



Gulf of Mexico Region Virtual Book Club
Gulf: The Making of an American Sea by Jack E. Davis
 7:00 PM CT/8:00 PM ET on April 4th, 2022

Meeting Schedule

Parts	Chapters	Date	# of pages
	Chronology Prologue: History, Nature, and a Forgotten Sea Introduction: Birth	4-April	75
Part One: Estuaries, And the Lie of the Land and Sea: Aborigines and Colonizing Europeans	Chapter One: Mounds		
	Chapter Two: El Golfo de Mexico		
	Chapter Three: Unnecessary Death		
	Chapter Four: A Most Important River, and a “Magnificent” Bay		
Part Two: Sea and Sky: American Debuts in the 19th Century	Chapter Five: Manifest Destiny	17-April	87
	Chapter Six: A Fishy Sea		
	Chapter Seven: The Wild Fish that Tame the Coast		
	Chapter Eight: Birds of a Feather, Shot Together		
Part Three: Preludes to the Future	Chapter Nine: From Bayside to Beachside	1-May	112
	Chapter Ten: Oil and the Texas Toe Dip		
	Chapter Eleven: Oil and the Louisiana Plunge		
	Chapter Twelve: Islands, Shifting Sands of Time		
	Chapter Thirteen: Wind and Water		
Part Four: Saturation and Loss: Post-1945	Chapter Fourteen: The Growth Coast	16-May	134
	Chapter Fifteen: Florida Worry, Texas Slurry		
	Chapter Sixteen: Rivers of Stuff		
	Chapter Seventeen: Runoff, and Runaway		
	Chapter Eighteen: Sand in the Hourglass		
	Chapter Nineteen: Losing the Edge		
	Epilogue: A Success Story Amid So Much Else		

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Prologue: History, Nature, and a Forgotten Sea

1. Winslow Homer's Homosassa painting, [Shell Heap](#) (pictured at right) conveys what the author feels is an intimate and vital connection. How does this painting differ from how people of Homer's time viewed the ocean?
2. Mississippi artist Walter Anderson once asked, "Why does man live?" What was his answer and how has that tied to the history and importance of the Gulf?



Introduction: Birth

1. What is a "gulf"? What are the comparisons between the Gulf of Mexico and the Mediterranean?
2. Why did Rachel Carson refer to the Gulf Stream as an "indigo flood"?

Part One: Estuaries, and the Lie of the Land and Sea: Aborigines and Colonizing Europeans

Chapter One: Mounds

1. What are some of the requirements of an estuarine region and how do these requirements play a role in the importance of the American Sea?
2. What happened to the wooden artifacts unearthed from the mounds when they came into contact with air?
3. Describe and discuss the lives of the native Calusa.

Chapter Two: El Golfo de Mexico

1. Why did Ponce de Leon name what he thought was an island "La Florida"? What do residents of Florida often describe as the reason for the name?
2. What are some of the important discoveries made by the Gulf's first cartographer Alvarez de Pineda?

Chapter Three: Unnecessary Death

1. How did the indigenous peoples of the coast know about the Spanish before the Spanish knew about them?
2. What is meant by "Estuaries are the bustling centers of oceans—cities that never sleep"? How could an understanding of this have changed the fate of many early explorers of the Gulf?
3. Why was the Texas coast a place that Europeans feared being shipwrecked for centuries?

Chapter 4: A Most Important River, and a "Magnificent" Bay

1. What mistake did La Salle make on his first trip down the Mississippi River? How did he convince the Crown to support the expedition via the sea?
2. How did modern day southern staples of sweet potatoes and watermelons make their way to the Gulf? What other crops utilized in Southern cuisine were originally farmed by the indigenous inhabitants of the area?