Name: _____

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MESOPOTAMIA
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The Assyrians

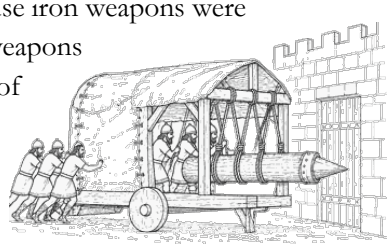
The Assyrians spread terror across the Fertile Crescent for more than 300 years. They used iron weapons and cunning tactics to build the largest empire the world had known at that time.

Power and Tribute

At its height, the Assyrians controlled the Fertile Crescent from Egypt to Persia. Their ruthless rule forced cities to pay tribute, which is payment for protection. This tribute enriched Assyrian warriors and enabled more investment in military technology.

Iron Weapons

Iron swords, lances, and armor made the Assyrian army more fearsome because iron weapons were stronger than the bronze weapons used by other civilizations of that era. Building on their iron-working skills, the Assyrians also crafted powerful battering rams.

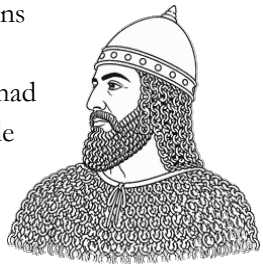


In its simplest form, a battering ram is a heavy log carried by several men and used to break down city walls. The Assyrians added wheels and canopies to their battering rams. A canopy is a small roof that protected Assyrian soldiers from rocks and spears thrown by defenders standing atop city walls.

Chariots

Other cultures had chariots, light two-wheeled vehicles pulled by horses, but the invention of spoke wheels made Assyrian chariots lighter and faster, allowing them to outrun soldiers and other chariots. Assyrian archers fired arrows from powerful bows while a driver steered the chariot, allowing them to escape before opponents could counterattack.

The Cavalry



About 1000 BCE, the Assyrians developed cavalry, soldiers who fought on horseback. The saddle had not yet been invented, so they rode on the bare backs of their horses. Assyrian cavalry wore chain mail and leather boots, making them better outfitted for war. Chain mail is armor made of small metal rings linked together in a mesh. While other armies fought in sandals, leather boots protected Assyrian soldiers around horses and helped them fight in rough terrain, cold weather, rain, and snow.

Assyrian Government and Culture

The Assyrians governed their empire with efficiency. To maintain control over distant lands, messengers traveled along a network of well-built roads that enabled reliable communication. King Ashurbanipal expanded his capital, Nineveh, making it one of the great cities of the ancient world. Nineveh included one of the first libraries. Long before books were common, Ashurbanipal ordered that clay tablets containing the stories of Mesopotamia be gathered in one place. It was here that the legends of the Epic of Gilgamesh were preserved as we know them today.

The Fall of the Assyrian Empire

But their power did not last. Following the death of the warrior king Ashurbanipal in 627 BCE, widespread revolts toppled the Assyrian Empire. Babylon regained control of Mesopotamia under the rule of Nebuchadnezzar II. Mesopotamia later fell to many invading armies, including those of the Persians, Alexander the Great, the Romans, the Ottoman Turks, and the British. Today, this region is part of modern Iraq, a land shaped by thousands of years of conquest and empire.

*This is a higher order learning question. You must answer the question to the best of your ability, but any reasonable answer will be graded as correct.

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Fill in the Blanks

The Assyrians conquered B__b__l__n in 911BCE and over the next three *c__n__u__i__s, developed into a great military e__p__re that stretched from E_____ to P__r__ia. The Assyrians became rich by brutally exacting t__i__u__e from cities within their empire. Tribute is p__y__e__t for p__o__e__t__on.

Technology made the Assyrian army fearsome. Their i_____ weapons were stronger than the bronze weapons used by rival nations. Assyrian battering rams were constructed of iron and included w__e__ls and c__n__p__es. The wheels made it possible to maneuver the battering rams quickly, while the canopies protected the Assyrian army from r__c__s and s__e__rs thrown by rival s__l__i__rs. Assyrian chariots were lighter due to the invention of the s_____ wheel. The Assyrians also made significant advances in outfitting their armies. Chain mail a__m__r protected the soldiers from spears and lances while l__a__h__r boots made it easier for soldiers to work around h__r__es and to fight in r_____ and c_____ weather.

The Assyrian army fell to B__b__l__n in the *s__v__n__h century b__f__re the C__m__on Era. At different periods, Mesopotamia was controlled by many outside cultures that included P__r__i__ns, Greeks, R__m__ns, Turks, and the B__i__i__h. The land between the rivers has been part of the modern nation of I_____ since 1932.

Answer in complete sentences

*1. What is tribute? Explain how the Assyrians became rich through tribute.

2. Explain how iron weapons made the Assyrian army more powerful than rival armies of their time.

3. Why were Assyrian chariots faster than the chariots of rival nations?

*4. What technological innovation helped the Assyrian army most? Explain your reasoning.

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