



THE POPOL VUH

Translated from
the K'iche' by
Michael Bazzett

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Discussion Questions

1. The original manuscript contained pages of the K'iche' aristocracy and lineage but Michael Bazzett chose to end this translation at the close of the mythic narrative to make the text more accessible. Do you agree with his decision? How might the inclusion of historical genealogy have affected your understanding of *The Popol Vuh*?
2. During the preamble, Framer and Shaper struggle to create a people that will properly praise and worship them. They seem to believe that their divine acts require someone to acknowledge and appreciate them. Do you believe that an act of greatness can still be great without anyone there to be impacted by it?
3. Once the animals were created by Framer and Shaper they were condemned to a life cycle of eating and being eaten for their inability to speak intelligently. What does that say about the value of communication? Why is intelligent speech the main differentiator between humans and animals in *The Popol Vuh*?
4. Seven Macaw and his sons are defeated when the hero twins trick them into becoming one with the earth. What does that say about the power of nature vs pride? How can the earth be stronger than supernatural power?
5. In the reader's companion, *The Popol Vuh* is often explained in relation to Christianity which came long after this Mayan epic and ultimately destroyed the ancient civilization. Does the comparison strengthen the reader's understanding of the text? Undermine the significance of Mayan beliefs? What could it mean that this epic and Christianity, as we know it today, have so much in common?
6. *The Popol Vuh* often repeats itself in language and story reminding us of the idiom, "History repeats itself." However, when Hunahpu and Xbalanque descend to Xibalba they do not meet their demise like their fathers One and Seven Hunahpu. What do the hero twins possess that saved them that their fathers did not? What does it mean that they succeed where their fathers failed?
7. When finally "true people" are created, the gods are threatened by their divine knowledge and understanding and "undo them / a little." Why was it important that the people's vision be limited, and their understanding of the world capped?
8. *The Popol Vuh* was originally an oral epic passed down verbally through generations until it was written down, sometime in the mid-1500s. Bazzett did his best to translate the story back into its original lyricism. How do you think hearing it sung and spoken would change the meaning of the story? How does writing down an oral tradition change?
9. As part of the Seedbank series, *The Popol Vuh* can be regarded as a guide for reflection on our relationship to the world around us. In what ways does this book challenge and broaden your perception of the world and humanity?