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STS.036 Technology and Nature in American History
Spring 2008

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STS.036

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Reading questions

Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness" (1995)

Muir, *Our National Parks* (1901), pp. 1-36

Pinchot, *The Fight for Conservation* (1910), pp. 3-20; 120-147

Cronon

- What is the 18th-century conception of the sublime? (73) What does the sublime have to do with Cronon's argument about American conceptions of wilderness?
- What does Cronon mean by the "domesticated sublime" of the late 19th century? (75)
- How did Turner's conception of the frontier relate to the origins of the wilderness preservation movement in the United States? (76-79)
- What are some of the ironies Cronon sees in the national frontier myth? (78-79)
- What does Cronon mean when he says that "wilderness represents a flight from history"? (79)
- According to Cronon, what is the trouble with wilderness? (80-81)
- What are the implications of Cronon's argument for the environmentalist movement? (82-85)
- How does Cronon propose solving the problems with wilderness? (86-90)
- What would Cronon say to Muir and Pinchot? Would he accept their conceptions of wilderness? Do Muir and Pinchot have trouble with wilderness?

Muir

- What is Muir's argument and purpose? What is his tone? What kinds of details and images does he use?
- How does Muir conceptualize Nature and wilderness? What kinds of value does he ascribe to wilderness?
- What is Muir's attitude toward Thoreau?
- What is Muir's conception of divinity?
- What are the lessons of the Kotzebue Sound?
- What is Muir's attitude toward national park tourism and wilderness recreation?
- What is Muir's attitude toward Native Americans?
- How does Muir depict the Grand Canyon in the chapter's conclusion?

Pinchot

- What is Pinchot's argument and purpose? His tone? How does he substantiate his claims?
- What does Pinchot say about national character and national responsibility for conservation of natural resources?
- What is Pinchot's assessment of resource use in the early 20th century?
- How does Pinchot feel about corporate land ownership in the West?
- According to Pinchot, what are the consequences of a "timber famine"?
- What does Pinchot's "new patriotism" call for?
- According to Pinchot, what are the national implications of his conservationist program?
- What other national crises does Pinchot invoke in his discussion of the natural resource crisis? What is the nature of the current crisis? What is Pinchot's remedy?
- In Pinchot's view, where does the responsibility for stewardship of natural resources reside?
- According to Pinchot, what are the moral and political dimensions of a conservationist ethic?
- What does Pinchot perceive as the biggest threats to the conservation movement and to a prosperous and equitable American society?