

HSB 41 Inventing New England
Week of February 28 (3rd section meeting)

These questions are designed to help you identify important themes in each week's readings. Be prepared to discuss them in your section meetings.

1. What is the relationship between historical artifacts and imaginative, poetic tales that spin out of them? Does Longfellow's "Skeleton in Armor," for example, lose its poetic power upon revelation that the Fall River skeleton was not a "Viking old" but rather a c. 1650 American Indian? Does Dinah Fenner's Indian basket become less interesting or less important if it was not hastily crafted by a starving Indian woman and given to English forces during King Philip's War?

2. What does it mean for historical objects to be "intercultural"? How does one reconcile the peaceable visions the term "intercultural" conjures up with the violence described in James Axtell's "The Vengeful Women of Marblehead"?

3. How and why do Indians "vanish"? What are the timetables of real and imagined vanishings?

4. In her article "Thankstaking," Jane Kamensky comments, "To ask whether [the Indians'] version is true is to ask the wrong question." What does she mean?

5. A recurring theme in this week's readings is *stories*—in poetic verse, family lore, national memory, and in historical artifacts themselves. How do stories shape individual, cultural, or national identities?