

Origins of the Modern World

By Robert Marks Reading Guide adapted from Rowman & Littlefield Pub, Inc.

Introduction

The book, Origins of the Modern World, is not your traditional summer reading book. This book is written by an historian and not by a novelist. The book will introduce you to the historical narrative of the second half of the course and make an argument that the “rise of the West” was not inevitable. In fact, according to Dr. Marks, it was pretty surprising that the West became so dominant in global affairs. For centuries, it appeared as if the East would continue its economic dominance into the modern period.

The book will not be an easy read, but it will give you a solid foundation in the early modern and modern periods. It will also introduce you to some of the recent historical scholarship in World History, which is still an emerging field of history. The book will challenge your thinking about the West (which will be extremely helpful for those of you who took AP European History last year). There will be a great deal of vocabulary that you will be unfamiliar with, so I recommend you read the book with a dictionary or the Internet handy for reference.

You should answer the questions below in a short paragraph of ***4-6 sentences***. I’m looking for depth of thought, not length. Be sure to cite specific references (page numbers) to the book in answering the questions. We will begin the course with a quiz on the book and then use the book throughout the time periods that it covers. It will be a constant reference

Introduction

- 1 Compare and contrast a Eurocentric and non-Eurocentric view of the origins of the modern world.
- 2 Why did the author choose a non-Eurocentric approach in writing this book?
- 3 Why do China and India have such large roles in world history?

Chapter 1

- 1 What was the world like in 1400?
- 2 What was the material world? Why was it important?
- 3 Why is it important to know that Asia was the center of the trading world?

Chapter 2

- 1 Why did the author choose to start with a focus on China? Why is this important to the course of world history?
- 2 How important was the Indian Ocean to world trade? Why?
- 3 Describe the concept of *dar al-Islam*. (*Be very brief.*)

Chapter 3

- 1 In what ways did China's world system and Britain's world system confront each other? (Be sure to describe each system *briefly* in your answer.)
- 2 How was the "New World" incorporated into the world economy? What role did silver play?
- 3 Compare and contrast the nature of empires in the "New World" (i.e. Aztec and Inca empires) with those of the "Old World".

Chapter 4

- 1 Why didn't the Industrial Revolution happen in China?
- 2 What are the "four necessities of life"? Where did they come from in the biological old regime?
- 3 How is science distinguished from technology? Why does the author think that science had little to do with the Industrial Revolution?

Chapter 5

- 1 What were the consequences of the widening gap between the industrialized world and third world for each?
- 2 How and why did India's economy de-industrialize?
- 3 What were the consequences of the depression of the 1870s?

Chapter 6

- 1 What have been the political, environmental and demographic consequences of the "great departure" of the 20th century?
- 2 Compare and contrast American consumerism and Soviet productionism.
- 3 What have been the challenges of third world countries in their attempts to modernize?