

Discussion questions for 8th grade instructors for *America's First Forest*

- 1. What was happening in America in the late 1800s that led to the introduction of forestry in the United States?**
- 2. Do you think that George Vanderbilt's efforts to establish a huge estate in western North Carolina was a positive development?**
- 3. Why did Frederick Law Olmsted encourage George Vanderbilt to hire a forester?**
- 4. How do you think the local landowners Vanderbilt bought land from felt about it? How do you feel about it today?**
- 5. Carl Schenck emigrated from Germany to the United States in 1895. What advantages did he have over many of the immigrants of that time?**
- 6. Carl Schenck was a forester trained in Germany. What challenges did he face as he tried to introduce scientific forestry on the Biltmore Estate?**
- 7. Have these challenges changed during the last 100 years? If so, how?**
- 8. Gifford Pinchot and Carl Schenck had different reactions to the logging operation on Big Creek. Discuss those differences.**
- 9. Did Schenck's interaction with the local population change his ideas about forestry? Explain why or why not.**
- 10. Pioneer foresters in America like Schenck and Pinchot wanted to show how trees could be cut and preserved at the same time, what today we might call "sustainable forest management." Why did they want to do this? What is your definition of forest conservation?**
- 11. How did Schenck view the role of private forest land ownership and management?**
- 12. What responsibilities do you think private landowners should have toward the land?**
- 13. Do you think that the government should help private landowners who provide public goods and services (like allowing camping or hunting) from their forest land?**
- 14. What is meant when we call the Biltmore Estate and the Biltmore Forestry School the "Cradle of Forestry?" Is this an accurate nickname?**
- 15. Schenck claimed that he did nothing to find a buyer for the Pisgah Forest after Vanderbilt, his employer, asked him to. Do you agree with his decision and motivation? Why or why not?**
- 16. Do you think Vanderbilt treated Schenck fairly when he let him go from his job?**
- 17. The Biltmore Forestry School trained foresters to work in the woods by taking students into the forest every day after lunch. Schenck accused other programs of teaching only from books and not in the woods. How do you think a forester should be trained?**

- 18. In 1916, much of the Biltmore Estate's forest became the Pisgah National Forest. Was this transition a good thing?**
- 19. What responsibilities do you think citizens have towards the forested landscapes we enjoy?**
- 20. Think of a forest or wooded area you are familiar with. How has it changed? What caused those changes?**