

A READING GUIDE FOR
I SWEAR
BY KATIE PORTER



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Would you characterize this as a political book? What were your expectations of an elected official, as compared to how Katie describes her political life?
2. What do you think of your Congressperson or Congress? What issues do they focus on? What issues *should* they focus on?
3. Katie's kids call her "congressmom" but she gets called *congressman* frequently in Washington. How does Katie's identity as a mother change when she campaigns and serves in Congress? Are her concerns those of a typical or atypical mother?
4. Of her upbringing, Katie says, "I grew up on a farm, a world where nearly everything required some effort. If I wanted something, I had to figure out how to get it." Why do you think knowing our representative's past experiences growing up is important? What are the benefits of sharing this with Americans?
5. "If you are under 40-years old," Katie writes, "you have likely been told repeatedly and without solicitation that you need to find a mentor." What has your experience been with mentorship, either being a mentor or a mentee? If you never had a mentor, how do you think one may have helped you? Do you think mentorship is overrated? Why or why not?
6. The book repeatedly talks about economic hardship, both as a personal issue for Katie growing up and as a political issue that cuts across the partisan divide. What does a fair economy mean to you?
7. As a candidate running for Congress, Katie is advised to speak with vague pronouncements—buzz phrases—on the trail, rather than talking about anything specific. But we can! Take these two buzz phrases and drill down. What do they mean to you? How do you think they can be implemented as laws?
 - "Comprehensive immigration reform."
 - "Healthcare is a human right."
8. What qualities do you look for in a candidate running for office, whether Congress or school board or trustee in your town? Why are these traits important?
9. Katie devotes a couple of chapters to the volunteers who went above and beyond, and sometimes over the line, in their enthusiasm. Where in your life have you volunteered? When you volunteer, which nickname best describes your efforts: The Provider, The Coach, The Protector, The Energizer, The Organizer?
10. "In the House of Representatives," Katie writes, "the privilege of wealth divides ruthlessly. Ideological differences might be the most visible to the public, but the class differences cut most sharply in our experiences." Were you surprised that class differences cut deeper than ideological differences, especially between colleagues of the same Party? Why do you think the legislative body is full of the privileged? How would Congress change if it had more class equity among its members?
11. One of Katie's chapters is "How to Whiteboard Anyone about Anything." Okay, now's your chance. What topic and questions would you whiteboard the hell out of for your spouse, your kid, your supervisor? Explain yourself. Have fun.
12. Have you ever contacted your Congressperson? If yes, what was your concern? If not, and you were to pick up the phone tomorrow, what would you share?

**HERE'S HOW TO FIND YOUR REPRESENTATIVE.
IT'S REALLY SIMPLE. JUST CLICK [HERE](#).**

(house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative)

... or call the U.S. House switchboard operator at (202) 224-3121
and they'll point you in the right direction.

BANK EXECUTIVES' GREATEST HITS

... ER, EXCUSES, WHEN ASKED A DIRECT QUESTION

“I don’t have any answers for you today, unfortunately.”

“I think I may have dropped the ball on this.”

“I wonder if we could just start over.”

“I don’t want to make anything up, but ...”

“I think this one is my fault.”

“I confuse myself sometimes.”

“I don’t want to say because I don’t know.”



COUNTRY CLUB POTATOES

These potatoes are a family favorite that got their name because they were served almost every Friday night at the Leon Country Club.

- 1 package frozen Potatoes O'Brien
(hash browns with onion and green pepper)
- 1 stick melted margarine*
- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- 1 (8 oz.) container of sour cream or onion dip
- 2 cups grated cheddar cheese

TOPPING

- 2 cups crushed corn flakes
- ½ stick melted margarine

1. Pour hash browns in 9" x 13" pan. Melt margarine and pour over frozen hash browns. Mix in soup, sour cream and grated cheese. Top with corn flakes and ¼ cup melted margarine.
2. Bake at 350°F until hot and cheese is melted.

* My mom admits that maybe the entire stick of margarine (or butter) is not needed, so feel free to go with the spirit of the story and use it all or to halve the amount.



THE WIT & WISDOM OF KATIE PORTER, AKA KATIE-ISMS

“I did not go to Washington to learn how to play by the rules. I went to Washington to rewrite them.”

“The American Bar Association had an entire panel devoted to how to handle me, a first-term Congressman.”

“Powerful people could not answer my questions, not because they were unprepared, but because their positions were not defensible.”

“Aspirational promises were not enough to right the bank’s wrongs.”

“Only ask a question if you want to hear an answer.”

“The problem being a know-it-all is that you really have to know it all.”

“Try the shorter, correct answer.”

“When Congressmembers don’t see oversight as part of their jobs, CEOs aren’t made to answer, and people lose confidence in their representatives.”

“If I had a dollar for every time that someone told me the Democrats need a better message, I’d be able to donate the proceeds of this book, rather than counting on every penny to replace my 19-year-old dishwasher.”

“Democracy only functions if voters know what’s going on in government and elected representatives know what’s going on in our communities.”

“Congress has a big responsibility to educate the public as part of functioning democracy. It needs a big-ass whiteboard to match.”

KATIE SPILLS THE TEA . . .

ON 3 SURPRISING TRUTHS ABOUT FUNDRAISING EMAILS

1. Nobody is out there “triple-matching.” The handful of mega-donors who give billions to influence elections are not making sure your \$3 donation is matched with \$9 from them. Not happening.
2. Nobody legitimately cares how many donors give on a certain day or how much money comes from a particular zip code. But the larger fonts seem so authoritative. Vibrating fonts are the worst. Click to the can.
3. Emails that have subject lines like “Warning: Payment Incomplete” or “Final Notice #89721” are preying on people, suggesting that there is an unpaid bill or debt collector coming for you. This tactic is unacceptable and simply false.

