

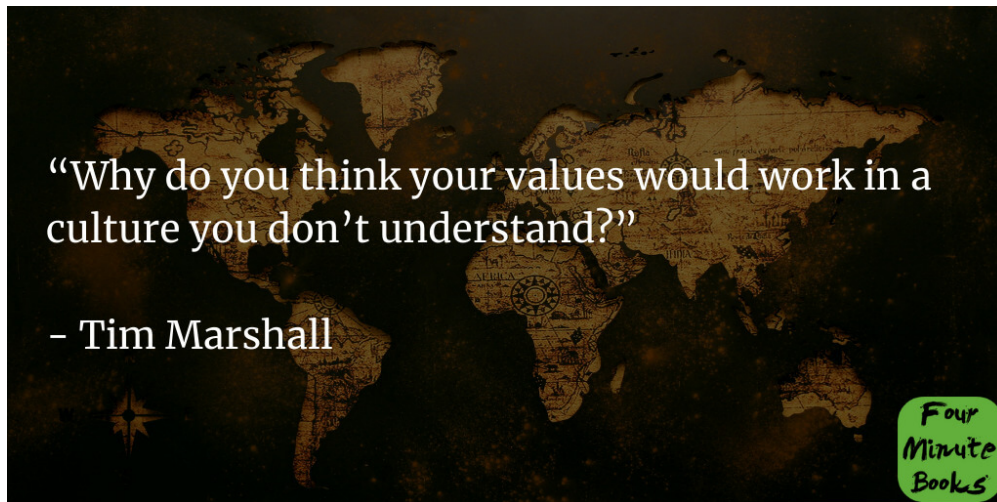
# Prisoners Of Geography Summary

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**1-Sentence-Summary:** *Prisoners Of Geography* explains how the location of a country dramatically affects its success and the amount of power it has in the world, and how this has determined the outcomes of major world events for centuries.

**Read in:** 4 minutes

**Favorite quote from the author:**



Have you ever played the popular board game Risk. If you have, you know that geography has a significant effect on how well you do. While Risk is just a board game, this idea extends into the real world.

The geographic features and resources of the land you live in actually have a lot to do with not only the strength of the economy but how well your country has fared in wars. More often than you probably realize, leaders' choices are limited by things like mountains, oceans, rivers, and concrete. And sadly, these leaders and their people often become prisoners of that geography.

In *Prisoners of Geography: Ten Maps That Tell You Everything You Need To Know About Global Politics* by Tim Marshall, we see world politics through the lens of a geographer. Marshall uses examples from ten different crucial regions to explain that the world's balance of power has everything to do with something as simple as the lay of the land.

Here are 3 of the most insightful lessons about geography from this book:

1. Russia could get invaded from the West, so they have a strong presence in the Baltics.
2. The United States is nearly invulnerable because of where it's located.

3. Southern Europe suffers while its northern countries flourish, simply because of geography.

Who needs a map? Let's jump right in and see why geography is so important!

## **Lesson 1: Russia has a strong presence in the Baltics to protect itself from getting invaded from the West.**

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If you look at Russia on a map, you might be surprised at just how enormous it is. The country spans 6 million square miles, making it the biggest country in the world by far. While the country is massive, there is one thing that keeps Russian President Vladimir Putin up at night.

It is a stretch of land bordering Russia that resembles a slice of pizza. It starts in Poland, and the wedge stretches to the foot of the Ural Mountains and northeast to Moscow.

What worries Russian leaders is that this land is part of the North European Plain. It stretches from France through Belgium, the Netherlands, Northern Germany, Poland, and then ends at the Ural Mountains. Because this area is flat, it makes Russia vulnerable and difficult to defend from Europe.

**Hypothetically, any country in the North European Plain could fairly easily send an army across this flat region that leads directly into Moscow, Russia's capital city.** One of the reasons Putin is well aware of this is because it has happened throughout Russia's history.

Since 1812, Northern European invaders have attacked Russia here an average of once every 33 years. So the Russian strategy has been to maintain control of Poland and the Baltic states. Because this takes a huge chunk of the vulnerable land, Russia can hold off potential invaders much more easily by maintaining a strong defense here. Sadly, this has meant a tough go for the Baltic states.

## **Lesson 2: The location of the United States makes it nearly invulnerable.**

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While most countries have to worry about invasions, for the most part, the United States doesn't. Its unique geographical position renders it pretty much invulnerable to any invading army. The neighbors to the north and the south are on friendly terms, and what's more, they are so large that any army attempting to invade through them would have to have impossibly long supply lines.

On the east and the west, the United States has the advantage of having oceans as borders. This all but cuts them off from invasions in these areas because any invader would have to cross an entire ocean to get there.

In addition to these natural defenses, there is one more thing that makes the US so secure—lenient gun laws. American citizens own an estimated 393 million guns, which allow every small town to have the ability to take up arms and defend themselves without the government, if necessary.

The right to bear arms is part of the American Constitution and is so deeply woven into the social fabric that guns are easy to reach for many Americans. **Any force attempting to invade the United States wouldn't just have to contend with the US army, they would have to fight a new set of armed civilians in just about every city.**

### **Lesson 3: Northern European countries flourish, while its Southern ones struggle, all due to geography.**

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The world has Europe to thank for the Enlightenment and Industrial revolution, which have both contributed to modern life in huge ways. Europe's thriving societies are in large part a result of a temperate climate with good soil and generous rainfall.

But the geography of Europe has also meant some areas have thrived more than others. At the peak of the Eurozone crisis in 2012, nasty stereotypes were spread around the media to explain why some people were experiencing such a bad economic downturn. The generalizations were that northern Europeans worked hard and were industrious, while southern Europeans were lazy and had no work ethic.

Marshal explains that the actual reason for the southern Europeans' struggles past and present is their geography. The Northern European Plain gifted France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Germany with good soil and a wealth of crops. **Because of the surplus of crops and goods, northern Europe was associated with hard work and developed big cities of commerce.**

On the other hand, Southern Europe has far less arable land. For example, Greece doesn't have enough fertile soil to be a big agricultural exporter, which has meant they could only develop a handful of major cities of commerce like there are in the north. And bigger cities also bring in highly skilled and educated workers who will drive the economy and technology forward.

### **Prisoners Of Geography Review**

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Whoa, *Prisoners Of Geography* is mind-blowing! I found myself focusing a lot more on what it said about my country than others, but still, everything in here is interesting. It makes a whole lot more sense why the world is the way it is once you read this book!

### **Who would I recommend the Prisoners Of Geography summary to?**

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The 78-year-old who wonders why some countries can just never get ahead while others are always on top, the 19-year-old that is studying politics in college, and anyone who wants to know how geography affects the successes and failures of nations.