



What?: Are These the 20 Most Important Questions in Human History--Or is This a Game of 20 Questions?

Mark Kurlansky

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What is What? Could it be that noted author Mark Kurlansky has written a very short, terrifically witty, deeply thought-provoking book entirely in the form of questions? A book that draws on philosophy, religion, literature, policy--indeed, all of civilization--to ask what may well be the twenty most important questions in human history? Or has he given us a really smart, impossibly amusing game of twenty questions? Kurlansky considers the work of Confucius, Plato, Gertrude Stein, Shakespeare, Descartes, Nietzsche, Freud, Hemingway, Emily Dickinson, the Talmud, Charles de Gaulle, Virginia Woolf, and others, distilling the deep questions of life to their sparkling essence. What? supplies endless fodder for thoughtful conversation but also endless opportunity to ponder and be challenged by--and entertained by--these questions in refreshingly original ways. As Kurlansky says, In a world that seems devoid of absolute certainties, how can we make declarative statements? Without asking the questions, how will we ever get to the answers? "Why are we here? Why is all of this here? Why do we die? What is death? What does it mean that outer space is infinite and what is after infinity? What is the significance of birdflight, why does matter decay, and how is our life different from that of a mosquito? Is there an end to these questions or is questioning as infinite as space?" With his striking black-and-white woodcut illustrations throughout, this handsome volume is a tour de force that packs a tremendous wallop in a deliciously compact package.

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