

Discussion Questions about Climate Proxies: "Reading the Past"

1. What does the word "proxy" mean in your more everyday experience?

2. Think about a more familiar climate proxy: tree rings. Why are there tree rings and how does this help us read past climates?

3. As Alley notes, think about how archeologists analyze "garbage" to read the history of human culture. What is the garbage of the earth's history that piles up and can be read back in time?

4. Where do we find the garbage? What makes for good or bad garbage for reading climate history?

5. How is the climate history read from the Greenland ice cores? What's hard about getting a reliable reading?

6. Think about one or two proxy methods more in depth.
 - a. How does isotopic dating work? How does it produce a temperature record?
 - b. How do ice borehole temps work? How does Alley use the pot roast analogy to help us understand this?

7. Your questions?