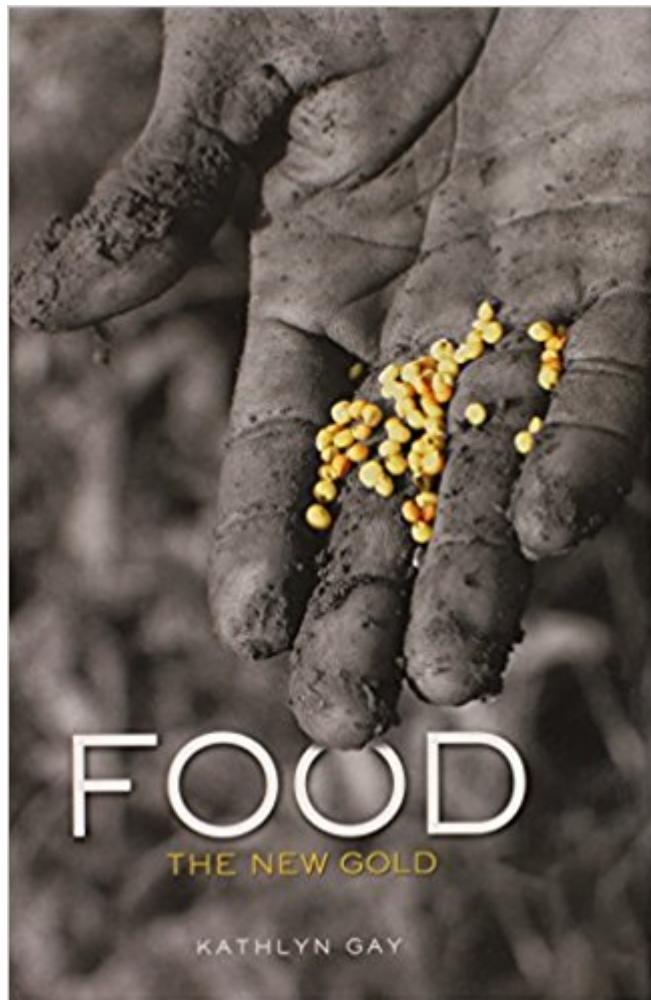


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# Food: The New Gold (Single Titles)



## **Synopsis**

Did you know starvation kills more people every year than AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis combined? Around the world, millions go to bed hungry every night. Farmers produce enough food to feed everyone, but the food does not get to the people who need it most. In some places, food has become a precious commodity almost like gold. Why is food scarce in some places and abundant in others? In this book, author Kathlyn Gay explores the complicated interaction between food, business, politics, and the environment. She examines the international food aid system; giant factory farms, which grow and slaughter animals using assembly-line techniques; and the genetic engineering of seeds, plants, and animals. These systems promise to get more food to the people who need it but the promises don't always pan out. Worse, many modern agricultural practices are harmful to the environment, to workers, and even to consumers. Food politics will only become more complicated as Earth's climate grows warmer, bringing rising sea levels, shifting growing seasons, and shrinking freshwater supplies. But despite these dreary predictions for the future of food and agriculture, the news is not all bad. Around the world, people are forging a new food future to provide good food for everyone and to do so in ways that nurture the soil and water, keeping farmland healthy and productive for generations to come.

## **Book Information**

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Age Range: 12 - 17 years

Grade Level: 6 - 12

## Customer Reviews

\*Starred Review\* An eye-catching jacket photo leads to a well-researched presentation of worldwide issues related to food. Chapters explore global and American hunger, the shift from family farms to corporate farming, the dangers of industrial farming, the effects of climate change on agriculture, the health risks of genetically engineered plants and animals, issues of food safety, the clash between public health and agricultural interests, and food policy for the future. While an entire book could be devoted to each topic, Gay does a fine job of presenting information on key issues along with specific examples that make them meaningful. Sidebars present topics such as food recycling and city dwellers keeping chickens. Though the chapter title “Frankenfoods” indicates a certain perspective on genetically engineered foodstuffs, Gay reports the point of view of agribusiness as well as the concerns of consumers, farmers, governments, and environmental groups. Clear color photos take readers to locations as diverse as a Colorado meatpacking plant, a Kenyan maize field, and the White House organic garden. Colorful graphics include a world map indicating relative hunger levels in different countries and a chart showing household incomes and the percentage spent on food in seven nations. An informative, well-documented resource on a timely topic. Grades 8-12. --Carolyn Phelan

Kathlyn Gay is the author of more than one hundred nonfiction books on a variety of topics, including social issues, environmental preservation, history, health, religious and cultural diversity, food security, and eating disorders. She has also written teacher manuals, ESL programs, portions of textbooks, and reference works. She has been featured in *The World's Who's Who of Authors*, *Contemporary Authors*, *About the Author*, and *Junior Authors and Illustrators*. Some of her titles for Twenty-First Century Books include *The Aftermath of the Russian Revolution*, *The Aftermath of the Chinese Nationalist Revolution*, and *Mao Zedong's China*.

excellent book for adults and children!

What is the biggest killer in the world today? AIDS? No. Malaria? No. Traffic? No. The answer is shockingly simple. Food. Or more precisely the lack of it. Research shows that starvation is killing off more people each year than AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined, even though farmers are producing more than enough food to go around. Here author Kathlyn Gay takes a look at this situation to discover why food has become the 'new gold', a precious commodity that remains out of reach for many. Many millions of people around the world are said to be starving (to death). Over a

billion people are said to be separately undernourished. Reading this book helps bring home just how fortunate many of us are. As a reviewer of cookery and food books it is easy to overlook the regular commodity of food. Most cookery books are, after all, aiming to create something special using perhaps better-than-average ingredients. You hardly need a recipe book for "starvation" sustenance cookery. Consumers in the 'affluent west' are, even if they just 'regular people' on a regular income, conspicuously lucky by comparison to many. How many times have we gone into a food store and become angry because our favourite brand of something isn't there or left frustrated as a certain ingredient for our luxurious recipe was not available? Reading this book can make you feel uncomfortable by self-awareness and a realisation of just how lucky we are. Why do people in some parts of the world have to beg for food and sometimes even scrounge in garbage dumps, while people in other parts of the globe have more than enough food? They can buy almost every kind of food imaginable on grocery store shelves. Why isn't food affordable for everyone? Make no mistake, this is not a wishy-washy liberal-type of thought, advocating a Communist-era utopia for all but a proper grown-up question. There will always be financial inequality in the world. Not everyone can afford to eat steak and drink fine wine every day - even if they wanted to - but surely a basic, sustenance shouldn't be out of the reach of everybody nowadays? Something must be wrong, surely? If over 35 million Americans must skip meals as they cannot buy enough food what hope is there for people in less-affluent, civilised countries? At the same time official U.S. government figures claim that over 43 billion kilograms of food is thrown away each year in America alone. The author has done a very good job of making (virtual) question marks appear before the reader's eyes and, we dare say, a fair few (virtual) exclamation marks too out of frustration, amazement and depression. The book is split into seven broad chapters that assess the whole situation (going hungry, factory farming, industrial farming, climate crisis, Frankenfoods, protecting the foods we eat and food meats politics). Feeding the future is a very thought-provoking epilogue that does not sadly fill this reviewer with optimism for the future. Far from it. Every action has a consequence, it is said, and clearly the author tries to draw many actions to broader consequences without directly advocating a given course of action. That is for the reader and their conscience to determine. There is no clear "simple way" to resolve the issues on a global scale yet even on a minor scale maybe the individual person can make an impression. Some of the topics covered will make unpleasant, uncomfortable reading. Some of the conclusions might awaken strong feelings (of agreement or disagreement). Whatever the end result, the book will in any case hopefully heighten your own awareness and get you to think a little about the impact on you and your family and maybe a little bit for the world-at-large. This is an interesting read devoid of hectoring lectures and overt propaganda.

Source notes, bibliography and further reading suggestions let you dig back into the source materials and learn more should you so desire. Any perceptions of bias can be filtered and revised. A good approach that other similar books could do well to follow. Finally, the price feels high for this relatively slim book and there is a discount on the ecologically-sound (!) ebook. This is not a criticism *per se*, just an observation that with a lower price it might have been even more accessible to people who in turn might be motivated to change their behaviour. As it stands, you might need to be "very convinced" of the subject and "very concerned" to consider this book a worthy acquisition and that is a shame.

Many people looked askance at the Group of Eight (G8) summit held in Japan to "discuss the global food crisis." The banquet was almost frighteningly gluttonous in light of the topic they had come to discuss. Delicacies such as caviar and milkfed lamb were a far cry from the dirt cookies that Haitian women made to enable their families to survive. Worldwide food shortages in many areas caused food to "become a precious item---almost like gold." Such circumstances often lead to desperation, but even though the summit was somewhat of an embarrassment, people have started to come together to try to solve the crisis and feed people on both local and global levels. In this day and age, many of us are now very much aware of efforts to feed people in our nation who are "food insecure." There are an astounding "thirty-five million Americans [who] are unable to buy enough food." You'll read about programs set in place to help them. Globally, many feel it is not enough to simply deliver food to those in need, but also to help them "grow or obtain their own food so they can be self-sufficient." In America, the family who could once grow enough food to support and nourish themselves is gone. Giant agribusiness are at the forefront of food production as the family farm has all but vanished from the face of the landscape. These agribusinesses "do not handle the hard, day-to-day work of planting and picking crops, milking cows, or slaughtering animals." These farms are owned by international corporations who run them from afar. Their agricultural domination extends not only to farms, but also to things such as seed companies and food-processing plants. In the 1970s "concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) appeared on the scene." The entire face of agriculture and food production appeared to change overnight. In this book you'll also read about inhumane animal treatment, human health risks, immigrant labor, CAFO contamination, health risks to the consumer, food additives, global warming and its affect on agriculture, Frankenfoods, genetically modified (GM) crops, and you'll read many more fascinating facts about food, "the new gold." This book looks at the world's food shortage and the "role of business, politics and the environment." For such a far-reaching topic, Kathlyn Gay does an excellent job of

researching and writing about our food crisis. I feel that this book gives the reader a good understanding of the problem and surrounding issues without becoming overly alarmist. The juxtaposition of the summit banquet and the photograph of a hungry boy waiting for a meal was an excellent way to begin the book. The book alternately will make one think about the issues while debating possible solutions. The book has numerous full-color photographs and informative sidebars. For example, one discusses the practicality of producing biofuels when crops are so sorely needed for food. In the back of the book is an index, a glossary, source notes, a selected bibliography, and additional book, film, and website resources to explore. This book courtesy of the publisher.

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