

Malcolm Margolin: The Ohlone Way  
Study Questions  
(pp. 1-144)

1. Describe the subsistence patterns of Ohlone hunting and gathering. What was the role of animals in the Ohlone subsistence economy?
2. What does Margolin mean when he describes the hunt as a “socially conscious exercise in self-restraint and discipline” (p. 35)?
3. Why was the acorn so significant for the Ohlone? Why did the Ohlone peoples not adopt more traditional (European) modes of settled agriculture? How did geography and ecology shape the dynamics of Ohlone culture and economy?
4. Over several centuries of peace and stability a diversity of cultures (nearly 40 triblets) developed amongst the Ohlone—why? How did each differ? What did they have in common?
5. How were the personal habits of the Ohlone conditioned by their migratory existence? How did the Spanish perceive the habits and culture of the Ohlone?
6. How did the Ohlone raise their children? How did the practices of the Ohlone compare to contemporary child-raising techniques? What values were passed on as Ohlone children made the passage from childhood to adolescence?
7. What roles did women play in Ohlone society? Did they enjoy sexual equality with men?
8. What were the marital and sexual practices of the Ohlone?
9. How was wealth measured in Ohlone society? Were the poor in Ohlone society as we understand the term today? What was the purpose and character of trade relations?
10. What were the rights and responsibilities of the chief? In what way were the powers of the chief limited?
11. Explain the spiritual world of the Ohlone. What was the relationship between the people and the animal gods? What was the role of dreams? Of Shamans? What was the relationship between present time and sacred time? What was the relationship between the spiritual and material worlds?
12. What was the Ohlone ‘way’ or the values and moral code implicit in the culture of the Ohlone (i.e. sharing, social moderation, and restraint, etc)? What are the strongest examples Margolin provides to illustrate these? (See postscript pp. 169-170.)

(pp. 157-170)

13. What was the intent of the Franciscans who established the missions? What were the results? Why?

