

Reflection Questions

Food Inc.

APES

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1. Richard Lobb of the National Chicken Council says in the film, “In a way, we’re not producing chickens, we’re producing food.” What does this statement mean? Do you agree or disagree with it? How might this perspective affect the way that chickens are raised?
2. If we are in consensus that even food animals deserve to have a certain quality of life, who has the responsibility to oversee the treatment of chickens or other food animals? What responsibility do individuals and consumers have?
3. In the film, food science professor Larry Johnson says, “If you go and look on the supermarket shelf, I’ll bet you 90 percent of [the products] would contain either a corn or soybean ingredient. And most of the time, it’ll contain both.” Why might it be a problem that the majority of our food is made mostly from just corn and soybeans—so that nearly everything we eat contains them?
4. If people are responsible for informing themselves about what is in their food, what would help them be more informed? If producers are responsible, what would be the more effective ways for them to inform people?
5. The movie points out that cows and farm-raised fish, which are not biologically suited to eating corn, are now given a modified diet that is based on corn. Do you think people’s diets have been modified in a similar way? How do you feel about the possibility of your food being modified without you being aware of it?
6. Who is responsible for the death of Kevin? His mother says, “Sometimes it feels like industry was more protected than my son.” What do you think of her words?
7. Ask students to imagine that they are charged with making sure a death like Kevin’s never happens again. What steps would they take to ensure it doesn’t?
8. The film gives the impression that food is either cheap or healthy. Do you think it is true that food is either one or the other, or is this a false dichotomy? How can healthy food be made available to everyone?
9. How does the cheap price of processed food affect low-income families? Is this fair?
10. With cheap food, it seems our society pays at both ends—at the production end with subsidy tax dollars, and at the consumption end with poorer health and lower productivity. Who benefits from cheap, fast food? Is it really cheap for everyone?
11. In the film, union organizer Eduardo Peña says, “We want to pay the cheapest price for our food. We don’t understand that it comes at a price.” Do you agree or disagree with him? What evidence do you see in the film that led you to agree or disagree? What evidence do you see in your life that informs your position as well?
12. As the film suggests, small companies and producers are often bought out or taken over by very big companies. What might be the implications of that—both positive and negative?
13. As portrayed in the film, cost and efficiency drive our current food system. Should price be the most important force behind our food industry? Why or why not? How might our food system change if it was driven by other values, like health or environmental sustainability?

14. In the film, Noel Kramers of the California Farm Bureau says that the bureau is against labeling because it “creates unnecessary fear in the consumer’s mind.” Do you agree with this reasoning? Why or why not?
15. Health experts recently called for warning labels on energy drinks, pointing out the effects of “caffeine intoxication”—a syndrome that can cause anxiety, insomnia, gastrointestinal upset, tremors, rapid heartbeat, and even death. Would a warning label affect whether or not you buy energy drinks? Why or why not?
16. What is a food liable law? Are these laws in violation of our Constitutional rights or necessary to prevent panic?
17. People who have been in the industry are knowledgeable about that industry. What are the pros and cons of them becoming regulators working for the government?
18. Yogurt company executive Gary Hirshberg states in the film, “The consumer does not feel very powerful, but it’s the exact opposite. When we run an item past the supermarket scanner, we’re voting for local or not, organic or not.” What does he mean by this statement? Do you agree or disagree with it? Why or why not?