

AT HOME ON AN UNRULY PLANET

FINDING REFUGE ON A CHANGED EARTH



"Marvelous."
—BILL McKIBBEN

BOOK
CLUB KIT

MADELINE OSTRANDER



Climate Change, Sustainability, and Environmental Justice

- In the prologue to *At Home on an Unruly Planet*, Ostrander asks, “How do you write a story about this era of disaster that doesn’t end in tragedy?” What is your answer to this question?
- In several parts of the book—such as Chapters 3, 7, and 12—we confront the aftermath of acute disasters. How are you impacted by the images Ostrander offers of damage from hurricanes, wildfires, or the industrial accident in Richmond? Do these descriptions stir you to respond in a different way to climate change?
- Have you experienced *solastalgia* (the homesickness of climate change described in Chapter 2) or climate anxiety? How have you handled those feelings? Have you experienced *soliphilia*, the sense of joy or unity that may come from community-driven environmental efforts (Chapter 8, p. 175)? Is there power in naming and sharing those feelings, as Ostrander suggests?
- Consider the following quote from Chapter 10 (page 211): “What if more of us stepped forward to defend the space above us, the ground beneath us? What if we took charge everywhere, to create new rules, to draw boundaries around the places we care about and insist together that they cannot be crossed?” What might that mean in practice in your own community?
- Consider the discussion of the history and meaning of identity politics in Chapter 12 (page 249). To what extent do our efforts to combat and/or minimize the effects of climate change rely on identity politics? How are communities with diverse identities (race, gender, sexuality, body type, disability, citizenship, socioeconomic status, etc.) impacted differently by the climate crisis? How should our response to systemic injustice shape our climate actions and vice versa?

Writing

- Ostrander chooses “home” as an organizing metaphor for this book. How does such a personal metaphor (which can mean both a physical dwelling and an emotional and cultural concept) shape the discussion of climate change throughout?

- Throughout the book, Ostrander introduces specific characters (such as Susan Prichard, Johannes Hofer, Richard Potts, and Elinor Ostrom) to reflect on scientific and environmental concepts. How do these characters affect your understanding of the role of science in our society's response to climate change?
- How do the settings in *At Home on an Unruly Planet* inform the narrative about climate change and the protection of home? Consider descriptions of home in the book, such as Jenny Wolfe's home (pages 53 to 55), Lisa Charles's house (pages 102 to 106), or Doria Robinson's house (pages 124 to 125). What details does Ostrander choose to depict these places, and how do they shape the story?
- How does Ostrander use narrative tension in the book to make the discussion of climate change more vivid and personal? How does the two-act, braided structure help create that tension?
- Ostrander writes, "So many stories about disaster close the curtain before you see what happens afterward." What are the challenges of writing a recovery narrative? As writers, how might we overcome those challenges?

Taking Action

- What are your most meaningful experiences of home and community? Are some of these experiences being affected by climate change? Who else shares these experiences? How might you find common cause, even with unlikely allies, to protect your home, your community, or places you care about?
- What potential preservation, restoration, and recovery quandaries might your community encounter following climate-related disasters? How might you research or participate in existing efforts to help your community plan for such impacts? Are there groups, networks, social gatherings, or neighborhood forums where you could start a conversation about climate-change response?
- In Richmond, California, Ostrander describes efforts to reimagine the local economy and begin severing the community's dependence on fossil-fuel-based industry, especially the oil refinery. What types of energy and industry exist in your community? How might decisions made about these industries influence your community, your region, perhaps even the rest of the country? How might your community create greener alternatives?

Some of these questions are adapted from the Green Reads Book Club of the Ecology Action Center in Normal, Illinois.