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## Johnston Public Library Book Discussion Questions

### **The Farmer's Wife** by Helen Rebanks

#### Summary

A portrait of life at Helen Rebanks' Lake District farmhouse that beautifully captures the unsung work of keeping a home and raising a family.

As dawn breaks on the farm, Helen Rebanks makes a mug of tea, relishing the few minutes of quiet before the house stirs. Within the hour the sounds of her husband, James, and their four children will fill the kitchen. There are also six sheepdogs, two ponies, 20 chickens, 50 cattle and 500 sheep to care for. Helen is a farmer's wife. Hers is a story that is rarely told, despite being one we think we know.

Weaving past and present, Helen shares the days that have shaped her. This is the truth of those days: from steering the family through the Beast from the East and the local authority planning committee, to finding the quiet strength to keep going, when supper is yet to be started, another delivery man has assumed he needs to speak to the 'man of the house', and she would rather punch a cushion than plump it.

This beautifully-illustrated memoir, which takes place across one day at the farm, offers a chance to think about where our food comes from and who puts it on the table. Helen's recipes, lists and gentle wisdom helps us to get through our days, whatever they throw at us.

#### Discussion Questions

1. The book highlights the unseen and uncelebrated work of farmers' wives. How did Helen Rebanks' portrayal of domestic life on a farm challenge or expand your understanding of this role?
2. The Rebanks family works as a close-knit team on their farm. How does their family dynamic contribute to the success of their farm and their personal lives? Have you experienced a similar sense of unity in your family or community?
3. Helen Rebanks shares both the joys and challenges of her life on the farm, including moments of self-doubt. How does she demonstrate resilience and personal growth throughout the book? Have you faced similar moments of doubt and growth in your own life?

4. The Farmer's Wife emphasizes finding beauty in everyday moments. Can you share a passage or moment from the book that particularly resonated with you? How has the book influenced your perspective on cherishing the simple joys of life?
5. Helen Rebanks emphasizes that gender roles can be limiting and that what truly matters is using one's skills. Do you agree with this perspective? How can we challenge traditional gender roles in both rural and urban settings?
6. In the book, Helen Rebanks shares several recipes that hold deep personal meaning for her and her family. Can you think of a recipe from your own life that holds a special memory or connects you to a significant moment or person? Can you identify scenes or character interactions that exemplify this theme?

Summary from GoodReads.com  
Discussion Questions from CulinaryCam.com