

# **Guns, Germs, And Steel Book Summary, by Jared Diamond Ph.D.**

by Allen Cheng

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## **Video Summaries of Guns, Germs, And Steel**

We've scoured the Internet for the very best videos on Guns, Germs, And Steel, from high-quality videos summaries to interviews or commentary by Jared Diamond Ph.D.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YM1IUXBepIE>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eA-7ypI2-KU>

## **1-Page Summary of Guns, Germs, And Steel**

### **Overall Summary**

In Guns, Germs, and Steel, Jared Diamond examines the idea that differences between societies are due to geographical reasons. The book is framed as a response to Yali's question about why European society has been so successful compared with other societies.

The book begins by discussing the differences between civilizations. It also talks about how civilization started and why there are so many differences in them today. For example, let's take a look at the Inca Empire and Spain during the 15th century. The Spanish were able to conquer the Incas because they had guns while the Incas didn't have any weapons at all for protection.

In Part Two, Diamond talks about how agriculture started and why it arose in certain parts of the world but not others. Using carbon-dating technology, archaeologists have determined that the first sites of agriculture were Mesopotamia (in the Middle East), followed by Mesoamerica and China. Agriculture arose in those areas for a few reasons. Most people at the time lived as hunter-gatherers, meaning they hunted game and picked nuts and berries for food. But in the parts of the world that first developed agriculture, game was becoming scarcer due to overhunting or because climate change made fruit less plentiful; therefore these early peoples had to experiment with new forms of food production. In Mesopotamia, ancient humans used trial and error to learn how to plant certain large seeds in the earth

resulting in crops that could be harvested and converted into highly nutritious foods like corn (maize). These early peoples also learned how to domesticate wild animals such as dogs, cows, buffalo etc., breeding familiar modern animals from them; they used their domesticated animals to assist with agricultural work while also learning how to domesticate certain wild crops like wheat (from which we get bread) through selective breeding—breeding plants together until desirable traits are passed on from one generation of plants onto another generation—producing most of our familiar modern crops today such as rice ("Oryza") barley ("Hordeum"), peas ("Pisum"), flax ("Linum usitatissimum"), sorghum ("Sorghum bicolor", "Sorghum vulgare") etc.).

Agriculture arose in Mesoamerica and China. However, due to environmental factors like soil fertility and the availability of domesticable animals, agriculture took longer to be adopted by people living in other areas. Once it had arisen around the world, however, agricultural innovations spread from east to west much faster than they spread north to south—this is because the Earth spins on an east-west axis, meaning that areas with similar latitudes have a similar climate and environment. Archaeological data indicates that these innovations diffused from east to west sooner than they diffused north or south.

In Part Three, Diamond explains how differences between early agricultural societies grew over time. Agricultural societies had domesticated animals and were constantly in close proximity to them. As a result of this, they were exposed to germs that caused diseases like smallpox more often than hunter-gatherer societies were; those who didn't have immunity died off while the ones who did lived on and passed their immunities down to their offspring.

Another important development in the history of agricultural societies was the invention of written language. While it's hard to say exactly why writing emerged, we know that agriculture society requires a lot of record keeping and crops require lots of attention. Therefore, people needed a way to communicate with one another. Furthermore, east-west diffusion ensured that once one society developed language, it diffused into surrounding areas because they were similar in latitude and climate.

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