

Marshall, Tim. *Prisoners of Geography: Ten Maps That Explain Everything About the World*. New York: Scribner Book Company, 2016. ISBN: 1501121472

*Prisoners of Geography: Ten Maps That Explain Everything About the World*, by Tim Marshall, is a *New York Times* bestseller that describes how geography - mountains, plains, rivers, coastlines, climate, and natural resources - shape the fate of nations. Each chapter explains geography's effects on a particular country or region. It also considers how other influences - religion, culture, language, ethnicity - interact with local geography.

The work includes an exploration of the North European Plain, which opens a path from western Europe directly into Russia, and how it has contributed to the Russians' desire to control a buffer zone of countries between it and the rest of the world. There is also a look at the defining borders of China, including the Tibetan Plateau, the Himalayas, jungles, deserts, and the Pacific Ocean. Looking to the United States, its splendid isolation between two oceans, excellent river system, and productive agriculture have contributed to its generally stable growth as a nation with a common language and heritage. By contrast, in resource-rich Western Europe, the main rivers do not connect and mountain ranges divide regions, resulting in the emergence of separate nation-states with different languages and a propensity for war.

The remainder of the insightful work considers how geographical challenges, from the Sahara Desert in the north, to the dense tropical jungles of the midsection, to the arid and mountainous south, have stymied Africa's development, and how in the Middle East, where mountains alternate with deserts, geographical borders push enemies together. Later chapters deal with contentious regions like India/Pakistan, Japan/Korea and their recent histories of war and reconstruction. And lastly, Latin America's geographic and political challenges are explored, including bureaucratic neglect of the Amazon rainforest and a lack of arable land to feed a growing population.

For this assignment, students will take a test within the first 2 weeks of school after class discussions focus on certain themes, topics and trends.

