At orientation you were given a summer reading book entitled “Caleb's Crossing” (2011) by Geraldine Brooks. The questions below refer to the common summer reading.

1. In discussing the purchase of the island from the Wampanoag, Bethia's father says, "some now say that [the sonquem] did not fully understand that we meant to keep the land from them forever. Be that as it may, what's done is done and it was done lawfully" (p. 9). Do you agree with his opinion?

2. With that in mind, examine Caleb's view of the settlers on p. 143–144. Why does he say that the sound of their "boots, boots, and more boots" (p. 143) moved him to cross cultures and adopt Christianity? Contrast this with Tequamuck's reaction to the settlers' arrival (p. 295). Placed in their situation, what would you have felt?

3. On p. 285, Joseph Dudley discusses the philosophical question of the Golden Mean, which suggests that the ideal behavior is the middle point between extremes. But he then goes on to argue against this belief, stating that, in fact, there is no middle point between extremes such as "good and evil, truth and falsehood." Which perspective do you agree with? Explain.

4. Compared with those in her community, Bethia is remarkably unprejudiced in her view of the Wampanoag. Did you grow up surrounded by prejudices you disagreed with? How did this affect you? Conversely, did you have prejudices in your youth that you've since overcome?

5. The Wampanoag and the Puritans have very different views on raising children. Describe the differences you see between the two and which method you believe is healthier. Are Caleb and Bethia the typical product of their respective societies?

6. Bethia acknowledges that her own religion could seem as crazy to Caleb as his does to her: "Of course, I thought it all outlandish. But... it came to me that our story of a burning bush and a parted sea might also seem fabulous, to one not raised up knowing it was true" (p. 35). In the end, Caleb does come to accept Bethia's religion, and she develops a kinder attitude toward him. Have you or anyone you know ever converted religions? Have you grown interested in or accepting of religions or practices that initially struck you as strange or foreign?

7. Unlike Bethia, her son has no interest in traveling to older countries like Italy, saying that "everything there is done and built and finished. I like it here, where we can make and do for ourselves" (p. 274). Is this sense of independence and potential still true of the United States today?

8. Both Bethia and Caleb struggle against the limits and expectations placed on them by society. How are their experiences similar? How are they different? Who faces the greater challenge? Why?

Note: If you did not receive the summer reading book because you were not at summer orientation – or if you are not a first-semester freshman, then see your instructor for a comparable assignment. Otherwise you are required to complete this assignment based on the common summer reading book.