William Cronon, "Introduction: In Search of Nature," in *Uncommon Ground*

What are the two key insights that Cronon and his colleagues used as starting points for their inquiry into the meaning of "nature" in modern America?

Why does Cronon suggest that popular environmentalism is naïve? Why might that claim have made the book so controversial?

What does southern California's response to earthquakes tell us about the ways in which the natural world and social world are intertwined?

What are the eight "views of nature" identified by the authors in *Uncommon Ground*? Which of them struck you as most interesting and/or provocative?

What, ultimately, is the big idea in Cronon's introduction? How might it help us to rethink the dominant narratives of American history?

Ted Steinberg, "Preface" and "Prologue: Rocks as History," in *Down to Earth*

How does Steinberg periodize U.S. history differently given his focus on the earth as agent?

What does Steinberg describe as the key factor in accounting for ecological change in America?

In what ways does Steinberg borrow from Marx, and to what effect?

How does Steinberg's description of our "ecological amnesia" square with Cronon's description of the dominant culture's views of nature?

Cronon's Eight Views of Nature

1. Nature as naïve reality, fundamental essence
2. Nature as moral imperative
3. Nature as Eden
4. Nature as artifice, self-conscious cultural construction
5. Nature as virtual reality
6. Nature as commodity
7. Nature as demonic other, or return of the repressed
8. Nature as contested terrain