Blair Hess
*Famous Kentucky Flavors /
Travel Kentucky: Historical
Destinations & Natural Wonders*



Eddie Price
*Homemaking on the
Kentucky Frontier*



Cynthia Resor
*Cooking in Kentucky
Before the Civil War*



Amy Le Ann Richardson
*It All Comes from Dirt:
Creating from the Land*



Let's Talk

Tips for Meaningful Humanities Discussions

Community conversations can be inspiring, meaningful, and sometimes a little challenging. It takes a little care to help people feel comfortable sharing. As a discussion leader, your role isn't to have all the answers but to create space, guide the flow, and invite conversation. The tips below are meant as support, not rules. Use what works best for your community.

- Keep the conversation casual to encourage shared exploration, not debate.
- Whenever possible, create more intimate, welcoming spaces for conversation. Avoid large conference rooms or theatres when possible. Consider theatre-in-the-round style seating or around a smaller tables to make it easier for people to share with each other.
- Introduce the program using the Introduction in this guide.
- Start the conversation with a story or anecdote that people can relate to. You might consider identifying one or two people who will be at the event ahead of time. Talk to them about sharing a story about this theme. This will allow you to start off the conversation by calling on them for that story to get conversation started or to redirect back to storytelling when conversation starts to lag.
- Ask open-ended, layered questions. The discussion questions on the following pages are just a guide. Move from surface level questions like, "What do you think/notice?" to questions like, "How does this connect to your own experience?" As the conversation continues, consider questions that are forward-looking like, "What does this suggest about our future as a community?"
- Listen more than you talk. Try paraphrasing an answer, thanking people for their input, encouraging curiosity, and inviting others to respond.
- Balance the voices in the conversation and keep things moving. Invite people who haven't spoken yet, and remember that listening is also a form of participation.
- Be ok with some tension. It's okay if not everyone agrees all the time. Differences of perspective are part of community. When tension arises, you can help by emphasizing shared experiences or values.
- Allow participants time to reflect and process as you near the end of the discussion. Consider a question like, "What do you want Kentucky and/or the nation to know about your community?" or, "What is one word or phrase you're taking away from this conversation?"
- Be sure to thank participants for sharing and encourage them to participate in your documentation process (written, video, audio, etc).



Let's Talk

Discussion Questions

These questions are grouped by topic and are meant to spark storytelling and reflection. You do not need to ask them all. We have bolded a couple key questions to help, but you are free to choose what feels most meaningful for your group or even add your own questions.

Festivals

- How does your community celebrate agriculture, planting, or the harvest?
- **What are some community or family memories around planting, growing, and harvesting food?**

Industrialization and Change

- Over your lifetime, how have agriculture or farming practices changed in your area? How has this affected your community?
- Did you or people in your family grow up farming? How did that experience shape the paths you chose? Do you want your kids to follow in your footsteps?
- What feels special or distinctive about agriculture in your area?
- How have technological changes affected farming in your area? Have those changes been available or practical for everyone?
- Some communities have large farms or a primary crop, while others have smaller farms, kitchen gardens, or hillier land. How does your landscape shape how your community gathers or thinks about food and farming?
- **Many communities have seen agriculture decline or shift over time. How has that affected your family or community? For those connected to tobacco farming, how have changes in that industry been felt locally?**

Ingredients

- What foods or ingredients feel local or traditional to your community?
- **How have industries like ginseng harvesting, tobacco farming, or other local food production shaped your area?**
- If you don't grow certain traditional ingredients yourself, how do you access them today?
- Do you save seeds or grow heirloom plants? If so, why is that important to you?
- Are there foods that were once abundant that are not now? Are there ingredients you use today that weren't common in your kitchen growing up? Examples may include: avocados, tofu, specialty



grains, ethnic foods, etc.

- Have your thoughts or habits around food waste changed over time?

Food and Community

- Share a favorite recipe from your family. What makes your version special?
- Food is a multisensory experience. Why is the presentation of food important, and how do you know when the taste, smell, appearance, sound, and texture are “right?”
- Share a favorite food memory. Why does it stand out to you?
- **Food is often central to holidays and sacred or special days. Why do you think food plays such an important role in these traditions? What foods are connected to those moments for you?**
- What are your comfort foods, and what memories do they carry?
- How does agriculture in your area influence what you eat?
- What are your thoughts on how food culture is shaped by things like cooking shows, branding programs (such as Kentucky Proud), or regional and fusion cookbooks?
- Does your community collect or share recipes through cookbooks, church collections, or similar traditions?
- Food often brings people together. How has that role changed in your community over time?
- Families may have special ingredients or techniques that make their food feel unique from a neighbor’s. How do those differences come together to form a shared community food culture?
- As your community has changed, how have food gatherings changed? Do people gather more often in homes, restaurants, or other spaces?
- Did your family bring food traditions to Kentucky from another state or country? How have those traditions changed over time?

Cooking and the Kitchen

- In many families, cooking and farm work were shaped by strong expectations about gender. What did those roles look like in your family, and how have they changed over time? How do you feel about the way those expectations have shifted across generations?
- **What role does the kitchen play in your life or memories? Do you remember cooking or gathering there with others?**
- Have changes in ingredient availability or nutrition science influenced how you cook?
- When deciding what to cook, how much weight do you give to nutrition advice, tradition, convenience, or taste?

Our American Story: Kentucky's Voices

Introduction

Kentucky Humanities presents *Our American Story: Kentucky's Voices*, a statewide series of community conversations that invite people to share the traditions, experiences, and stories that shape their communities.

Festivals that honor food, planting, and the harvest remind us that our lives are deeply connected to the land and to one another. The meals we grow, cook, and share carry memories of family, faith, and community, while also pointing toward the future we're building together.

Today we are talking about how our community is *Growing Together*. We're here to listen, reflect, and learn from one another and to hear what makes our land and food traditions meaningful to you.

For use with a Kentucky Chautauqua® or Speakers Bureau presentation:

We'll begin by hearing from [Presenter's Name] about [brief description of the presentation]. After, we'll invite you to share your own experiences and reflections as part of our community conversation.

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Once you have completed your program, please use the QR code or click [here](#) to complete your Final Report. This form will allow you to upload pictures, A/V, and other relevant program documentation.



Sponsors



KENTUCKY HUMANITIES

Kentucky Humanities is an independent, nonprofit affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities in Washington, D.C. Kentucky Humanities is supported by the National Endowment and by private contributions. Kentucky Humanities is not a state agency, but is a proud partner with Kentucky's cultural, heritage, arts, and tourism agencies. Since its founding in 1972, Kentucky Humanities has invested more than \$20 million in public programs for Kentuckians. Learn more at kyhumanities.org.

The Federation of State Humanities Councils

Founded in 1977, the Federation of State Humanities Councils (Federation) is the membership organization of the 56 state and jurisdictional humanities councils. The Federation supports, connects, and amplifies the work and voices of its members, demonstrating councils' value for communities and their collective impact on civic health and cultural vibrancy. Learn more about the Federation and its member councils at statehumanities.org.

The Smithsonian's Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage

The Smithsonian's Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage promotes greater understanding and sustainability of cultural heritage across the United States and around the world through research, education, and community engagement. The center is a research and educational unit of the Smithsonian that produces the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, the Cultural Vitality Program, the online Folklife Magazine, exhibitions, symposia, publications, and educational materials. It also maintains the Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections. Learn more at festival.si.edu.

The Kentucky Historical Society

The Kentucky Historical Society (KHS) was formed in 1836 by a group of prominent Kentuckians intent on preserving the history of the Commonwealth. KHS is a membership organization with members from Kentucky and around the world. KHS is part of the Kentucky Tourism, Arts and Heritage Cabinet; has full American Alliance of Museums accreditation; and is a Smithsonian affiliate. Learn more at history.ky.gov.

