

**“Why Mow? The Case Against Lawns” by Michael Pollan:  
Questions for Discussion and Writing**

1. Discuss the significance of the essay’s title. In the context of American culture as described by Pollan himself, how is it likely to be received by many readers? Why do you think Pollan chose this title?
2. Why and in what way(s) is mowing the lawn considered a “civic responsibility” in the United States? Describe the reaction that suburban Americans typically have to neighbors who don’t fulfill this duty.
3. What purpose(s) do Pollan’s anecdotes about his father serve? Discuss Pollan’s description of his childhood neighbors in Farmingdale. What is his attitude toward them and people like them, and how does he convey this attitude?
4. What reasons (e.g., historical reasons, social reasons, and psychological reasons) does Pollan present for the popularity of American-style lawns in the United States? Do you think these are good reasons for the practice? Why or why not?
5. Summarize and evaluate the various reasons Pollan presents for opposing American-style lawns. Do you agree with these arguments and with his overall position? Why or why not?
6. How is Pollan’s attitude different from his father’s? What exactly is he advocating—what alternative to lawns does he argue for, and what advantages does his approach have?
7. How would you feel, and how would you handle the situation, if you were a homeowner in an American neighborhood with a neighbor like Pollan or Pollan’s father? Keep in mind the context that Pollan presents in the essay (e.g., the relationship between property values and lawn maintenance).
8. What purpose(s) do the literary, mythological, and religious references in the essay serve?
9. Discuss Pollan’s writing style. How would you describe the overall tone of the essay? Describe his use of diction (for example, in the section describing the unpleasant experience of mowing his lawn). What examples of humor can you find, and what is its effect?
10. Discuss Pollan’s use of subtle transitions in the essay. How does he achieve a sense of flow throughout such a long, complex discussion of the topic?