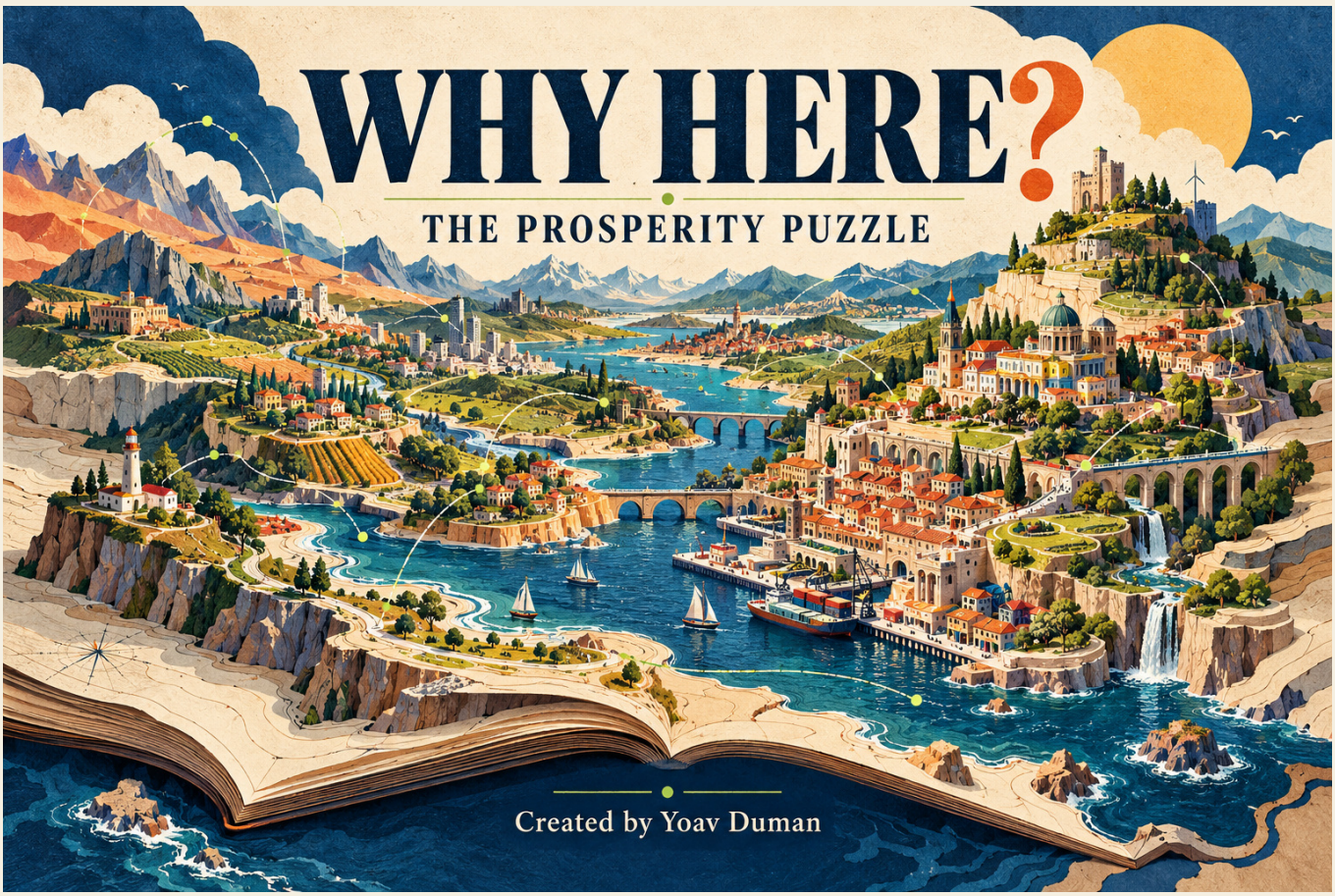
Teaching guide



Some countries produce far more per person than others. Why? Give students a starting idea, real records that put it under pressure, and room to defend a better explanation.

This investigation connects institutions, geography, health and historical change. The learner chooses and interprets evidence. The activity does not prescribe a preferred political or economic position.

COURSE	Introductory comparative politics; political economy
FORMAT	Individual investigation, followed by discussion
FULL ROUTE	Plan 50-65 minutes, including written work
PREPARATION	No advance reading; records and definitions supplied

A laptop or tablet is useful for charts and writing. The activity can be paused and resumed. Original papers are optional unless assigned. Adapt pacing to your group.

Teach the reasoning

Learning goals

• Compare GDP per person with institutional and geographic measures while respecting uncertainty and sample limits.

• Use historical and health research to examine explanations while keeping populations, periods and outcomes distinct.

• Build a scoped hypothesis and possible mechanism, develop a credible rival, and propose evidence that could distinguish them.

• Defend a conditional action, consider political obstacles and well-being, and explain what changed or survived from an initial prediction.

Choose the right route

For Class always uses Full. Complete all five records and their required writing, then confirm the final explanation. Class reports, printing and PDF unlock only when the required work is current. Editable backups remain available before completion.

For Fun: choose Core (prediction, country lab, history, final explanation) or Full (Core plus the health challenge). Writing is optional in both; evidence and interpretation checks still apply when confirming a record. Exploration reports are personal records, not completed class assignments.

Before students open the evidence

Ask for the first prediction before the country chart and research records. If a learner has already explored, the investigation retains that exposure and labels a later prediction accordingly. A later explanation stays separate from the original prediction; it does not become an earlier independent answer.

Check that students can locate Terms, the exact-value country table, Save / resume, and the active measure selector. Briefly distinguish a factor, an outcome and a process connecting them. Do not supply a country pair or a model explanation.

For Class response fields require typing; paste and text drops are off. Names, course details and legitimate backup restoration remain available. This input rule does not establish authorship.

Five records, one argument

1. **Your prediction.** Select an explanation and a measurable comparison with GDP per person. Predict a direction or no clear pattern and explain the reasoning before opening evidence.

2. **Country lab.** Inspect rule of law and at least one geography measure. Compare two countries, retain a challenging case, save one actual omission check, restore all twelve and interpret the observations in the existing note.

3. **The map changes.** Make a historical forecast, inspect the historical record and its limits, build a possible pathway and assess one arrow using a selected source. An unresolved connection can be defensible.

4. **The health challenge.** In Full, record an expectation, examine the campaign studies and compare their birth-group and place logic. Explain a named study, its measured outcome and finding, and an alternative or condition relevant to that comparison.

5. **Your explanation.** State a scoped hypothesis and possible mechanism. Develop a rival, propose a test and evidence that could change your mind, then defend a conditional action, obstacle, well-being comparison and revision.

Keep the next action concrete

Students may use short, specific notes or bullets. The displayed word minima record an effort threshold, not analytical quality. A student who predicted no clear pattern still examines a country comparison that could challenge that expectation.

Use at least two evidence groups in the final argument: country comparison, historical reversal or malaria research. The two malaria papers count as one group. In Core, use the country and historical groups.

Hints should leave work to do

Ask students to identify the factor, outcome, relevant comparison, possible alternative or missing observation. Definitions and source facts stay available. Do not turn the hint into a completed causal chain, favored answer or ready-to-submit paragraph.

Assess the argument

Use the completed report to assess reasoning. A confirmation mark does not establish an accurate explanation or a strong study design. Keeping an initial view and changing it can both be justified.

CRITERION	LOOK FOR
Claim and process	A factor, outcome, direction, defensible scope and an intermediate step, with affected people identified.
Country evidence	Relevant exact values, a challenging case and the retained sample check, interpreted without a causal overclaim.
Research warrant	A named comparison or study attached to a particular claim, with relevant date, population, outcome and limit.
Rival and test	A serious alternative; predicted observations, or a diagnosis of why the proposed comparison cannot distinguish them and what is needed next.
Conditional action	A plausible, provisional obstacle, an intervention, beneficiaries, an implementation or political obstacle, and an outcome beyond national output.
Reconsideration	A clear link from the first prediction to a later decision, using the student's own evidence.

Optional rubric: score each criterion 0 (missing or unsupported), 1 (partly developed) or 2 (specific, accurate and justified), for 12 points. Adapt to your course. Do not grade a student for choosing an institutional, geographic, combined or uncertain position.

Debrief without closing the debate

• Which country made your starting explanation harder to defend, and why?

• What did your saved omission check change, and what could it never establish?

• Which proposed connection is best supported, most complicated or still unresolved?

• Could your explanation and its rival produce the same observation? What further evidence would help?

Keep each record in scope

RECORD	BOUNDARY THAT CHANGES THE CLAIM
Country lab	Twelve selected countries, with equal country weight. GDP and governance refer to 2024. GDP is PPP-adjusted, in constant 2021 international dollars, and is not a typical household income.
Rule of law	A perception-based governance estimate with original 90% model-based intervals. It is neither a democracy score nor a complete institutional theory. Close scores need cautious interpretation.
Geography	Tropical land share and mean distance to an ice-free coast retain the Nunn-Puga archive definitions. They are not direct measures of current disease or actual transport costs.
Historical reversal	Urbanization and population-density proxies around 1500 are compared with later income among former European colonies. The later-income window is 1995, not the lab's 2024. Territories are not the same populations followed over centuries.
Malaria campaigns	The Americas study uses setting-specific adult economic measures and native-born male samples; the US sample uses native-born white men. India examines household expenditure and educational outcomes. Neither is a national-GDP treatment effect.

Levels are not growth rates

The country chart compares output levels in one year. A claim about growth needs evidence over time. Correlation, including a leave-one-country-out change in r, does not identify a cause.

Policy stays conditional

The supplied evidence need not establish a single main cause or a binding constraint. Students can propose a possible obstacle, identify when it would matter and explain what they still need to learn. Cover art supplies atmosphere, not geographical or statistical evidence.

Save, return and include everyone

Keep editable work

Use **Save / resume** for a JSON progress backup or a playable HTML copy with progress. Open a saved investigation to restore a JSON backup, review the preview, and confirm replacement only when you want to use it. A readable TXT or PDF report does not reopen editable progress.

Browser saves belong to that browser and website. Before changing devices or moving between YoavDuman.com and PossibleStates.com, download an editable backup. Both sites use the same game format; work is not automatically synchronized.

Read, export and submit

In For Class, complete all five Full records and the final report action. Then download the TXT report or choose Print / save report as PDF. Submit the readable file through your course website as instructed. Downloading does not submit work.

If a file download does not work, the activity offers selectable backup text, and report text when eligible. Keep a backup before closing a browser whose storage is unavailable. Corrupt or conflicting saves are preserved for review rather than silently overwritten.

Reduce reading barriers, keep analysis

• Use Terms and the country table alongside the chart. Country names and exact values offer an alternative to small chart targets.

• Let students describe the requested action in their own words before they answer. Clarify the location, measure or comparison; leave the interpretation to them.

• Invite uncertainty with a reason. If a comparison cannot distinguish two accounts, ask what additional evidence would make it informative.

• Use discussion after individual records, or a paired discussion on one device with a clearly identified shared record if that suits the assignment.

• Plan individual accommodations with the learner and your institution. Independent accessibility certification and a human classroom pilot have not been established.

Materials

The student guide explains the route and saving controls. The assignment handout can be posted to your course website. Sources.html lists research and data links. The standalone HTML game runs offline; online guides and original sources need an internet connection.

Research and data sources

These are the source links used by the activity. The country dataset records access on 30 October 2026. Source dates, populations and outcomes remain separate; the illustration is a conceptual invented landscape.

1. **World Bank: GDP per capita, PPP**
https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.PP.KD

2. **World Bank: Worldwide Governance Indicators**
https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/worldwide-governance-indicators/documentation

3. **Nunn and Puga: geographic data archive**
https://diegopuga.org/data/rugged/

4. **Acemoglu, Johnson and Robinson (2002), Reversal of Fortune**
https://economics.mit.edu/sites/default/files/publications/reversal-of-fortune.pdf

5. **Sachs (2003), Institutions Don’t Rule**
https://www.nber.org/papers/w9490

6. **Bleakley (2010), Malaria Eradication in the Americas**
https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3810960/

7. **Cutler et al. (2010), Early-Life Malaria Exposure and Adult Outcomes**
https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/app.2.2.72

8. **Glaeser et al. (2004), Do Institutions Cause Growth?**
https://www.nber.org/papers/w10568

9. **Acemoglu (2025), Institutions, Technology, and Prosperity**
https://shapingwork.mit.edu/research/institutions-technology-and-prosperity/

10. **UNDP: the human-development approach**
https://hdr.undp.org/about/human-development

Suggested activity citation: Yoav Duman, “Why Here? The Prosperity Puzzle,” Possible States. https://possiblestates.com/simulations/why-here. Include your access date.

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