

# 12.3.1 Lesson 2

## Introduction

In this lesson, students continue to read and analyze pages 17-21 of *Guns, Germs, and Steel* (from “Before seeking answers to Yali’s question, we should pause” to “despite what I believe to be their superior intelligence”). In this excerpt, Diamond continues to explain his ideas concerning disparities of wealth and power in relation to human development by exposing flaws in commonly held explanations for the economic and social contrasts between various nations and groups. Students pay particular attention to the way in which the author establishes his reasoning for why Yali’s question should be investigated. Student learning is assessed via a Quick Write at the end of the lesson: How does Diamond demonstrate the validity of researching Yali’s question in this excerpt? Additionally, students begin the research process by learning how to use the text to surface possible issues for research.

For homework, students read and annotate pages 21-25 of *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, boxing unfamiliar words and looking up their definitions. Additionally, students continue to surface issues related to the text and come to the next lesson prepared to share 2-3 additional issues.

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## Standards

Assessed Standard(s)	
RI.11-12.3	Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.
Addressed Standard(s)	
W.11-12.9.b	<p>Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.</p> <p><b>b.</b> Apply <i>grades 11-12 Reading standards</i> to literary nonfiction (e.g., “Delineate and evaluate the reasoning in seminal U.S. texts, including the application of constitutional principles and use of legal reasoning [e.g., in U.S. Supreme Court Case majority opinions and dissents] and the premises, purposes, and arguments in works of public advocacy [e.g., <i>The Federalist</i>, presidential addresses]”).</p>
L. 11-12.4.a,c	<p>Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on <i>grades 11-12 reading and content</i>, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.</p> <p><b>a.</b> Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence, paragraph, or text; a word’s position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.</p> <p><b>c.</b> Consult general and specialized reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning, its part of speech, its etymology, or its standard usage.</p>

## Assessment

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**Assessment(s)**

Student learning is assessed via a Quick Write at the end of the lesson. Students respond to the following prompt, citing textual evidence to support analysis and inferences drawn from the text:

- How does Diamond demonstrate the validity of researching Yali's question in this excerpt?

**High Performance Response(s)**

A High Performance Response should:

- Explain how Diamond demonstrates the validity of researching Yali's question in this excerpt (e.g., In this excerpt, Diamond explains several reasons why researching "Yali's question" (p. 17) is valid. First, Diamond counters three common "objections" (p. 17) to investigating "Yali's question" (p. 18). In doing so, he shows that he seeks to "interrupt the chain" (p. 17) that causes groups of people to dominate each other, that his research is not "Eurocentric" (p. 17), and that he does not view "civilize[d]" (p. 18) cultures to be superior to "hunter-gatherer" cultures (p. 18). Diamond then contradicts a typical answer to Yali's question with a discussion of the "commonest explanation" (p. 18) that incorrectly presumes "genetic differences" (p. 20) in "intelligence" (p. 19). Diamond roots his opposition to this explanation in facts, such as "[s]ound evidence for the existence of human differences in intelligence that parallel human differences in technology is lacking" (p. 19) and "tests of cognitive ability ... have not succeeded in convincingly establishing the postulated genetic deficiency in IQs of nonwhite peoples" (p. 20). Diamond's various ideas about why objections to answering Yali's question are unnecessary and why a typical answer to Yali's question is incorrect work together to demonstrate the validity of Diamond's research into Yali's question.).

## Vocabulary

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**Vocabulary to provide directly (will not include extended instruction)**

- perpetuate (v.) - to cause to continue
- ephemeral (adj.) - lasting a very short time; short-lived
- vestiges (n.) - marks, traces, or visible evidence of something that is no longer present or in existence
- repudiate (v.) - to reject with disapproval or condemnation
- loathsome (adj.) - disgusting, revolting, repulsive
- postulated (v.) - assumed without proof, or as self-evident; taken for granted
- conversely (adv.) - in a contrary or opposite way; on the other hand
- mortality (n.) - the frequency of deaths that occur in a particular time or place
- procuring (v.) - getting (something) by some action or effort

**Vocabulary to teach (may include direct word work and/or questions)**

- innate (adj.) - existing in one from birth; inborn; native

**Additional vocabulary to support English Language Learners (to provide directly)**

- futile (adj.) - having no result of effect; pointless or useless
- prominence (n.) - the state of being important, well-known, or noticeable
- phenomenon (n.) - something (such as an interesting fact or event) that can be observed and studied and that typically is unusual or difficult to understand or explain fully
- genetic (adj.) - of, relating to, or involving genes
- subconsciously (adv.) - existing in the part of the mind that a person is not aware of
- hypothesis (n.) - an idea or theory that is not proven but that leads to further study or discussion
- discern (v.) - to come to know, recognize, or understand (something)
- intact (adj.) - not broken or damaged; having every part
- densely (adv.) - being crowded with people
- chronic (adj.) - happening or existing frequently or most of the time
- passively (adv.) - not participating readily or actively; inactive
- irreversible (adj.) - impossible to change back to a previous condition or state
- stunting (v.) - stopping (someone or something) from growing or developing
- turned on its head (idiom) - turned something upside down or reversed it

## Lesson Agenda/Overview

Student-Facing Agenda	% of Lesson
<b>Standards &amp; Text:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Standards: RI.11-12.3, W.11-12.9.b, L.11-12.4.a,c</li> <li>Text: <i>Guns, Germs, and Steel</i> by Jared Diamond, pages 17-21</li> </ul>	
<b>Learning Sequence:</b>	
1. Introduction of Lesson Agenda	1. 5%
2. Homework Accountability	2. 10%
3. Reading and Discussion	3. 50%
4. Quick Write	4. 10%
5. Surfacing Issues	5. 20%
6. Closing	6. 5%

## Materials

- Student copies of the Short Response Rubric and Checklist (refer 12.3.1 Lesson 1) (optional)
- Copies of the Surfacing Issues Tool for each student (optional)

## Learning Sequence

How to Use the Learning Sequence	
Symbol	Type of Text & Interpretation of the Symbol
10%	Percentage indicates the percentage of lesson time each activity should take.
no symbol	Plain text indicates teacher action.
	<b>Bold text indicates questions for the teacher to ask students.</b>
	<i>Italicized text indicates a vocabulary word.</i>
►	Indicates student action(s).
☞	Indicates possible student response(s) to teacher questions.
❗	Indicates instructional notes for the teacher.

### Activity 1: Introduction of Lesson Agenda

5%

Begin by reviewing the agenda and the assessed standard for this lesson: RI.11-12.3. In this lesson, students read pages 17-21 of *Guns, Germs, and Steel* and analyze the way in which Diamond demonstrates the validity of his research. Students also begin the research process by surfacing potential research issues after their reading and discussion of the text.

- Students look at the agenda.

### Activity 2: Homework Accountability

10%

Instruct students to take out their responses to the previous lesson's homework assignment. (Read and annotate pages 17-21 of *Guns, Germs, and Steel* (from “Before seeking answers to Yali’s question, we should pause” to “despite what I believe to be their superior intelligence”) (W.11-12.9.b).) Instruct students to form pairs to discuss their responses.

- Student annotations may include:
  - Numbers 1-3 in the margin by the author’s “reasons” for “posing ... the question” (p. 17), because he explains a sequence of ideas. A “1” beside “One objection goes as follows” (p. 17); a “2” beside “Second, doesn’t addressing Yali’s

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question automatically involve” (p. 17); and a “3” beside “Third, don’t words such as ‘civilization,’ and phrases such as ‘rise of civilization’” (p. 18).

- An exclamation point near the sentence “Yet many (perhaps most!) Westerners continue to accept racist explanations privately or subconsciously” (p. 18), because it is surprising to hear Diamond say that most people accept racist explanations for the differences among societies.
  - A star next to the sentence “Sound evidence for the existence of human differences in intelligence that parallel human differences in technology is lacking” (p. 19), because it is important to note that there is no basis for people’s racist explanations.
  - A question mark beside the paragraph that begins “Intelligent people are likelier than less intelligent ones to escape” and ends “where natural selection for body chemistry was instead more potent” (pp. 20-21), because the author’s reasoning here seems questionable. How does he know that smart people are less likely to be murdered, but just as likely to die from disease?
- Consider explaining to students that they should use the new annotation code of numbering in the margin to denote a sequence of ideas in the text.

Instruct student pairs to share and discuss the vocabulary words they identified and defined in the previous lesson’s homework (L.11-12.4.c).

- Students may identify the following words: *perpetuate*, *ephemeral*, *vestiges*, *repudiate*, *loathsome*, *postulated*, *conversely*, *mortality*, and *procuring*.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Students may also identify the following words: *futile*, *prominence*, *phenomenon*, *genetic*, *subconsciously*, *hypothesis*, *discern*, *intact*, *densely*, *chronic*, *passively*, *irreversible*, *stunting*, and *turned on its head*.
- Definitions are provided in the Vocabulary box in this lesson.

### Activity 3: Reading and Discussion

50%

Instruct students to stay in their pairs from the previous activity. Post or project each set of questions below for students to discuss. Instruct students to continue to annotate the text as they read and discuss (W.11-12.9.b).

- If necessary to support comprehension and fluency, consider using a masterful reading of the focus excerpt for the lesson.

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- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider posting or projecting the following guiding question to support students in their reading throughout this lesson:

**In this excerpt, what reasons does Diamond identify that demonstrate the need for his research?**

Instruct student pairs to read pages 17-18 of *Guns, Germs, and Steel* (from “Before seeking answers to Yali’s question, we should pause” to “simply to understand what happened in history”) and answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing the following terms to students: “Darwinian theory” (p. 18) is the theory of the origin of animal and plant species by evolution through a process of natural selection, and “natural selection” (p. 18) is the process by which forms of life having traits that better enable them to adapt to specific environmental pressures, as predators, changes in climate, or competition for food or mates, tend to survive and reproduce in greater numbers than others of their kind, thus ensuring the perpetuation of those favorable traits in succeeding generations.

**What is Diamond’s purpose in asking readers to “pause to consider some objections” before discussing Yali’s question (p. 17)?**

- Diamond wants to “pause to consider some objections” so he can demonstrate that investigating “Yali’s question” is necessary and not “offens[ive],” as “[s]ome people” may think (p. 17).

**How does Diamond’s response to the first “objection” on page 17 support his decision to research Yali’s question?**

- Diamond explains that some people may “confuse an explanation of causes with a justification or acceptance of results” (p. 17), which means that seeking answers for Yali’s question might suggest approval or “acceptance” of the inequalities present in the modern world. However, Diamond shows this objection to be faulty by comparing the purpose of his book with the work of “psychologists ... social historians ... and ... physicians” who investigate to “understand[] ... a chain of causes to interrupt the chain” (p. 17) and not “justify” the results.

**Why might an answer to Yali’s question “automatically involve a Eurocentric approach to history” (p. 17)?**

- An answer to Yali’s question might “involve a Eurocentric approach to history” (p. 17) because his question involves the contrasts between “white people” who “developed so much cargo” and “black people” who “had little cargo of [their] own” (p. 14). Understanding that the “white people” Yali referred to were European might cause an

investigation of the question to focus on and “glorif[y]” (p. 17) how western Europeans developed and ultimately dominated other parts of the world at different points in history.

- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider explaining that the term *Eurocentric* refers to the practice of considering Europe and Europeans as the focal point of world culture, history, and economics.

**How does Diamond use the “blessings of civilization” to counter the “third” objection to researching Yali’s question (p. 18)?**

- Diamond disagrees with the objection that questions such as Yali’s are inherently discriminatory because they presume that “civilization is good” and that “hunter-gatherer” societies are inferior (p. 18). By explaining that life is not necessarily better in “civilization” due to lower levels of “social support,” or in “hunter-gatherer” cultures due to lower-quality “medical care” and higher “risk of death by homicide,” Diamond establishes that he does not view either lifestyle as better than the other (p. 18). He emphasizes his research is simply motivated by a desire to “understand what happened in history” (p. 18).

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

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Instruct student pairs to read pages 18-21 (from “Does Yali’s question really need another book” to “despite what I believe to be their superior intelligence”) and answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider explaining that the *Aborigines* Diamond discusses in this excerpt refers to a group of people who were the earliest inhabitants of Australia.

**How is “racism” connected to the “commonest explanation” for the differences in human development concerning wealth and power (p. 18)?**

- The “commonest explanation,” or most widespread answer to Yali’s question “assume[s] biological differences among peoples” which are “innate” and “genetic,” and in so doing assumes people of one race to be superior to those of other races (p. 18).

**Considering Diamond’s discussion of the “commonest explanation,” what might *innate* mean (p. 18)? (L.11-12.4.a)**

- Diamond explains that early explanations for the differences in human development focused on “innate ability” and later on “evolutionary descent,” and finally on

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“genetics” (p. 18). These explanations have to do with aspects of human beings that have nothing to do with choice, but instead refer to the way a person is born; therefore, *innate* could refer to qualities with which a person is born.

**Explain how the following statement is relevant to Yali’s question and Diamond’s research: “Sound evidence for the existence of human differences in intelligence that parallel human differences in technology is lacking” (p. 19).**

- This statement explains that despite the fact that there are stark “differences in technology” (p. 19) throughout the world, those differences are not rooted in the intellectual superiority of one race or group over another. With this statement, Diamond counters the claim that “we already know the answer” to Yali’s question using the “commonest explanation” and do not “need another book to answer it” (p. 18).
- **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle, consider asking the following scaffolding question:

**According to Diamond, why are “tests of cognitive ability” (p. 20) unreliable as evidence to explain “technological differences” (p. 19)?**

- Cognitive tests are unreliable because they “measure cultural learning and not pure innate intelligence” (p. 20). “[C]ultural learning” reflects the “effects of childhood environment and learned knowledge” (p. 20), and because this research is based on individual upbringing and is difficult to assess, it is not a meaningful way to measure or explain differences between people.

**Explain the connections Diamond makes between murder, disease, and intelligence among “Westerners” and New Guineans on pages 20-21.**

- Diamond explains that Westerners are more likely than New Guineans to die of “infectious epidemic diseases” (p. 20) because Westerners live in more “densely populated societies” (p. 20) where such diseases can rapidly spread. He also explains that New Guineans are more likely than Westerners to be murdered or die from “chronic tribal warfare, accidents, and [lack of] food” (p. 20). He then reasons that because it takes more intelligence to avoid “causes of high mortality in ... New Guinea” (p. 20) than it does to survive the type of death more typical for Westerners (disease) then “natural selection promoting genes for intelligence” (p. 21) over time has possibly made New Guineans “smarter than Westerners” (p. 21).

**How does Diamond’s point of view affect his claim that “New Guineans are smarter than Westerners” (p. 20)?**

- In this section of text, Diamond uses many opinions, rooted in his personal experience rather than his research, to explain his reasoning, which creates uncertainty about his claim that “New Guineans are smarter than Westerners” (p. 20). Words and phrases that underscore his personal observations and experience, such as “[m]y perspective” (p. 20), “my impression” (p. 20), “probably” (p. 21), “[t]his effect surely contributes” (p. 21), and “what I believe” (p. 21) emphasize his opinion rather than fact, and therefore undermine his claim.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider explaining to students that while Diamond presents rational claims in this section of text, his argument is not based on fact but rather is conjecture. Explain that *conjecture* is the formation or expression of an opinion or theory without sufficient evidence or proof.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

### Activity 4: Quick Write

10%

Instruct students to respond briefly in writing to the following prompt:

**How does Diamond demonstrate the validity of researching Yali's question in this excerpt?**

Instruct students to look at their annotations to find evidence. Ask students to use this lesson's vocabulary wherever possible in their written responses.

- Students listen and read the Quick Write prompt
- Display the prompt for students to see, or provide the prompt in hard copy.

Transition to the independent Quick Write.

- Students independently answer the prompt using evidence from the text.
- See the High Performance Response at the beginning of this lesson.
- Consider using the Short Response Rubric to assess students' writing. Students may use the Short Response Rubric and Checklist to guide their written responses.

### Activity 5: Surfacing Issues

20%

Inform students that they have been reading and analyzing texts (in Module 12.3 and previous modules) for several purposes, including developing skills for discussion and writing. Explain

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that this type of reading and writing also fosters skills necessary to build evidence-based arguments around a problem-based question for research.

Inform students that *Guns, Germs, and Steel* will be used to generate sample issues for research in Module 12.3. Explain to students that the term *issue* can be defined as an important aspect of human society for which there are many different opinions about what to think or do. Many issues can be framed as areas of investigation, and later, problem-based questions (“Odell Education Building Evidence-Based Arguments Unit Plan,” p. 9). Explain that Diamond mentions many issues within his text, but it is up to the students to investigate the viability of a surfaced issue through further research. Explain that identifying these initial issues is the beginning of the inquiry process. During the inquiry process, students develop their understanding of different aspects of the issues, and pose and refine questions as they do their pre-search work.

- Students listen.
- Students will learn about *areas of investigation* in 12.3.1 Lesson 9.

Instruct student pairs to brainstorm and discuss 3-4 issues that they have surfaced in pages 13-21 of *Guns, Germs, and Steel*.

- **Differentiation Consideration:** For additional support, consider providing students with copies of the Surfacing Issues Tool.
  - Student responses may include:
    - Human development disparities concerning wealth and power
    - Patterns of historical cultural dominance
    - Errors in theories of intelligence
- Explain to students that a *topic* is any subject that can be researched, while an *issue* is a topic that can be debated. The term *issue* is used in the context of argumentation.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion about the issues students surfaced. Instruct students to record the page number location of the issue in the text and a description of key information related to the *issue* in their notes.

- Explain to students that they are not required to use a specific method of organization to track materials. Instead, students are encouraged to adhere to a system of organization that suits their personal preferences, be it a file system, a notebook, or an electronic repository.

## Activity 6: Closing

5%

Display and distribute the homework assignment. For homework, instruct students to read and annotate pages 21-25 of *Guns, Germs, and Steel* (from “A genetic explanation isn’t the only possible answer to Yali’s question” to “That seems to me the strongest argument for writing this book”) (W.11-12.9.b). Direct students to box any unfamiliar words and look up their definitions. Instruct students to choose the definition that makes the most sense in context, and write a brief definition above or near the word in the text (L.11-12.4.c).

Also, instruct students to continue to surface issues related to the text and come to the next lesson prepared to share 2-3 additional issues.

- Students follow along.

## Homework

Read and annotate pages 21-25 of *Guns, Germs, and Steel* (from “A genetic explanation isn’t the only possible answer to Yali’s question” to “That seems to me the strongest argument for writing this book”). Box any unfamiliar words and look up their definitions. Choose the definition that makes the most sense in context, and write a brief definition above or near the word in the text.

Additionally, continue to surface issues related to the text and come to the next class prepared to share 2-3 additional issues.

## Surfacing Issues Tool

<b>Name</b> :		<b>Class</b> :		<b>Date</b> :	
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**Directions:** As you read, look for issues that are suggested in the text. Remember that an issue is an important aspect of human society for which there are many different opinions about what to think or do. Summarize the issue succinctly, and note the page number and what the text says about the issue in the correct columns.

Issue	Page(s)	Key information about the issue from the text

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## Model Surfacing Issues Tool

<b>Name</b> :		<b>Class</b> :		<b>Date</b> :	
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**Directions:** As you read, look for issues that are suggested in the text. Remember that an issue is an important aspect of human society for which there are many different opinions about what to think or do. Summarize the issue succinctly, and note the page number and what the text says about the issue in the correct columns.

Issue	Page(s)	Key information about the issue from the text
The reasons for historical and modern inequalities	13	Although inequalities between societies are easily seen in contemporary history, there are no easy answers as to what originally caused these differences. We know that “literate societies with metal tools have conquered or exterminated the other societies. While those differences constitute the most basic fact of world history, the reasons for them remain uncertain and controversial” (p. 13).
Global wealth and power distribution	15	Diamond acknowledges the differences in global wealth and power distribution but wonders, “Why did wealth and power become distributed as they now are, rather than in some other way?” (p. 15).

History's broadest pattern	16	Diamond looks at Yali's original question and "rephrase[s]" (p. 16) it, changing it from a specific question about New Guineans lack of "cargo" (p. 14) and crafting a global question about differences in the rate of "human development" (p. 16).
Eurocentric history	17	Diamond ensures readers that his approach to answering Yali does not "automatically involve a Eurocentric approach to history, a glorification of western Europeans, and an obsession with the prominence of western Europe and Europeanized America in the modern world?" (p. 17). He assures that "most of [his] book will deal with peoples other than Europeans" (p. 17).
Biological differences	18, 19	Diamond explains that although others may answer Yali's question "assuming biological differences" (p. 18) that are "innate" (p. 18), such attempts to answer Yali are "loathsome" and "wrong" (p. 19).

Measuring intelligence	19, 20	Intelligence is difficult to measure because adults' "cognitive abilities ... are heavily influenced by the social environment ... experienced during childhood" (p. 19). "Tests of cognitive ability (like IQ tests) tend to measure cultural learning and not pure innate intelligence." (p. 20)
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