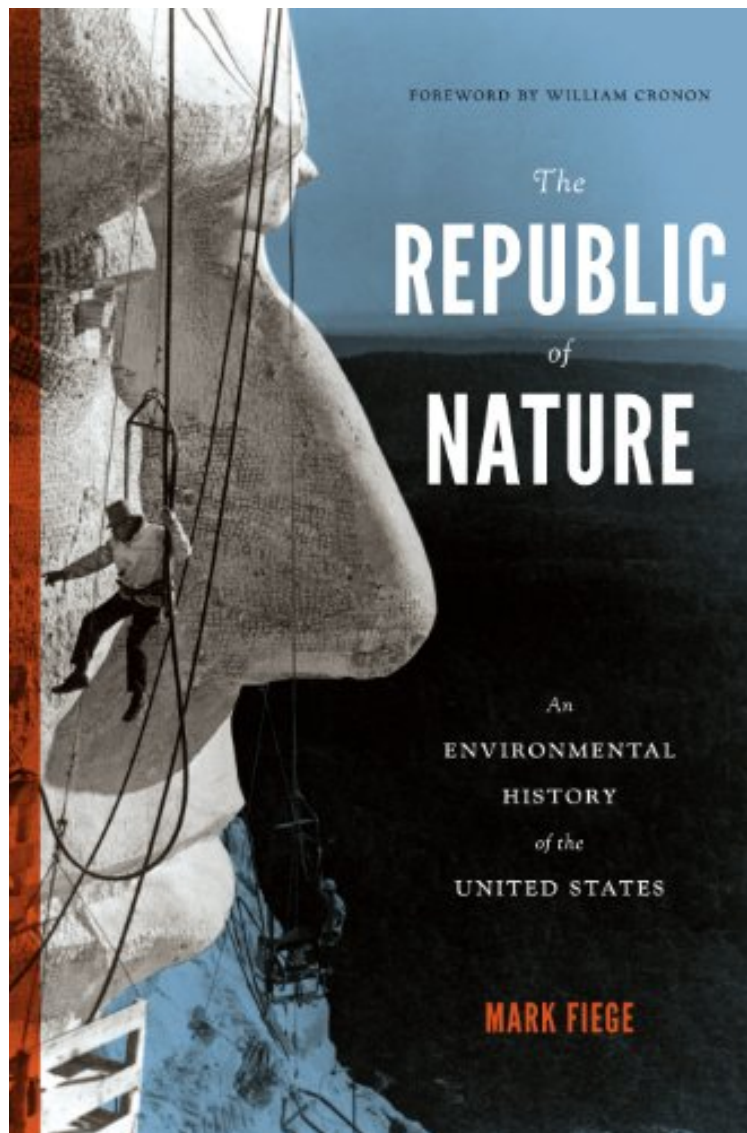


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## The Republic of Nature: An Environmental History of the United States (Weyerhaeuser Environmental Books)

Mark Fiege

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#528465 in Books University of Washington Press 2013-07-23 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.02 x 1.34 x 5.981, 1.64 #File Name: 0295993294600 pages | File size: 75.Mb

Mark Fiege : The Republic of Nature: An Environmental History of the United States (Weyerhaeuser Environmental Books) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Republic of Nature: An Environmental History of the United States (Weyerhaeuser Environmental Books):

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. This Land Is Your Land, This Land Is My Land By Taylor Rose If I were to suggest any book as an example of how to write engaging, accessible environmental history, *The Republic of Nature* would be it. In a little over 400 pages, Mark Fiege thoroughly re-conceptualizes traditional US history in terms of organic cycles, natural resources, and climate. In short, *Republic* is a pathbreaking collection of narratives that is as important to high school teachers as it is to eminent scholars. The book is not written like a typical scholarly work, with narrow thematic or geographic focus. Rather, it begins with popular American history. Familiar subjects—the Salem Witch Trials, Southern Slavery, even the Manhattan Project—take on new meaning when filtered through Fiege's lens of nature. Colonial New England, for example, was Satan's dominion to its white settlers. To Fiege, it was the dominion of nature, no less malevolent; a frightening milieu of smallpox, crop failure, and New World anxiety. In another chapter, slavery is as much about seasonal cotton production as it is bacon and cornmeal, humid evenings and bleary-eyed twilight. Thus, at both the mundane and intellectual level, the book is immediately relevant. From the Founding Fathers to the Civil Rights Movement, nature shapes and guides human history, and not just out in the middle of the woods. To be sure, critics should have no shortage of bones to pick, not the least of which arises from the audacity of the book's subtitle. *Republic* would make an excellent supplement to any survey of US history, but to supplant traditional textbooks requires a greater degree of cohesion and comprehensiveness. That being said, Fiege never set out to overhaul two centuries of nationalist historiography. He ultimately accomplishes his main goal of laying the foundation for future research and broadening the scope of environmental history. Perhaps most importantly, the book is a fascinating read and is, at times, as poetic as it is informative. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. You Will Never See History the Same Again. By Bruce L. Berry If you are a historian or just interested in history, Fiege brings you a whole new perspective. I am taking a class right now, Environmental History taught by Dr. Adam Sowards at the University of Idaho. This book was introduced in this class. Never have I interpreted history in this way. I have my own personal library and LOVE history. Not just a certain point in history, or a particular country, but all of history. Fiege's book takes you beyond your traditional methods of historical study and hermeneutics. I will not spoil the content for you, but be ready to walk away with a whole new tool and perspective. Aside from the brief moments of over-romanticism, this book offers a unique exploration with great detail and lots of evidence. The book is organized great and the sources are wonderful. I have my own personal library and LOVE history, but be ready to never see history the same again. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Loved it. It will help me present old material ... By Carrim88A new refreshing perspective. This was the text for a class, but I read the whole book start to finish. Loved it. It will help me present old material in new light to my students.

In the dramatic narratives that comprise *The Republic of Nature*, Mark Fiege reframes the canonical account of American history based on the simple but radical premise that nothing in the nation's past can be considered apart from the natural circumstances in which it occurred. Revisiting historical icons so familiar that schoolchildren learn to take them for granted, he makes surprising connections that enable readers to see old stories in a new light. Among the historical moments revisited here, a revolutionary nation arises from its environment and struggles to reconcile the diversity of its people with the claim that nature is the source of liberty. Abraham Lincoln, an unlettered citizen from the countryside, steers the Union through a moment of extreme peril, guided by his clear-eyed vision of nature's capacity for improvement. In Topeka, Kansas, transformations of land and life prompt a lawsuit that culminates in the momentous civil rights case of *Brown v. Board of Education*. By focusing on materials and processes intrinsic to all things and by highlighting the nature of the United States, Fiege recovers the forgotten and overlooked ground on which so much history has unfolded. In these pages, the nation's birth and development, pain and sorrow, ideals and enduring promise come to life as never before, making a once-familiar past seem new. *The Republic of Nature* points to a startlingly different version of history that calls on readers to reconnect with fundamental forces that shaped the American experience.

"Fiege has written a book that will undoubtedly leave an imprint on the field of environmental history and beyond. . . . he has added his book to a short list of must-reads in the field of environmental history." David Arnold, *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, Win. 2011/2012 "Fiege makes a powerful case for always asking the question 'How does nature matter?' when thinking about any present or historical issue or social policy." Tikkun, Summer 2012 "This smart and well-written book, one both synthetic and generative, hopefully will, in fact, prompt students, researchers, and the public to further explore the 'paths that circle through the nature of American history . . .'" Brett Mitzelle, *Southern California Quarterly*, Summer 2013 "The Republic of Nature is an incredibly ambitious and completely unprecedented book Fiege's goal is no less than to demonstrate the centrality of the nonhuman world to any understanding of the American past. The intended audience is wide, and this book invites the broadest consideration and debate." Linda Nash, *Isis* 104, September 2013 "Mark Fiege re-frames the canonical account of American history based on the simple but radical premise that nothing in the nation's past can be considered apart from the natural circumstances in which it occurred and points to a different version of history that prompts us to reconnect with fundamental forces that shaped the American experience." Tom Williams, Utah Public Radio, September 27 2013 "The Republic of Nature dares us to

think differently in the way the best history books do by thoroughly engaging readers in unexpected ways and in challenging our perceptions of the ways the world works."Raechel Lutz, Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, April 2013"Readers will be surprised and delighted by how much Fiege accomplishes in each case study. . . a fine and affordable supplement to U.S. history surveys . . . [and] American environmental history courses."Paul W. Hirt, Oregon Historical Quarterly, Spring 2013"Fiege's book is extraordinary: beautifully written, ambitious in its arguments, and impressive in scope and scholarship. . . a compelling and ambitious study of American history that will enrich the classroom and provoke new scholarship."James Morton Turner, Journal of American History, December 2012"Fiege is a fine storyteller with a powerful sense of historical context, and popular readers will like that this book is environmental history served up in a rich mixture of information they'll find familiar and grounding."Montana: The Magazine of Western History, Winter 2012"This imaginative and well-researched . . . approach should prompt scholars to continue to reexamine US history through an environmental prism. Recommended."Choice, January 2013"Fiege is a good storyteller; he is knowledgeable; he writes well; and he keeps it simple."Robert Pogue Harrison, New York of Books, October 25 2012"The Republic of Nature compellingly demonstrates the value of applying environmental perspective to historical events. From this we can learn the value of applying environmental perspectives to the history we are creating today."Robert E. Hoopes, Wildlife Activist, Summer 2012"The writing is compelling and will reward general readers as well as environmental historians with a new way of thinking about history."Minnesota History, Summer 2012"Fiege's fresh new spin on important historical events of U.S. history places social and political factors on the background to highlight the environmental context. This thought-provoking book tells a different version of American history than the one we are used to, where nature plays a fundamental role in the events that shaped the nation."Institute for Global Environmental Strategies"Mark Fiege's book presents a concept that is as revolutionary as it is obvious, writing history as if the natural world mattered. . . . Fiege takes a look at historical events so well-worn they've become platitudes and makes them fresh again . . . by . . . examining them through an environmental lens . . ."Christian Martin, Cascadia Weekly, June 2012"For readers swayed by Fiege's persuasive pages, American history will never look quite the same again. . . . This is unconventional environmental history just as it is unorthodox American history. . . . It is not a book to whip through in search of useful data . . . but one to savor on Sunday afternoons."J. R. McNeill, Science, May 2012". . . eminently readable . . . an original contribution . . ."Publishers Weekly, January 2012"The Republic of Nature is going to improve the teaching of and the study of American history for years to come. Although he did not attempt to craft a complete synthesis, having mastered the synthetic nature of environmental history, Mark Fiege demonstrates that the workings of the biophysical world were essential to the nation's development."Zachary Falck, Journal of Social History "A thoughtful, thought-provoking, and beautifully written book. The Republic of Nature is sure to be a watershed title for environmental historians and open up a necessary and long overdue dialogue with other fields of American history."Karl Jacoby, Brown University"Like the most excellent histories, The Republic of Nature demands readers see what was once familiarGettysburg, the Salem Witch Trials, and other iconic moments in the American past in a radically new way, demonstrated with such force that there can be no return to the old narrative. But this book is better than excellent. It is truly brilliant, for Mark Fiege offers us an equally persuasive reorientation of the practice of history itself. It's not just about rewriting the stories; it's about fundamentally rewiring the way we see the past."Philip Deloria, University of Michigan"Mark Fiege has written a book so original and so necessary that a reader can be excused for being both astonished and wondering why no one has written a book like this before. It is easy to say that human history never takes place outside the natural world; it is quite another thing to write a history that demonstrates it with the subtlety and grace Mark Fiege does in The Republic of Nature."Richard White, author of Railroaded"This is surely among the most important works of environmental history published since the field was founded four or more decades ago. No book before it has so compellingly demonstrated the value of applying environmental perspectives to historical events that at first glance may seem to have little to do with 'nature' or 'the environment.' No one who cares about the American past can afford to ignore what Fiege has to say."from the Foreword by William Cronon

About the Author Mark Fiege is associate professor of history and the William E. Morgan Chair of Liberal Arts at Colorado State University, Fort Collins. He is the author of Irrigated Eden: The Making of an Agricultural Landscape in the West.