

Chesapeake Bay Governor's School for Marine and Environmental Science  
2018-2019  
Sophomore Summer Reading Questions for **The Sixth Extinction** by Elizabeth Kolbert

**Sophomores**

Your summer reading assignment is **The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History** by Elizabeth Kolbert. Please read the book and answer the questions below in your composition book/journal. The questions are organized by chapter, so you may read a chapter and then answer the question(s). These responses are due at the beginning of the school year and will be graded by your Foundations of Science teacher.

Chapter 1: The Sixth Extinction

Why has Bd, a natural fungus, become such a big problem for amphibians in recent years?

EVACC seeks to keep species alive that are threatened or extinct in the wild. Do you think it's a good use of resources to try to keep alive species extinct in the wild? Does reintroduction of the species seem feasible? Explain why or why not.

Chapter 3: The Original Penguin

What is similar in the causes of the extinction of the Great Auk and the Charles Tortoise?

Do you find it troubling that species go extinct from human causes? Is that fundamentally different from going extinct from natural causes? Does the presence of morality in our species hold us to a higher standard?

Chapter 7: Dropping Acid

What is threatening coral reefs? Why are scientists so worried about the loss of corals?

Reefs of different types have been lost in previous mass extinctions (see pages 140-141). Is it thus a big deal that reefs may be gone from the world for a few million years again?

Chapter 8: The Forest and the Trees

If Earth was warmer in the past than it is now (for example, the palm trees in Antarctica), why are people concerned about the warming from climate change?

Chapter 10: The New Pangaea

Travel and commerce have drastically increased species introductions, which increases the likelihood of species invasions. Do you support measures to reduce the chances of invasions? Should people be unable to plant nonnative plants in their yards or to buy exotic pets? Should travelers' luggage be subjected to increased scrutiny? Would you be willing to pay more for products (like lumber) so they could be screened for invasive species?

How is the problem of white nose syndrome in bats similar to the problem of Bd in amphibians?

Chapter 11: The Rhino Gets an Ultrasound

People often consider ancient humanity to have lived "in harmony with nature". What does the discovery that people may have caused the extinction of megafauna even in prehistoric times mean for humanity's role in nature? What bearing should that have as we seek to integrate modern humans more effectively into the natural world?