

## Discussion Questions and Exercises

### Questions

The following questions are among those suggested to initiate discussion on each of the story texts of this workbook.

1. In the "Tower" and "Soul Food" stories, "stones" play an important role, albeit differing roles (i.e., stone walls and stone carvings). From the perspectives of each story, what are the defining properties of a "stone" and how are "stones" used? Based upon these definitions and usages, what are the implications for how the Jerichoans and Inuit understand "wilderness?" Can you offer any examples of both a Jericho and Inuit usage of "stone" in Euro-American culture? What does a "stone" mean to you? How does that meaning influence how you relate to the world and define wilderness?

2. In story, "The Tower," the "stone wall" may be more than just a means of protection and security. The "wall" may symbolize a "frontier," the boundary between all that is represented by the "domestic" within and the "wild" outside. As such, how the Jerichoans define themselves is dependent on the notion of separating themselves for the "other" and on the idea that they represent the antitheses of those on the "other side." The notion of "frontier" is thus critical in defining the world of the people of Jericho.

To what extent is the idea of “frontier” also essential in defining the American character? How has the notion of “frontier” expressed itself in American history? Is American identity still dependent on having a “frontier?” What are the implications of a “frontier” for “wilderness?”

3. The notion of “fear” plays a prominent role in the stories of the “Tower” and “Soul Food.” At Jericho a massive wall and tower are built to keep something out. Before the coming of Sedna the Inuit people had no fear; after Sedna they had fear. What is it that the Jerichoans and the Inuit fear? In light of this discussion, what is it that you fear most? How do our fears influence how people relate to the world and define wilderness?

4. In the story “A Plant” and “A Flower” the importance of the symbols is shown to be an importance influence on how we relate to the world. How is the world understood and viewed as mediated through the Pythagorean theorem in contrast to a Churinga board? What are the implications and distinctions in accessing the world through qualitative-based artistic and ritual symbols, and through quantitative-based mathematical symbols? What are the advantages of each form of expression, i.e., what can each reveal, define and give meaning to, that the other can not? What are the implications for how we relate to the world and define wilderness?

5. In the “Lesson” and “Quest” stories we are presented with two distinct ways of coming to know the world. One route involves utilitarianism, empiricism and rationalism, while the other involves questing “far from the dwellings of men, in the great solitudes.” What is meant by the statement, “all true wisdom is to be found far from the dwellings of men”? In our own field of study and profession (art, business, nursing, social work, etc.), what is the criteria for knowledge, and how does your discipline define its relation to the world? How do the ways we define what is knowable and use knowledge influence how we relate to the world and define wilderness?

6. What is it that defines a “rich man” in the stories of “Wise Use” and “Eye to Eye?” Consider the significances of the following symbols: "the more given away the greater the status" and "*ashammaleaxia*," (Eye to Eye), and "people are driven by the desire to accumulate material wealth" and "individualism" (Wise Use). How do you define a “rich man?” How do our definitions of “rich men” influence how we relate to the world and define wilderness?

7. As suggested in the “Wise Use” and the “Eye to Eye” stories, there can be differing ways we define our ethical responsibilities to the other members of our community. How do you define our responsibilities to all the members (human, plant and animal) of the community in which you live? How would the way we define that responsibility influence how we define wilderness?

If the world (animal, plant, earth) and the human being are understood as each interconnected with the other and each with a spiritual significance, as a "living being, with a soul," what are the implications for how people assume responsibility and relate to the world (animal, plant, earth), to other people and to the self? Can there be a "land ethic" without also acknowledging that the land has rights of its own?

If the world (animal, plant and earth) and the human being are understood as each being autonomous from the other and devoid of a spiritual significance, like a "great machine," what are the implications for how people assume responsibility and relate to the world (animal, plant, earth), to other people and to the self?

In your own personal situation, what is the importance of individual rights (your right to fulfill your own needs) and of collective responsibility (the right of the whole community to fulfill its needs), and how are they balanced, each with the other?

8. What are the similarities and differences between the origin accounts as offered by the Eskimo (Sedna story), the Australian Aborigine (Karora story), as found in Genesis, and as expressed in the story The Lesson (Evolution)? What is the relationship between how

you understand the origin/creation of the world, and how you define and relate to that world?

9. What are humanity's primary motivations, as indicated in "Wise Use" and as indicated in "Eye to Eye?" What are your own primary motivations. How is our relationship with the world affected by our motivations?

Are the symbols, "man, by nature, is acquisitive,... driven by the desire to accumulate material wealth," "individualism," "survival of the fittest," "competition," and "progress is endemic to human institutions," reflective of innately human qualities simply revealed for the first time by Smith, Tocqueville and Spencer? Or are these symbols relatively new ways of characterizing humanity and thus helping to create new qualities in the human experience? In either instance, what are some of the implications of these qualities on how humanity relates to the world?

What are the relationships between and the significance and implications of the statements, "Be fruitful and increase, fill the earth and subdue it," and "with technological knowledge, man is given power over nature," on how humanity relates to the world?

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The following questions are among those suggested to add further discussion to each of the story texts of this workbook.

10. An appreciation of gatherer-hunter peoples may offer (as in "Soul Food," "A Flower," and "The Quest"), among other things, two important insights into ourselves. First, we invalidate the commonly-held stereotype that the quality of life among the "primitives" is "savagery" and that contemporary Euro-American "civilization" has "progressed." Nevertheless, what lingers is the question of *why* we should choose to perceive gatherer-hunter peoples in such a way? What does that suggest about ourselves and our own values? Second, an appreciation of the quality of life in gatherer-hunter illustrates the unequivocal linkage with expectations. A "simple" technology is not automatically equated with an "inferior" quality of life. Challenged

is the ethnocentric notion that the enhancement of the quality of life is a direct reflection of technological "progress" and expanded resource utilization. Again, the question remains *why* we should choose to perceive technology as so primary? What does that say about ourselves and our own values?

11. Imagine yourself living in the Upper Paleolithic and been among those who painted on the cave walls of Lascaux or Les Trois Freres (from *The Quest*). As illustrated on the walls of the Lascaux cave, what is the meaning of the images? Why are human forms represented as stick-like, while animal forms are more realistically portrayed? In the Les Trois Freres paintings, why do the figures combine human and animal qualities? Why are so many of these images painted in the depths of caves, accessible only after a difficult journey? How do your people define themselves and their relationship with the animals about them?

12. What is the *Alcheringa*? And more specifically, what are significances and implications of a world pervasively inundated by mythic story, where every animal, plant, body of water, landform, star and person is defined and embedded within an intricate mythology?

13. What is the significance of and the relationship between Plato's Cave, Thoreau's Pond, the Brew, Bateson's "Mind," and the Dreamtime?

14. Are the symbols of "survival of the fittest" and "competition" accurate interpretations of the dominant processes occurring in the biological world as observed by Darwin? Are there other symbols and interpretations of the biological world, e.g., cooperation? Are the symbols "survival of the fittest" and "competition" appropriate and applicable to human social institutions and cultural stories? What are the implications of these symbols on how the world is viewed and related to?

14. How is the view of the universe, as defined by Galileo and Newton, similar to the view of humanity as defined by Marx and Maslow? What values do all share in common?
15. For Franklin, Smith, Tocqueville, Spencer, Marx and Maslow, what are the composite defining properties of "person?" Compare that definition of "person" with that offered by the Eskimo, Indian and Aborigine. How are the definitions similar and different?
16. In the Eskimo world view, what is the role of Sedna in the hunter-animal relationship, and are there equivalent roles in American culture? How does the Eskimo world view compare with Bateson's cybernetic ecosystem (Flower)?

## Exercises

1. **Apply** the method of interpretation to the Eye Juggler story presented in the Introduction of this workbook.
  - a. What are the key symbols within the story text?
  - b. Upon what epistemological criteria are the values based?
  - c. What is the significance and meaning of looking in the four directions and not trying to see too much, and of eyes as easily at rest at the top of a tree as in the sockets of one's head?
  - d. What is the relationship between the old man with longblack braids and the tree, and between Coyote and the tree?
  - e. What values are ingrained within the story?
  - f. Given the perspective of the story, how might "wilderness" be defined?

2. Write out a story text that best expresses your values on how you relate to the world and on how you define wilderness. The story can be based upon a memorable event, specific place or particular person in your personal life or you can create an original story based upon your imagination. Be as specific as possible, but be concise. Try to limit your text to one page in length. After you have written out your story, ask yourself and write out: what are the key symbols (specific words and/or images used/conveyed) within the story, what values do these symbols refer to and what is your definition of "wilderness?"

3. Read and individually eye juggle all the story texts of the workbook, recording interpretations and reflective thoughts in a journal. Before eye juggling can occur, the student should carefully read the "Preface," "Eye Juggler: An Introduction," and "Song: A Methodology" in the workbook. Know your methodology. An important key: all the story texts should be engaged (read or heard) before any given story text is eye juggled. Complete the following for each of the story texts:

a. Isolate and discuss a minimum of two key values within each story text. Use the definition of "values" as offered in this workbook. Interpret the isolated values from the perspective of the storyteller within the story text, expressing the values of others. Ground the two isolated values with reference to specific symbols in the story text. One, if not both, of the isolated values should express or have implications for how humanity defines its relationship with the world, e.g., what might be the wilderness values of the storyteller? If "wilderness" has no meaning for the storyteller, what values within the story might characterize humanity's relation with the world?

b. Reflect on the personal and/or societal implications of the story text. "To reflect" is not to summarize but to think about and study seriously; to reflect is to consider the

assumptions and implications of a position or idea; to reflect is to contemplate.

--Students are encouraged to link the themes and values conveyed in the story texts with personal experiences and previous academic study.

--Students are also encouraged to link these story themes and values with current events as they are reported in the news media (print, radio, television).

Elaborate and discuss the implications of these linkages for our world and for you personally. Your reflection should express your own values on the issues brought forth.

Leave space in your journal following each story text entry to incorporate additional reflections later in the term. The meaning and significance of any given story text may not be revealed upon your initial eye juggling.

4. An effective way to interpret the story texts is through open discussion with others in a seminar context. Seminar participants are asked to divide into groups of relatively equal size. Each collaborative group is then assigned a specific story text and is responsible for presenting it to the entire seminar. Among the activities each group could complete are the following:

a. Conduct research on the assigned text and provide discussion on the historical background and/or cultural context (character of the literature and art forms, configuration of religious, social, political and economic institutions, key historical personages) for the story text. Select only a segment or portion from the story text to research, e.g., archaeological background on Jericho from "The Tower," cultural background on the Inuit from "Soul Food," or biographical or historical background on Herbert Spencer from "Wise Use." Select a segment that you may know little about or a segment that is of particular interest to you. Refer to the workbook bibliography for initial sources. Library research will be necessary.



- b. Eye juggle the story text, i.e., clarify and interpret the key values from the perspective of the storyteller within the story text, expressing the values of others. Ground the entire presentation with reference the specific symbols within the story text.
- c. Offer a definition of wilderness as grounded from the perspective of the values embedded within the story text. What is the storyteller's concept of and relationship with the world and/or with wilderness? What is the meaning of the word "wilderness" for the storyteller? Does wilderness have meaning for the storyteller? If it does not, how is the relationship between humanity and nature defined?
- d. For the assigned story text, continue telling its story. Attempt to focus on a wilderness experience or, if wilderness has no explicit meaning, on some other experience involving humanity's relationship with nature. Create your own characters, events and/or landscape to illustrate the value orientations and literary motifs of the story text. Your continued story should be presented in a format that best represents the values of the story text, e.g., drawing, skit or play, speech, oral or written story.
- e. Formulate your own discussion questions relevant to the story text or select appropriate discussion questions from this workbook, and in turn, lead the members of the entire seminar in a discussion of those questions. One way the questions can be posed is through role playing. Based upon the story text, assign particular roles to seminar members and establish a particular situational scenario. Then pose the questions to the role players, soliciting their responses based upon the values of their characters.
- f. Reflect on the personal and societal implications of the values within the story text. In so doing, members of the

collaborative group have an opportunity to express their own values on the issues and topics brought forth in the story text.

g. Among the members of your collaborative group, compare the wilderness definitions and stories for all ten of the story texts. How are they similar and different? What values are revealed in the comparison?

5. Imagine yourself an American Indian, Eskimo or Australian Aborigine.

a. What is an eagle and what are its defining properties?

b. Does the eagle have any rights?

c. What are your primary motivations?

d. What is an American Indian, Eskimo or Australian Aborigine wilderness experience?

6. Imagine yourself a resource developer.

a. What is an eagle and what are its defining properties?

b. Does an eagle have any rights?

c. What are your primary motivations?

d. What is a developer wilderness experience?

7. Imagine yourself an environmentalist.

- a. What is an eagle and what are its defining properties?
  - b. Does an eagle have any rights?
  - c. What are your primary motivations?
  - d. What is an environmentalist wilderness experience?
8. Imagine yourself, along with fifty other people, marooned on an island. There is little hope for rescue or escape. Because of your charisma and wisdom, you are chosen leader and must decide the fate of all the island's inhabitants. Those who have elected you leader represent a broad range of American middle-class values and expectations. Among the fifty people is an enlightened clergy, a brilliant engineer, an expert ecologist, a renowned artist, an experienced police officer, a compassionate social worker, a skilled physician, an astute resource developer and a worldly philosopher. You have only rudimentary tools, such as hammers, saws and hand drills. The food, medicine, fuel and clothing supplies that were brought with the group are rapidly dwindling. On the island is a vast diversity of animal and plant species, including a majestic but rare species of eagle, a rather large though common species of rodent, and a pathogenic species of bacterium, *Pasteurella*. While many of the species are unknown to you, all of the species are in an intricate ecological balance with each other. The *Pasteurella* is kept in check and thus a non-infectious state. The island is situated in the midst of a vast ocean expanse as well as on a typhoon storm path.
- a. Who among all the inhabitants of the island will be your most trusted advisor(s) and why?
  - b. How will you attempt to satisfy the life-style expectations of the people?

- c. Do the indigenous inhabitants of the island (plant and animal) have rights? If so, what are they and how will you attempt to safeguard those rights?
- d. How will you attempt to insure the long-term viability of the entire island community, taking into consideration the potential for a growing human population, the depletion of natural resources, the disposal of waste products and the endangerment of the indigenous inhabitants?
- e. If, for whatever reasons, you had to make a choice between the extinction of the rare species of eagle and the elimination and re-orientation of all previous forms of leisure and recreational activities as well as of many jobs and professions, what decision would you make and why?
- f. If, for whatever reasons, you had to make a choice between the extinction of the rare species of eagle and the deterioration of the people's welfare, a rise in the incidents of dysfunctional family behavior and crime, and you being deposed as leader, all of which is followed by an eventual new social order, though a societal order offering a substantially reduced standard of living, what decision would you make and why?
- g. If you had to make a choice between the extinction of the rare species of eagle and an increased level of human infant mortality, what decision would you make and why?
- h. Having imagined yourself through this exercise, attempt to isolate those values that have guided your decisions. As the leader, what are your values?
9. Review the demographic and energy consumption information provided in "Soul Food" and "The Tower." Draw separate graphs for each set of data, plotting on one graph the levels

of kilocalories consumed per societal type and on the other graph the growth of human population over time. Compare the results of the two graphs. Also consider the trends in species diversification, natural resource availability and pollution as suggested in "The Culture of Consumption."

- a. What are the implications of this information on how humanity relates to the world.
  - b. Imagine what the world might be like in the year 2050. What are the predominate values which define and give meaning to that world?
  - c. How will wilderness be defined in 2050?
10. Select a wilderness issue that fully engages your personal values, e.g., protection of an endangered species, loss of jobs and a way of life because of wilderness designation, etc., and write a letter to the editor of the local newspaper. You need to clearly state your position and try to convince other readers of the worth of that position. The editor will not accept an editorial of more than 500 words. You do not have to submit your letter to the newspaper editor, but you should submit it to the community of your fellow seminar students.
11. Conduct "original" research using interviewing techniques with a "live" informant. The values of the informant should be distinct from those of the interviewer. The focus of the research will be on those portions of the informant's story that reveal his/her values on how humanity is defined, how humanity does and should relate to the world, and how "wilderness" is defined. The intent is to comprehend and appreciate the informant's perspective, to "see" the world as he/she sees it. The research will be presented in a written format and include the informant's descriptive story as a text that, in turn, will be eye juggled. Identify the key symbols (e.g., significant words and phrases) used in the story text and suggest the values embedded within that story. Refer to "Interviewing," (in the

Methodology section of this workbook), for suggestions on conducting an interview.

12. The following key terms and concepts may help point the way to, if not highlight, many of the pivotal values embedded in the story texts. Review and discuss them to enhance your interpretation of the stories.

Dream Animal  
 Origin/Creation Stories  
*Dasshussua*  
 We Are What We Imagine  
 The Vital Act is the Act of Participation  
 Original Affluent Society  
 Rites of Passage  
 What is to be Feared?  
 Domesticated and Wild Animals  
 Be Fruitful and Increase, Fill the Earth and Subdue It  
 We Live by Endangering the Souls of Others  
 What is a Person, and Who are to be Considered People?  
 The Language of Nature is Mathematics  
*Alcheringa*  
 Nature is the Symbol of the Spirit...the World  
 Emblematic  
 Mind  
 Cybernetic Epistemology  
 What is Knowledge, and How is it Acquired?  
*Tabula Rasa*  
 Utilitarianism  
 Empiricism  
 Rationalism  
 Cartesian Dualism  
 All True Wisdom is to be Found Far From the Dwellings  
 of Men  
*Awakkule*  
 Reciprocity  
 Circle

Feel Beauty  
What Motivates Humans?  
Individualism  
Man by Nature is Acquisitive  
Survival of the Fittest  
Hierarchy of Needs  
Self-actualization  
*Ashammaleaxia*  
Wagon Wheel  
Give-away  
What is a Rich Man?  
Wise Use  
*Wilderness*