

## Guns, Germs, and Steel: “Geographic Luck” Big Ideas

**Part I:**

**BIG IDEAS CHART.** Summarize each of the following quotations in your own words, boiling it down to **ONE** easy-to-understand sentence. Read them in order for an overview of this episode of *Guns, Germs, and Steel*.

**USEFUL VOCABULARY**

- Cultivation – in farming, the act of selecting plants that are the strongest, biggest, and provide the most nutrition, for seeds for next year’s planting; over time, this leads to increasingly bountiful harvests, and changes in the very characteristics of the plants themselves
- Domestication –the act of taming and breeding animals for farming purposes
- Ingenuity – the quality of being clever, original, and inventive

Quote from the film	Your summary of the quote, in your own words
“Why you white men have so much cargo, and we New Guineans have so little?”	
“Farming was clearly crucial to the story of human inequality, but just as important was the type of farming. People around the world who had access to the most productive crops became the most productive farmers. Ultimately, it came down to geographic luck.”	
“Pigs don’t give you milk, or wool, or leather or hides, and most important of all, pigs can’t be used for muscle power – pigs don’t pull plows or pull carts. The only muscle power in New Guinea was human muscle power.”	
“As villages grew bigger, there were more people to work on the land. More people could produce more food more efficiently – enough to support specialists within the community....To have metalworking specialists who can figure out how to smelt [make] copper and iron, requires that the rest of the people in the society be able to generate enough food surpluses to feed them.”	

<p>“But New Guinea agriculture was not productive enough to generate those food surpluses, and the result was no specialists, no metalworkers, and no metal tools.”</p>	
<p>“My years in New Guinea have convinced me that people around the world are fundamentally similar. Wherever you go, you can find people who are smart, resourceful, and dynamic.... Of course there are huge cultural differences, but they’re mainly the <i>result</i> of inequality, not its <i>root cause</i>. Ultimately, what’s far more important is the hand that people have been dealt.”</p>	
<p>“There are some who think Jared Diamond’s argument is too neat and easy. Can wealth and power really be reduced to cattle and wheat? What about culture, politics and religion? Surely they’ve been just as important?”</p>	

**Part II: COMPLETE THIS ON A SEPARATE SHEET OF PAPER**

**TESTING DIAMOND’S CLAIMS.** How credible/reliable do you find Diamond’s argument? Create a chart or explain your thinking in complete sentences. Answer on a separate sheet of paper and address the following:

- What does your **intuition** tell you? Is his argument **logical**? Why or why not? (Provide one piece of SPECIFIC historical evidence to support your idea)
- Does he provide **evidence** for his argument? Cite two (2) pieces of SPECIFIC evidence he gives and discuss whether or not this evidence is convincing? (Consider Diamond’s **reliability** as a Pulitzer Prize-winning author, and being called “the world’s best geographer” by *The Economist* magazine in 2007)