

Name: _____ Date: _____ # _____

Guns, Germs, and Steel: Study Guide

LO: I will demonstrate my understanding of Jared Diamond's theory presented in *Guns, Germs, & Steel*.

SLE: Apply organizational and study skills

Guns, Germs, and Steel Study Guide—Answer Key

What question was Jared Diamond trying to answer?

Diamond was trying to answer Yali's question: Why do you Americans have so much cargo (stuff) and we New Guineans have so little? Or to put it another way, why did people of Eurasian decent end up conquering much of the world instead of it being the other way around?

What is Jared Diamond's answer to this question?

Geographic luck. Having the most productive crops and animals allowed Europeans to develop guns, germs, and steel, and ultimately, to conquer the world.

How were people in the Fertile Crescent geographically lucky?

People in the Fertile Crescent were geographically lucky because they had nutritious crops like wheat and barley that were easy to farm and could be stored for long periods of time. They also had access to most of the animals that could be domesticated, including large animals they could use to do work. Finally, they lived on a wide continent where they could spread to the east and west to places with a similar climate, making it easier for them to spread their cultural knowledge.

How were the people of Papua New Guinea unlucky geographically?

Their food sources are not as nutritious and particularly lack protein. Their food sources also go bad quickly and cannot be stored. The crops they farm are more labor intensive and they didn't have access to any animals that could be domesticated.

List four large mammals that can be domesticated. Where did these animals originate? How did animals like this help people develop large, complex civilizations?

Cows, goats, sheep, and pigs. Horses lived nearby. Having access to these animals meant that the people had a steady food supply, both of meat and milk. They could use the animal hides and hair to make clothing. The larger animals could be used to do work like plowing and hauling things. The animals could also eat the stubble in the fields after harvest and their manure would act as fertilizer. This allowed people to specialize and create large, complex civilizations.

List two grains or cereal crops that enabled the development of civilization. Where did these crops originate?

Wheat and barley. The Fertile Crescent.

Why was it easier for cultural knowledge to diffuse east and west than north and south? How did this benefit Eurasians and act as a detriment to North and South Americans?

When traveling east and west people experienced a similar length of day and similar climates, so their crops and animals would continue to thrive. When traveling north or south the latitude changes and so does the climate. The same crops and animals won't thrive in different latitudes.

How did guns, germs, and steel allow a small band of conquistadors to conquer the mighty Inca Empire?

European diseases like smallpox had wiped out large numbers of Inca and sickened others. Seeing a new weapon like a gun for the first time would have been terrifying. The steel armor of the conquistadors protected them and their specialized swords called rapiers allowed them to slash and stab down at the Inca from their horses.

List two of the deadliest diseases in the world. What steps can be taken to prevent the spread of disease?

Malaria and smallpox. Smallpox can be guarded against through inoculation. Malaria was guarded against by living away from sources of open water that were breeding grounds for mosquitos. Also, living in small communities that were spread across large distances meant outbreaks were often contained.

How did germs help Eurasians conquer the rest of the world? Why did Eurasians have immunity to these diseases while people in other parts of the world did not?

Until they got to the tropics, diseases helped Eurasians conquer peoples in the Americas and in Africa. Eurasians had immunity to these diseases because they came from the farm animals Eurasians had domesticated. People in other parts of the world had never had access to the same animals, so they did have the opportunity to build up immunity to the diseases that came from those animals.

In addition to a lack of natural immunity, what caused the more rapid spread of disease in places like Africa after the arrival of Europeans?

Because European colonists in the late 1800's forced the native Africans out of their small villages and into cities and large, crowded communities to mine and ferry the continent's natural resources, they took the successful economic and social systems away from these people. By putting so many people together in areas where diseases like Malaria are easily spread, the native populations have lost the immunity they

once had to these diseases. This is caused, in part, by the strains of the disease mutating, causing drugs to be less effective. As a result, there are high numbers of people infected with and dying from diseases like Malaria. In addition, new diseases, such as HIV/AIDS are now also spread more easily because of so many people living in densely populated areas.