



Welcome to this starter pack—a guide to help you organise your very own *Eating Chilli Crab in the Anthropocene* book club. Here's what you can find on this page:

- i. A short summary of each book chapter & discussion questions to help you get started
- ii. Book Club etiquette
- iii. How to Get Involved
- iv. Bonus Reading List
- v. Resources to help you manage eco-anxiety

I. CHAPTER SUMMARIES & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

General Questions

1. What was something new or unexpected you learned from this chapter?
2. What was your most important takeaway from this chapter?
3. What was your favourite passage in the chapter?
4. How did you feel while reading this chapter?

Introduction: Seeing Singapore with New Eyes

Matthew Schneider-Mayerson notes that while we tend to think of “the environment” as a separate, niche interest, “the truth is everything is environmental.” He argues that while science, technology, and policy are important tools to measure and shape the world, desires, values, priorities and politics are just as important, and predicts that if human beings (and Singapore) are to survive climate change, “it will be because of a dramatic shift in desires, values and priorities, which will redirect technology, policy and broader political and economic systems.”

1. How is the view of environmental issues described in this introduction – and demonstrated in the book as a whole – different from the way that most of us tend to think about them?
2. Do you agree that “in this era of climate crisis, fundamental change is on the horizon, one way or another, to the places we’ve known and the lives we’ve come to enjoy and expect”? What thoughts, feelings, or desires does this claim spark in you?



Eating Chilli Crab in the Anthropocene: Nature, Culture and Care

Celebrating the evolution of the ancient crab and drawing on indigenous knowledge of sustainable fishing, Neo Xiaoyun pushes us to think more consciously about our relationship with nonhuman animals. This chapter highlights the ecological limits of producing Singapore's beloved chilli crab dish, and calls on us to consider more ethical ways of treating this humble creature.

1. Can crab consumption ever be ethical or sustainable? What are your thoughts on the tension between keeping an iconic dish in Singapore's food culture and the preservation of a species?
2. How can Singapore's predominantly carnivorous food culture align itself with the aims of real sustainability?

Lovable Lutrines: Curated Nature and Environmental Migrants in the Ottercity

Heeun Monica Kim draws our attention to the incredible affection Singaporeans have for our otters and the ways in which the otter has become a mascot for Singapore's environmentalism. She also critiques our comparative inattention to the vulnerable and threatened species that are less charismatic, as well as our lack of concern for (human) environmental migrants.

1. Do you think Singapore is capable of caring for human and nonhuman environmental refugees? How might we extend better care to those most vulnerable in a time of climate crisis, displacement, and migration?
2. It seems like we naturally give more attention to animals like otters because they possess charismatic, lovable qualities—in other words, cuteness. Should we try to unlearn these biases and, if so, how might we go about doing so?

To Build a City-State and Erode History: Sand and the Construction of Singapore

Through the lens of Singapore's artists and filmmakers, Sarah Novak explores the social and environmental consequences of land reclamation. She implores us to consider the exploited resources that have been instrumental to but largely ignored in the Singapore Story of progress.

1. Should Singapore stop reclaiming land altogether? If not, how might land reclamation take place in a way that is more restorative, rather than destructive or exploitative?
2. This chapter highlights how the issue of sand and land reclamation has been a topic of interest for artists and filmmakers. How do you think art can influence the way we think and feel about land reclamation and other environmental issues?



Consuming Tigers

Ng Xin discusses the long history of tigers and human–tiger relationships in Singapore and Southeast Asia; the tragic disappearance of real, flesh-and-blood tigers from Singapore and the world; and the ways in which tigers have been reduced to advertising mascots for local brands such as Tiger Beer and Tiger Balm. What does it mean when animals exist primarily as symbols and brands?

1. "The stories we tell about tigers and the meanings that we make of them matter." Do you agree with this? Why or why not? How might the reimagining and appropriation of tigers as brand symbols be related to the disappearance of real tigers?
2. When we talk about the "plight of endangered animals," what stories and associations come to mind? How might we reinterpret the current narrative to get more people to care about this urgent issue?

Dumpster Diving in Semakau: Retrieving Indigenous Histories from Singapore's Waste Island

What could possibly be wrong with Semakau Landfill, Singapore's celebrated eco-dump? Fu Xiyao describes the environmental costs of Semakau by unearthing the indigenous histories, livelihoods and knowledge systems that were sacrificed for a technocratic environmental solution. She calls for future environmental management to incorporate indigenous experiences and perspectives in order to restore care for our island.

1. Drawing on the connection between discarded indigenous histories and our lack of concern for the fate of our waste, what are some changes that we might make in order to cultivate a culture of care in the way we treat our local environment?
2. According to the author, retrieving and learning from indigenous histories can help us face the environmental challenges of the Anthropocene. What aspects of indigenous history, knowledge and worldviews are you familiar with? Which might be most helpful, and how might we integrate them into our way of life?

Feeding the Monkeys: Towards a Multispecies Singapore

Michele Chong "stories" macaque monkeys, presenting them as animals with personalities, families and histories. By drawing attention to the origin of macaque–human conflicts in Singapore, she discusses the possibility of designing and constructing a "multispecies Singapore" that would be organised around both human and nonhuman flourishing.

1. Do you think the concept of a zoöpolis—the redesigning of space such that humans and animals can coexist in an urban environment—is possible in Singapore? Why or why not? Can we truly co-exist with animals without one group dominating over the other? What might this look like?
2. The author calls for a deeper and wider understanding of nonhuman animals in order for us to live more harmoniously with them. How can we cultivate this type of



understanding in our society, be it at home, in schools or in the wider community?

Javan Mynahs, “Invasive Species” and Belonging in Singapore

Who belongs in Singapore? Lee Jin Hee begins to answer this question with reference to the Javan mynah bird, an “invasive” species in Singapore, before tackling some related, thorny questions: Which humans can be said to rightfully belong in any given place? What should environmental conservation aim to achieve in an ever-changing world?

1. Is the demarcation between “native” and “non-native” (animals, plants, people) still useful or relevant today? What alternative words can we use, in place of the labels “native” and “non-native”? What impact might these alternative words have on the way we relate to our local environment?
2. What strategies can we adopt to eliminate the dichotomies of native/non-native, not only with regard to nonhuman animals, but to Singapore’s migrant worker population as well? How can we change the way we understand “belonging” in a society?

An Oily Mirror: 1950s Orang Minyak Films as Singaporean Petrohorror

Yogesh Tulsi dives into Singapore’s cultural history, arguing that the popular orang minyak films of the 1950s are indicative of the moment when fossil fuels could be recognised as something monstrous. He argues that to consider these films today, in the age of climate change, is to hold up an oily mirror, and asks if Singapore has become an orang minyak.

1. The author interprets the orang minyak as “a self-interested, oil-soaked actor willing to destroy traditional communities and ecosystems in the pursuit of comfort, recognition and wealth.” Based on the films described and your own cultural knowledge, is the orang minyak an appropriate symbol for Singapore today? If so, why? If not, what might be a more fitting cultural symbol?
2. This chapter explains how oil has been made invisible not only in national rhetoric about climate change, but in everyday consciousness as well. Do you agree? How can popular culture, community efforts or individual voices make oil and its role in the climate crisis more visible?

Changing Course: Jewel Changi and the Ethics of Aviation

Mathias Ooi tackles the complicated ethics of aviation in the age of climate change. He contends that while eco-conscious Singaporeans sometimes obsess over individual choices, governments ultimately play a more significant role in shaping the demand for aviation. If we all come together to take a stand, might we change course towards more responsible management of air travel demand?

1. Would you be willing to reduce your air travel, or give it up entirely? How much responsibility do individual consumers have for aviation emissions that contribute

to climate change, as compared to corporations and governments?

2. Do you think that it is possible—or desirable—for Singaporeans to emulate the work of campaign groups (in the UK, for example) that have successfully slowed down the expansion of airport infrastructure? How do you imagine such work being done in Singapore?

Singapore on Fire: From Fossil History to Climate Activism

Aidan Mock explores Singapore's intimate relationship with fossil fuels, arguing that understanding this history is critical to the work of environmental activists in Singapore. Mock notes that while oil and gas companies played an important role in the establishment of Singapore post-independence, their continued presence threatens Singapore's future. He concludes by outlining effective steps that individuals can take to slow climate change.

1. Besides the industry's history in Singapore, why do you think forward-looking Singapore has been slow to move away from fossil fuels? How do you think we can move away from being dependent on fossil fuels?
2. The author states that those who are not comfortable with being activists can contribute in their own ways, as engineers, civil servants, marketers and so on. How might you leverage your own unique position—your abilities, skills, and resources—to contribute to meaningful action on climate change?

Learning to Thrive: Educating Singapore's Children for a Climate-Changed World

Drawing on Forest School Singapore and the global earth education movement, Al Lim and Feroz Khan contend that education in Singapore should work to prepare students for the climate-changed world they will inherit, by emphasising transition virtues such as frugality, adaptation, humility, collaboration and systems-thinking.

1. Shifting our rigid education system towards one that emphasises these "transition virtues" will be a challenging task. Do you agree with these virtues, or are there others worth adopting? How can educators, parents, caretakers and others in society integrate these virtues in their work to support this shift?
2. Beyond test scores and credentials, children of tomorrow will be preparing for the daunting task of slowing, adapting to and surviving climate change. What advice would you give to them, and to others who will live their lives in the shadow of climate change?

Another Garden City is Possible: A Plan for Post-Carbon Singapore

Bertrand Seah argues that "the climate crisis demands that we rethink what it means to be pragmatic—from the pursuit of growth to the protection of the environment." He lays out a comprehensive policy vision of a post-carbon Singapore, a New Garden City, which would be achieved by decarbonising Singapore's transport, energy and finance industries, closing the chapter on Singapore's oil refineries and embracing degrowth.

1. This chapter encourages the reader to embrace degrowth and “do away with the notion that consuming more and more things will make us happier ... liberate ourselves from the idea that having a new phone every year, or new clothes every season, makes us any better off [and] shift from private excess to public abundance.” Do you think this notion of degrowth is possible in our society? What is the ongoing pandemic teaching us about the possibility of radical changes in our consumption and behaviour?

2. Considering the 5 strategies proposed for a post-carbon Singapore:
 - a. Phasing Out the Fossil Fuel Industry
 - b. Decarbonising Transport
 - c. Decarbonising Energy and Power
 - d. Decarbonising Finance
 - e. Adopting Degrowth

How do you see each of us supporting these strategies in our capacities as individuals or communities?



II. BOOK CLUB ETIQUETTE

Thank you to Group Reading Committee and Kei Franklin for helping to craft this section!

- **Establish a workable schedule:** Decide as a group how frequently you'd like to meet to talk about the book.
 - You could read the whole book together (e.g. 1-2 chapters every week/month);
 - Or, you could read specific chapters based on an agreed theme/topic;
 - Or, you might want to join a public reading group that is currently reading the book, and follow their schedule;

Deciding upon the level of commitment and schedule beforehand can help maximise engagement for all members of your book club.

- **Before the book club:** We recommend assigning someone in your group to facilitate the discussion. Most successful book clubs have a clearly defined 'host'—someone who can take the lead and direct the flow of conversation. The host can provide a general overview of the chapter/book, share discussion questions, and help to focus the conversation. This will make the session more engaging and meaningful.
- **During the book club:**
 - You might want to begin with some simple warm-up questions. If you have new members, introduce yourselves (name, age, favorite animal, pronoun, why they've joined the session, etc.). Do a Check-In by asking everyone to describe how they are feeling that day—you can be creative by inviting people to use colors / textures / types of weather to describe how they're feeling, rather than emotions. A good book club is also a fun social space.
 - At the first session, you may want to collectively agree on some discussion guidelines, which will help the space be inclusive and safe for all participants. Some suggested guidelines are:
 - Avoid using discriminatory language. (If you're not sure if something sounds discriminatory, it probably is.)
 - Avoid using difficult or inaccessible words and concepts. If you feel that certain terms are useful but it's possible that not everyone knows or understands them, explain them.
 - Agree that it is OK to ask for clarifications and that is also OK to make mistakes—we avoid shaming individuals for any reason.
 - We agree to speak from our own perspective, rather than attempting to represent the opinion of a larger group or anyone else.
 - As a 'host', try and be aware of group dynamics. Pay attention to how much space any one individual is taking up. Try to balance out who is speaking, and



provide openings for different people to contribute to the discussion. You can also include this in your discussion of group guidelines (e.g. We agree to 'share the mic').

- **At the end of each book club session:** We recommend doing a Check-Out—ask everyone to share how they feel, or any final thoughts they might have.
- **Considerations for online book clubs:** If you're holding your book club online, here are some extra tips for you.
 - Pick a convenient time so that folks from other time zones can join!
 - Mute audio when not speaking
 - For hearing people, the use of hand signs can be really useful to convey information to each other, without having to interrupt the speaker. Plus they're fun! [There are many hand signs you can use, and this video \(Signs #2, 4, 10 & 11\) is a good example of what we mean!](#) Feel free to come up with your own unique hand signs, and test them out before you start the discussion.
 - Have fun with virtual backgrounds (related to the topic or not)!

III. HOW TO GET INVOLVED

If you've been struck by any of the environmental issues explored in the book and want to become more engaged, here is a list of NGOs, organisations, and initiatives that you can lend your support to. This list is non-exhaustive, but we hope it'll give you some direction on where to start:

- [SG Climate Rally](#)
- [Climate Conversations](#)
- [Nature Society Singapore](#)
- [The Jane Goodall Institute Singapore](#)
- [Animal Concerns Research & Education Society \(ACRES\)](#)
- [Singapore Youth for Climate Action](#)
- [World Wide Fund for Nature \(WWF\) Singapore](#)
- [Fridays4Future SG](#)
- [Forest School Singapore](#)

You can also check out [LepakInSG](#), a comprehensive calendar listing environmental events and activities in Singapore.



IV. BONUS READING LIST

Check out these additional resources if you'd like to learn more about a specific issue explored in the book.

FILM/ART

- Art, [Points of Departure](#), Juria Toramae
- Art; [SEA STATE](#), Charles Lim
- Art; [Shifting Sands](#), Sim Chi Yin
- Film; [A Land Imagined](#), dir. Yeo Siew Hua (also available on Netflix)
- Film; [Lost World](#), dir. Kalyanee Mam
- Documentary project; [Island Nation Singapore](#), Singapore Memory Project
- Play; [Tanah•Air 水•土: A Play In Two Parts](#), Drama Box

ESSAYS

- [Degrowth: A call for radical abundance](#) by Jason Hickel
- [Petrofiction and Petroculture](#) by Amitav Ghosh
- [Rethinking Native in the Anthropocene](#) by Avery Hill and Elizabeth Hadly
- [Stepping Stone Singapore: The Cultural Politics of Anti-immigrant Anxieties](#) by Terence Chong
- [The Haunting of Fatimah Rock: History, Embodiment and Spectral Urbanism in Contemporary Singapore](#) by Ad Maulod

Links

- [Artists and Climate Change](#), a collective of climate change stories, initiated by The Arctic Circle
- [Climate-Science](#), a site with easy-to-understand explainers on all aspects of climate change.



V. RESOURCES FOR ECO-ANXIETY

Remember to take a break and take a breath. We hope these resources will help you form self-care rituals and manage eco-anxiety.

- (Twitter) [I Am Having Major Climate Anxiety](#) by Karen Healey
- [It's Hard To Think About Climate Change During A Pandemic. Here's How To Stay Engaged](#) by Laura Klivans
- [Feel Something, Learn Something, Do Something: A Care Package for Climate Grief](#) by Mary Annaïse Heglar
- (Podcast) [No Place Like Home](#) by Mary Anne Hitt & Anna Jane Joyner
- [Obligatory Note of Hope](#) by Jenny Offill

You can purchase a copy of Eating Chilli Crab in the Anthropocene [here](#).

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