INTRODUCTION
1. Based on the first section of this chapter, how does environmental history differ from the more traditional fields of history?
2. What are the strengths, and weaknesses, of the current historical literature on slavery in the Middle East?
3. Most people think of the Arabian Peninsula as a uniform expanse of sandy desert. Based on the “spatial parameters” section (pages 5–11), how accurate is this perception?
4. What are the most important ways in which “traditional Arabia” differs from modern Arabia?
5. Why does the study of the Arabian Peninsula require historians to make use of nontraditional sources, such as genetic studies and travelers’ accounts?
6. Why does the author believe that travelers’ accounts are of particular value in the study of Arabian Peninsula agriculture and slavery?

CHAPTER 1
1. Why did the Arabian Peninsula adopt agriculture at such a late date (after 3000 BCE)?
2. Why is “bustan” gardening better suited to Arabian geographical realities than traditional open-field agriculture?
3. To what degree did the population density in traditional Arabia correspond with regional availability of water?
4. What are the main benefits, risks, and limitations of sayl (floodwater) agriculture?
5. Why was terracing necessary to conduct agriculture in some parts of Arabia?
6. What were the main benefits, and drawbacks, of jilib (draw well) irrigation?

CHAPTER 2
1. How does slavery in the Arabian Peninsula differ from the better-known slavery systems of America and the Atlantic world?
2. In what ways was malwa (freedmen) status different from slave status in the traditional Arabian Peninsula?
3. Why does the author use the term “servile” in many cases where the sources mention Africans working in agricultural labor?
4. Why does the author use the term “colony” to describe large-scale concentrations of servile African agriculturalists in the Arabian Peninsula?
5. What were some of the features common to most African servile colonies in the Arabian Peninsula?

CHAPTER 3
1. What factors made Khaybar distinctive among Arabian Peninsula agricultural towns?
2. What does the example of Khaybar tell us about the relationship between Bedouin and agricultural populations in the traditional Arabian Peninsula?
3. What factors prevented the Khaybara (Khaybar’s servile African population) from assimilating fully into the dominant Arab society?
4. What cultural practices distinguished the Khaybara from other Arabian Peninsula populations?
5. How did the coming of the modern age of petroleum in Saudi Arabia transform Khaybar?

CHAPTER 4
1. What measures did traditional Arabian Peninsula populations, particularly Bedouin, take to avoid the malarial risks of Arabian Peninsula palm plantations and other moist lowlands?
2. What are the main distinctions between the different varieties of malaria present in the Arabian Peninsula?
3. How did traditional Arabian agricultural techniques make the inherent risk of malaria in Arabia’s moist lowlands even worse?
4. What genetic advantages did populations of sub-Saharan ancestry enjoy that helped them survive in highly malarial environments?
5. What parallels does the author draw, from the standpoint of genetics and demographics, between slavery in the Atlantic world of 1600–1850 and slavery in the traditional Arabian Peninsula?
6. Arabs traditionally assigned Africans of different ancestry (sub-Saharan vs. Abyssinian) to different slave employments. What role may genetics have played in influencing these decisions?
7. What lessons does the author draw from his quantitative study of well depths and the presence/absence of African labor (pages 119–21)?

CHAPTER 5
1. How useful overall is traditional Arab geographical and travelogue literature to our understanding of the antiquity of Arab servile agriculture in the Arabian Peninsula?
2. Why is the author skeptical of Lovejoy’s estimate that only a “steady trickle” of slaves (8,000 per year) entered the MENA (Middle East/North Africa) region from 800 to 1600 CE?
3. According to the author, what factors drove the gradual assimilation of African servile agricultural populations into dominant Arab society?
4. Based on the DNA evidence, how did patterns of Arabian Peninsula slavery differ from patterns elsewhere in the MENA region, particularly in terms of the relative male/female contribution?
5. How successful were the British in combatting the slave trade during the nineteenth century?
6. How did technological changes in Arabian agriculture in the twentieth century undermine agricultural slavery in Arabia?
7. What role did economic and demographic change play in reducing the malaria threat to Arabian Peninsula populations?