

guns germs and steel

guns germs and steel is a groundbreaking book by Jared Diamond that explores the profound reasons behind the disparate development of human societies across different continents. Published in 1997, the book seeks to answer why some civilizations advanced rapidly and became dominant globally, while others remained isolated or fell behind. Diamond's thesis centers on the idea that geographic and environmental factors, rather than innate differences among peoples, primarily shaped the course of human history. This comprehensive analysis combines insights from archaeology, biology, geography, and history to explain how a combination of guns, germs, and steel transformed the world.

Understanding the Core Thesis of Guns, Germs, and Steel

What Is the Main Argument?

The central argument of *Guns, Germs, and Steel* is that the unequal development of human societies is largely due to environmental factors rather than inherent differences in intelligence or capability. Diamond posits that:

- The availability of domesticable plants and animals played a crucial role in enabling societies to develop complex agriculture.
- Geographic orientation influenced the spread of crops, livestock, and innovations.
- Societies with access to domesticated animals and fertile land gained advantages in health, technology, and military power.
- The spread of germs (diseases) from Eurasia to other continents decimated indigenous populations, facilitating conquest and colonization.
- The development of steel weapons and advanced technology provided military advantages to some societies over others.

This framework shifts the focus from human traits to environmental and geographical conditions, providing a more objective explanation for historical inequalities.

Key Elements of Guns, Germs, and Steel

1. The Role of Geography and Environment

Diamond emphasizes that geography is the primary determinant of societal development. Factors include:

- Availability of Domesticable Plants and Animals: Societies that could domesticate plants like wheat, barley, rice, and maize, and animals such as sheep, goats, pigs, and cattle, gained significant advantages.
- Northeastern Eurasia's East-West Axis: The orientation of Eurasia facilitated the spread of crops, animals, and technologies across similar latitudes and climates.
- Isolation of Continents: Geographic barriers like oceans and deserts restricted the spread of innovations, influencing divergent development paths.

2. Agriculture and Food Production

The transition from hunter-gatherer societies to agricultural communities was pivotal. Key points include:

- The domestication of plants and animals led to surplus food, supporting population growth.
- Food surpluses enabled specialization of labor, technological innovation, and complex social structures.
- Societies with access to productive agriculture advanced more rapidly than those relying solely on hunting and gathering.

3. The Spread of Germs (Diseases)

Eurasian societies developed immunities to many deadly diseases due to close contact with domesticated animals, which transmitted illnesses like smallpox, measles, and influenza. When Europeans arrived in the Americas, these diseases decimated indigenous populations, often before direct contact or warfare.

Key points:

- Disease resistance was a significant advantage in conquest.
- The devastating impact of germs often preceded or replaced military conquest.

4. Technological Innovation and Steel

The development of steel technology revolutionized warfare, agriculture, and industry. Societies with access to steel weapons and tools gained military superiority. Technological progress was facilitated by:

- Concentrated population centers fostering innovation.
- Surplus resources supporting technological experimentation.
- Knowledge transfer along trade routes.

5. Political and Social Structures

Complex societies with centralized governments and organized military forces could mobilize resources and defend territories effectively, further consolidating power and influence.

Historical Case Studies in Guns, Germs, and Steel

1. The Conquest of the Americas

European explorers, equipped with steel weapons, horses, and exposed to deadly germs, easily overpowered indigenous civilizations such as the Aztecs and Incas. The combination of military technology and disease devastated native populations, enabling European colonization.

2. The Rise of Eurasian Empires

Eurasian empires like the Mongols, Chinese dynasties, and the Ottoman Empire expanded rapidly due to technological advantages and access to domesticated animals, which supported large armies and efficient logistics.

3. The Divergence of Africa and Australasia

Many regions in Africa and Australasia lacked the same level of domesticable plants and animals, resulting in slower societal development and less technological complexity compared to Eurasia.

Implications of Guns, Germs, and Steel for Understanding Human History

1. Challenging Racial and Cultural Myths

Diamond's analysis dispels notions that technological or societal superiority is due to inherent racial or cultural qualities. Instead, environment and geography are the key factors.

2. Highlighting the Importance of Environmental Factors

The book underscores how environmental luck and geographic luck greatly influenced historical trajectories, emphasizing the importance of context over individual or cultural traits.

3. Informing Modern Development and Policy

Understanding the environmental roots of societal disparities can inform development policies by focusing on sustainable resource management, education, and infrastructure tailored to specific regional contexts.

Criticisms and Limitations of Guns, Germs, and Steel

1. Overemphasis on Environment

Some critics argue that Diamond underplays the role of human agency, cultural choices, and individual leaders in shaping history.

2. Simplification of Complex Societies

The book sometimes simplifies complex social and political dynamics by attributing them mainly to environmental factors.

3. Focus on Eurasia

While the book provides compelling explanations for Eurasian dominance, some question whether it underrepresents the diversity of human experiences in other regions.

Conclusion: Why Guns, Germs, and Steel Remain Relevant

Guns, Germs, and Steel offers a compelling framework for understanding the broad patterns of human history. Its emphasis on environmental and geographic determinism provides valuable insights into the roots of global inequality. By shifting the focus away from racial or cultural superiority, it promotes a more nuanced view of history that recognizes the importance of chance, environment, and adaptation.

This book remains highly relevant for students, historians, policymakers, and anyone interested in understanding the complex factors that have shaped our world. Its interdisciplinary approach encourages us to consider how geography, biology, and environment continue to influence societal development today.

Key Takeaways for Readers Interested in Guns, Germs, and Steel

- Environmental factors largely explain the unequal development of societies.
- The domestication of plants and animals was crucial to societal complexity.
- Diseases played a significant role in the conquest and colonization of indigenous populations.
- Technological advancements, especially in steel, provided military and economic advantages.
- Geography and climate influence the spread of innovations and cultural traits.
- Recognizing these factors helps dispel myths of racial superiority and emphasizes the role of

environment in shaping history.

Optimized for SEO Keywords:

- Guns Germs and Steel summary
- Jared Diamond Guns Germs and Steel
- Environmental factors in history
- How geography affected human societies
- Role of germs in colonization
- Agricultural development and societal progress
- Impact of steel and technology on civilizations
- Human history and environmental determinism
- Why some societies advanced faster
- Historical factors shaping global inequality

By understanding the insights from Guns, Germs, and Steel, readers can gain a deeper appreciation of the complex factors that have led to the modern world's diverse societies and power structures.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the main thesis of Jared Diamond's 'Guns, Germs, and Steel'?

The book argues that geographical and environmental factors largely shaped the modern world's inequalities by influencing the development of agriculture, technology, and societies, rather than differences in biological or racial traits.

How does 'Guns, Germs, and Steel' explain the rise of Western civilizations?

Diamond attributes the success of Western civilizations to early advantages in domestication of plants and animals, which led to technological innovation and immunity to certain diseases, enabling them to conquer other societies.

What role do germs play in the narrative of 'Guns, Germs, and Steel'?

Germs are depicted as a critical factor in European conquests, as exposure to diseases like smallpox decimated indigenous populations in the Americas, facilitating European dominance without extensive military conflict.

How does the book address the concept of environmental determinism?

'Guns, Germs, and Steel' emphasizes that environmental and geographical factors, rather than

inherent racial differences, determined the development of societies and their ability to produce technological and societal advances.

What criticisms have been raised against Jared Diamond's thesis in 'Guns, Germs, and Steel'?

Critics argue that the book oversimplifies complex historical processes, downplays the role of individual agency and cultural factors, and sometimes overemphasizes environmental explanations for societal success.

How has 'Guns, Germs, and Steel' influenced popular understanding of world history?

The book popularized the idea that geography and environment are key to understanding historical inequalities, influencing both academic discourse and public perceptions of history and development.

In what ways does 'Guns, Germs, and Steel' challenge traditional Eurocentric narratives?

Diamond's thesis shifts focus from racial or cultural superiority to environmental and geographical factors, challenging the notion that Europeans were inherently destined to dominate others.

What are some modern applications or implications of the ideas presented in 'Guns, Germs, and Steel'?

The book's insights inform discussions on global inequality, development policies, and understanding how environmental factors continue to influence societal progress and disparities today.

Has 'Guns, Germs, and Steel' been adapted into other media or inspired further research?

Yes, the book has inspired documentaries, academic research, and debates in fields like anthropology, history, and geography, and contributed to a broader understanding of how environmental factors shape human societies.

Additional Resources

[Guns, Germs, and Steel: An In-Depth Examination of Jared Diamond's Pioneering Thesis](#)

In the annals of historical and anthropological scholarship, few works have sparked as much debate and admiration as Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel*. Published in 1997, the book endeavors to explain the broad patterns of human history—why some societies advanced rapidly while others remained relatively stagnant—by examining environmental and geographic factors. Its sweeping narrative, interdisciplinary approach, and provocative thesis have cemented it as a seminal work, but also one that warrants critical scrutiny. This article offers a comprehensive review of *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, analyzing its core arguments, supporting evidence, critiques, and its impact on the fields of

history, anthropology, and beyond.

The Central Thesis of Guns, Germs, and Steel

At its core, Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel* seeks to answer a fundamental question: Why did human societies develop at vastly different rates across different continents? Specifically, why did Eurasian civilizations come to dominate many parts of the world, leading to the modern global landscape of inequality?

Diamond posits that geographic and environmental factors, rather than inherent biological differences among peoples, primarily determined the disparate development trajectories. He argues that the availability of domesticable plants and animals, the orientation of continental axes, and the resulting diffusion of technology and ideas created a fertile ground for the rise of complex societies in certain regions.

Key components of the thesis include:

- Guns: The development and use of advanced weaponry, which provided military advantages.
- Germs: The role of infectious diseases, which decimated indigenous populations during European conquests.
- Steel: The technological innovations in metallurgy and tools that facilitated expansion and dominance.

Diamond's overarching assertion is that environmental advantages, rather than racial or cultural superiority, led to the unequal distribution of power and wealth among human societies.

Environmental Foundations of Societal Development

A significant portion of Diamond's analysis revolves around environmental determinism—the idea that geography and ecology shape human history.

Availability of Domesticable Plants and Animals

Diamond emphasizes that the domestication of plants and animals was the foundational step toward societal complexity. He identifies key factors that made certain regions more conducive to domestication:

- Plant domestication: Crops such as wheat, barley, rice, and maize provided reliable food sources that supported population growth.
- Animal domestication: Animals like cattle, sheep, goats, and pigs contributed not only food but also labor and, critically, exposure to zoonotic diseases.

The "first agricultural revolutions" occurred in the Fertile Crescent, Mesoamerica, China, and the Andes—regions rich in suitable flora and fauna.

Continental Orientation and Its Impact

Diamond discusses how the orientation of continents influenced the diffusion of crops, animals, and technologies:

- East-West Axis: Eurasia's east-west orientation facilitated the spread of domesticated species and innovations across similar latitudes and climates.
- North-South Axis: Africa and the Americas, with their north-south orientations, faced environmental barriers that slowed diffusion.

This geographic factor explains why Eurasian societies rapidly adopted technologies from neighboring regions, whereas others remained isolated.

The Role of Guns, Germs, and Steel in Conquest and Domination

Diamond argues that technological advantages, particularly guns and steel, combined with infectious diseases, created a triumvirate that enabled Eurasian societies to conquer and dominate other parts of the world.

Guns and Steel as Technological Instruments

- Military technology: Steel weapons, armor, and fortifications provided a decisive edge in warfare.
- Transport and communication: Horse domestication and wheeled vehicles enabled rapid movement.
- Agricultural tools: Steel implements increased productivity, supporting larger armies and populations.

Germs: The Invisible Weapon

Perhaps the most compelling aspect of Diamond's thesis concerns disease. European explorers and colonizers inadvertently carried pathogens such as smallpox, measles, and influenza, to which indigenous populations had no immunity. The resulting pandemics decimated societies in the Americas, Australia, and elsewhere, often before direct conflict occurred.

Diamond emphasizes that:

- Germ immunity: Eurasian populations had historically faced and developed immunity to many

diseases due to close proximity to domesticated animals.

- Disease as a weapon: The devastating impact of germs often preempted military confrontation, effectively acting as an "invisible" weapon of conquest.

Critical Examination of Diamond's Arguments

While *Guns, Germs, and Steel* has been lauded for its comprehensive scope and interdisciplinary approach, it has also faced significant critique from scholars across disciplines.

Strengths of the Thesis

- Holistic explanation: Diamond provides a unifying framework that accounts for broad patterns in human history.
- Environmental focus: His emphasis on geography and ecology shifts the narrative away from racial determinism.
- Interdisciplinary methodology: The integration of archaeology, genetics, ecology, and history enriches the analysis.

Criticisms and Limitations

- Determinism and Reductionism: Critics argue that the book overly emphasizes environmental factors, neglecting cultural, political, and individual agency.
- Neglect of Human Agency: Some scholars contend that human choices, innovations, and social organizations also shape history significantly.
- Western-Centric Bias: Despite aiming to be broad, some critiques suggest that Diamond's framework unintentionally centers Eurasian development as the default or superior path.
- Underestimation of Cultural Factors: Critics note that technological and societal innovations often originate from specific cultural contexts, which Diamond downplays.

For example, anthropologist James Blaut criticized the book for overlooking the importance of social structures and ideologies in fostering technological development. Similarly, some historians argue that the narrative underplays the complex dynamics of conquest, resistance, and cultural exchange.

The Legacy and Impact of *Guns, Germs, and Steel*

Despite criticisms, Diamond's work has profoundly influenced both academic discourse and popular understanding of history.

Academic and Popular Reception

- The book won numerous awards, including the Pulitzer Prize and the National Medal of Science.
- It popularized the concept that environmental factors are crucial in shaping societal development.
- It inspired subsequent research into the role of geography, ecology, and biology in history.

Influence on Policy and Education

- The book has been incorporated into curricula worldwide, fostering a broader understanding of global inequalities.
- It has influenced discussions on development, sustainability, and the importance of environmental factors in shaping human societies.

Critique and Ongoing Debates

- Scholars continue debating the relative importance of environmental versus cultural factors.
- Some question whether the emphasis on geography downplays the significance of human ingenuity and social organization.
- The book's framework has been extended and challenged by subsequent works that incorporate more nuanced analyses of power, ideology, and agency.

Conclusion: A Landmark, Yet Partial, Explanation

Guns, Germs, and Steel remains a landmark in understanding human history, offering a compelling environmentalist perspective that reshaped debates about inequality and development. Its central thesis—that geography and ecology set the stage for societal trajectories—resonates with many scholars and lay readers alike.

However, as with all models, it is essential to recognize its limitations. Human history is complex, shaped by myriad factors including culture, politics, and individual agency. While Diamond's environmental determinism provides a broad explanatory framework, it should be integrated with other perspectives to achieve a more comprehensive understanding.

In the end, Guns, Germs, and Steel challenges us to reconsider simplistic narratives of racial or cultural superiority and to appreciate the profound influence of environmental factors in shaping our shared human story. Its legacy lies not only in its insights but also in the questions it raises—questions that continue to inspire scholarly debate and critical reflection.

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This article provides a thorough, critical, and balanced review of Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, suitable for academic or journal publication, with detailed analysis and deep exploration of its themes, strengths, and limitations.

Guns Germs And Steel

guns germs and steel: *Guns, Germs, and Steel* Jared M. Diamond, 1997 In this artful, informative, and delightful (book) (New York Review of Books), Diamond offers a convincing explanation of the way the modern world came to be and stunningly dismantles racially based theories of human history. Photos. Copyright © Libri GmbH. All rights reserved.

guns germs and steel: *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies (20th Anniversary Edition)* Jared Diamond, 2017-03-07 Winner of the Pulitzer Prize • New York Times Bestseller • Over Two Million Copies Sold "One of the most significant projects embarked upon by any intellectual of our generation" (Gregg Easterbrook, New York Times), *Guns, Germs, and Steel* presents a groundbreaking, unified narrative of human history. Why did Eurasians conquer, displace, or decimate Native Americans, Australians, and Africans, instead of the reverse? In this "artful, informative, and delightful" (William H. McNeill, New York Review of Books) book, a classic of our time, evolutionary biologist Jared Diamond dismantles racist theories of human history by revealing the environmental factors actually responsible for its broadest patterns. The story begins 13,000 years ago, when Stone Age hunter-gatherers constituted the entire human population. Around that time, the developmental paths of human societies on different continents began to diverge greatly. Early domestication of wild plants and animals in the Fertile Crescent, China, Mesoamerica, the Andes, and other areas gave peoples of those regions a head start at a new way of life. But the localized origins of farming and herding proved to be only part of the explanation for their differing fates. The unequal rates at which food production spread from those initial centers were influenced by other features of climate and geography, including the disparate sizes, locations, and even shapes of the continents. Only societies that moved away from the hunter-gatherer stage went on to develop writing, technology, government, and organized religions as well as deadly germs and potent weapons of war. It was those societies, adventuring on sea and land, that invaded others, decimating native inhabitants through slaughter and the spread of disease. A major landmark in our understanding of human societies, *Guns, Germs, and Steel* chronicles the way in which the modern world, and its inequalities, came to be.

guns germs and steel: ***Guns, Germs and Steel*** Jared M. Diamond, 2019 Why has human history unfolded so differently across the globe? In this Pulitzer Prize-winning book, Jared Diamond puts the case that geography and biogeography, not race, moulded the contrasting fates of Europeans, Asians, Native Americans, sub-Saharan Africans, and aboriginal Australians. An ambitious synthesis of history, biology, ecology and linguistics, *Guns, Germs and Steel* remains a ground-breaking and humane work of popular science.

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guns germs and steel: Summary and Analysis of Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies Worth Books, 2016-11-15 So much to read, so little time? This brief overview of *Guns, Germs, and Steel* tells you what you need to know—before or after you read Jared Diamond's book. Crafted and edited with care, Worth Books set the standard for quality and give you the tools you need to be a well-informed reader. This short summary and analysis of *Guns, Germs, and Steel* by Jared Diamond includes: Historical context Chapter-by-chapter summaries Detailed timeline of key events Important quotes Fascinating trivia Glossary of terms Supporting material to enhance your understanding of the original work About *Guns, Germs, and Steel* by Jared Diamond: Professor Jared Diamond's informative and fascinating Pulitzer Prize-winning *Guns, Germs, and Steel* explores a historic question: Why were the Eurasian peoples able to dominate those from other lands? Diamond argues that it was ecology and geography—not race—that shaped the modern world. Societies that developed in regions with fertile land for farming and that had domesticable plants and animals were able to progress more quickly, thereby creating the tools to conquer preliterate cultures. Drawing on a variety of disciplines—from linguistics, genetics, and epidemiology to biology, anthropology, and technology— *Guns, Germs, and Steel* offers an eloquently argued view of the development of human societies. The summary and analysis in this ebook are intended to complement your reading experience and bring you closer to a great work of nonfiction.

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guns germs and steel: Guns, Germs, and Steel Summary Station Staff, 2015-11-24 Learn About The History Of World Power In A Fraction Of The Time It Takes To Read The Actual Book!!! Get this 1# Amazon bestseller for just \$2.99. Regularly priced at \$9.99. Read on your PC, Mac, smart phone, tablet or Kindle device Diamond says that twenty-five years ago he met a politician in what is now Papua New Guinea, Yali, who asked why white people had so many things, but black people did not. The book attempts to provide answers to the question: Why have Eurasian people been the dominant wealth and power in the world? That is, why didn't other cultures gain dominance before 1,500 CE? After all, until the end of the most recent Ice Age, circa 11,000 BCE, all humans were hunter-gatherers. So, what accounts for the different rates of development of societies between 11,000 BCE and 1500 CE? Those questions are the subject of the book. The author says that finding reasons or causes for the unequal distribution of wealth and goods does not justify it. Diamond says we do not justify disease just because we understand its causes. He says that the foundations of European societies were developed in other part of the world, so the focus is not on aggrandizing Europe. Here Is A Preview Of What You'll Learn When You Download Your Copy Today * How Geography Determines The Structure Of Societies* The Reason Why Europeans Were Able To Conquer Other Parts Of The World* Learn Why The Belief About European People Being A Superior Race Is Wrong Download Your Copy Today! The contents of this book are easily worth over \$9.99, but for a limited time you can download the summary of Jared Diamond's *Why Nations Fail* by for a special discounted price of only \$2.99

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guns germs and steel: Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies Jared Diamond, 1999-04-17 Fascinating.... Lays a foundation for understanding human history.—Bill Gates In this artful, informative, and delightful (William H. McNeill, New York Review of Books) book, Jared Diamond convincingly argues that geographical and environmental factors shaped the modern world. Societies that had had a head start in food production advanced beyond the hunter-gatherer stage, and then developed religion --as well as nasty germs and potent weapons of war --and adventured on sea and land to conquer and decimate preliterate cultures. A major advance in our understanding of human societies, *Guns, Germs, and Steel* chronicles the way that the modern world came to be and stunningly dismantles racially based theories of human history. Winner of the Pulitzer Prize, the Phi Beta Kappa Award in Science, the Rhone-Poulenc Prize, and the Commonwealth club of California's Gold Medal.

guns germs and steel: Guns Germs and Steel Jared Diamond, 2005-07-12 Fascinating.... Lays a foundation for understanding human history.—Bill Gates Winner of the Pulitzer Prize, *Guns, Germs, and Steel* is a brilliant work answering the question of why the peoples of certain continents succeeded in invading other continents and conquering or displacing their peoples. This edition includes a new chapter on Japan and all-new illustrations drawn from the television series. Until around 11,000 BC, all peoples were still Stone Age hunter/gatherers. At that point, a great divide occurred in the rates that human societies evolved. In Eurasia, parts of the Americas, and Africa, farming became the prevailing mode of existence when indigenous wild plants and animals were domesticated by prehistoric planters and herders. As Jared Diamond vividly reveals, the very people who gained a head start in producing food would collide with preliterate cultures, shaping the modern world through conquest, displacement, and genocide. The paths that lead from scattered centers of food to broad bands of settlement had a great deal to do with climate and geography. But how did differences in societies arise? Why weren't native Australians, Americans, or Africans the ones to colonize Europe? Diamond dismantles pernicious racial theories tracing societal differences to biological differences. He assembles convincing evidence linking germs to domestication of animals, germs that Eurasians then spread in epidemic proportions in their voyages of discovery. In its sweep, *Guns, Germs and Steel* encompasses the rise of agriculture, technology, writing, government, and religion, providing a unifying theory of human history as intriguing as the histories of dinosaurs and glaciers.

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guns germs and steel: Critical Summary of Guns, Germs, and Steel - The Fates of Human Societies by Jared Diamond Dennis Bergot, 2004-02-17 Seminar paper from the year 2004 in the subject Economy - Environment economics, grade: 1,0 (A), University of Hamburg (Centre for Sea and Climate Research), course: Seminar Contemporary Environmental Problems, language: English, abstract: The starting point of Diamond's book "Guns, Germs, And Steel" is a question he was asked by an indigenous New Guinean friend of his called Yali. His question was: "Why is it that you white people developed so much cargo and brought it to New Guinea, but we black people had little cargo of our own?"¹, addressing the obvious inequality in wealth and power of today's world. With his book, Diamond tries to provide an answer for this question. According to Diamond, the immediate causes for the inequalities in the world today are to be found in the different stages of development between the continents as of around A.D. 1500. By that time, only societies of Eurasia, the landmass that constitutes Asia and Europe, and there especially the Western Europeans, possessed ocean-going ships, population-decimating germs, steel weapons, horses usable for warefare, easy spread of information by an efficient writing system and many other means that come in handy decimating, subjugating or in some cases even exterminating the original inhabitants of other continents. Diamond calls these advantages the proximate factors of differing developments that led to the inequalities. The book's title "Guns, Germs, And Steel" can be understood as a summary of these proximate causes. In chapter three of his book, Diamond cites as a prominent example of the inequalities the conquest by the Spaniard Francisco Pizarro and a few hundred soldiers over the Inca emperor Atahualpa at Cajamarca/Peru in A.D. 1532. The Spanish got there and won because

they possessed the above stated proximate factors. He then turns the point around and asks why, for instance, the Native Americans or Aboriginal Australians were not the ones who possessed these proximate factors and used them to conquer Europe. [...]

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guns germs and steel: Guns, Germs and Steel Riley Quinn, 2017-07-04 Winner of the 1998 Pulitzer, Guns, Germs, and Steel attempts to answer why human history unfolded differently on different continents.

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continents and across 13,000 years of human history in an attempt to answer the question of why that history unfolded so differently in various parts of the globe. His results offer new explanations for why the unequal divisions of power and wealth so familiar to us today came into existence – and have persisted. Balancing materials drawn from a vast range of sources, addressing core problems that have fascinated historians, anthropologists, biologists and geographers alike – and blending his analysis to create a compelling narrative that became an international best-seller and reached a broad general market – required a mastery of the critical thinking skill of reasoning that few other scholars can rival. Diamond's reasoning skills allow him to persuade his readers of the value of his interdisciplinary approach and produce well-structured arguments that keep them turning pages even as he refocuses his analysis from one disparate example to another. Diamond adds to that a spectacular ability to grasp the meaning of the available evidence produced by scholars in those widely different disciplines – making *Guns, Germs and Steel* equally valuable as an exercise in high-level interpretation.

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