

Things to think about: Crosby, The Columbian Exchange

Why do you think this book has been republished 30 years after its first appearance?

Why is the title of chapter 2 in Spanish, when all the other chapter titles are in English?

Why does he start chapter 2 by asking why the European conquest of the Americas was so easy?

What evidence suggests that there was less disease in the Americas before 1492?

How does Crosby characterize the social effects of unprecedented death rates from new contagions?

Why does he compare the population of 18<sup>th</sup>-century Iceland to that of the pre-Contact Americas? (44)

How can historians deal with problems like the inadequacy of 16<sup>th</sup>-century statistics and the difficulty of understanding 16<sup>th</sup>-century verbal descriptions? (47)

What is the relation between disease and military conquest? Is it reasonable to call disease an ally of Cortes and Pizarro?

What is the relation between the introduction of old world crops to the Americas and the development of plantation agriculture?

What image of the Spaniards does Crosby offer? Does he suggest that they were different in any important way from other European groups in the Americas?

What is the point of Crosby's analogy between contagious diseases like smallpox and weeds or feral livestock?

What are the implications of Crosby's claim (75) that it seemed as though Europeans meant to replace Caribbean people with introduced livestock? That indigenous people were in competition with these animals? (99)

What were the ecological effects of the explosive multiplication of livestock populations?

What is the connection between 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>-century American ranches and medieval Iberia? (86)

Does the camel provide a persuasive exception to the "rule" Crosby suggests about the adaptability of old world domesticated animals in the new world? (96)

Why does Crosby refer to divine retribution on p. 97?

Why does Crosby think that the Spanish colonizers would have been threatened if the Indians

under their jurisdiction had possessed the larger domestic animals? (98)

Why was the effect of introduced animals so different for American people who lived under European rule and those who lived outside it? How did these animals enhance the attractions of nomadism?

On p. 106, why does Crosby suggest that “we must give the Indian agricultural credit”? Who is “we” and why is it up to “us”?

Why were introduced animals more important than introduced plants in expanding the frontier of European settlement?

Can a Malthusian analysis be applied to the growth of the wild herds? (113) To the growth and stasis of human population, as Crosby claims on p. 167 and p. 191?

How does Crosby connect the global spread of American food crops with population growth in various parts of the world? Is his argument persuasive?

How do you think that people discovered how to remove the prussic acid from bitter manioc? Why would they have been motivated to do this? (173)

Why is calories produced per acre cultivated a significant statistic?