

Name: _____

Date: _____

The Assyrians

The Assyrians were fierce warriors whose kingdom was upstream on the Tigris River from the Babylonians. Their armies conquered Babylon in 911BCE and over the next three centuries, the Assyrians built the largest and powerful empire the world had known at that time.

By the seventh century BCE, Assyrian armies seized lands stretching from Egypt in the west, across Mesopotamia to Persia in the east. The Assyrians ruled over their empire with great cruelty, forcing cities to pay tribute. Tribute is payment for protection. The tribute from throughout the region made Assyrian warriors rich. The wealth also allowed the Assyrians to invest in military technology that made their armies even more fearsome.



Iron swords, lances and armor strengthened the Assyrian army because iron weapons were stronger than the bronze weapons used by other civilizations of that era. The Assyrians also used iron to create powerful battering rams. In its most simple form, a battering ram is a large, heavy log carried by several men and propelled with enough force 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 down at them by defensive forces standing atop city walls.

The invention of spoke wheels made Assyrian chariots lighter, faster, and better prepared to outrun soldiers and other chariots. This allowed Assyrian archers to shoot arrows from the chariot and escape before opponents had the opportunity to counter-attack. Arrows from their deadly crossbows could penetrate the armor of rival soldiers. About 1000BCE, the Assyrians introduced the first cavalry. A cavalry is an army that fights on horseback. The saddle had not yet been invented, so the Assyrian cavalry fought on the bare backs of the horses.

The Assyrian cavalry was also better outfitted for war, with chain mail and leather boots. Chain mail is a type of armor consisting of small metal rings linked together in a pattern to form a mesh. While other armies fought in sandals, leather boots protected Assyrian soldiers while they were around horses, and prepared the Assyrian army to fight in rough terrain and in cold weather, rain and snow.

Soon after the death of the warrior king Assurbanipal in 627BCE, widespread revolts toppled the Assyrian Empire. Babylon recaptured Mesopotamia under the rule of their warrior king, Nebuchadnezzar. Mesopotamia later fell to many invading armies that included the Persians, the army of Alexander the Great, the Romans, the Turks and the British. Mesopotamia is now part of the modern nation of Iraq, a country that is struggling to develop democratic government after the brutal dictatorship of Saddam Hussein ended in 2003.

Answer in complete sentences

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

*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 911BC 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 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

2. Explain how iron weapons made the Assyrian 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.

5. Identify at least five outside cultures that have ruled Mesopotamia

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