

Lesson 2 Assyria Rules the Fertile Crescent

MAIN IDEAS

Science and Technology Assyria built a military machine that was greatly feared by others in the region.

Government Assyria used several different methods to control its empire.

Government The Chaldeans replaced the Assyrians as the main power in Mesopotamia and other parts of the Fertile Crescent.

A Mighty Military Machine

ESSENTIAL QUESTION How was Assyria able to build an empire?

A Powerful Army

- Assyrian Empire replaced Babylonian Empire
- Assyria was located in hilly northern Mesopotamia
 - built powerful horse and chariot army to protect lands
 - soldiers were only ones in area to use iron swords, spears tips
 - used battering rams, ladders, tunnels to get past city walls
 - inside cities, feared Assyrians slaughtered enemy inhabitants

Harsh Treatment of Captured People

- Assyrians were cruel to defeated peoples
- Enemies who surrendered were allowed to choose a leader
 - enemies who resisted were taken captive and killed or enslaved
- Enemy leaders were killed, cities burned
- Captured peoples were sent into exile
 - **exile**—forced to move from homelands to other lands, often far away

REVIEW QUESTION

Why were the Assyrians feared by their enemies?

Assyria Builds a Huge Empire

ESSENTIAL QUESTION How did Assyria control its empire?

A Huge Empire

- From 850 to 650 B.C., Assyrians conquered most of Fertile Crescent
 - including Syria, Babylonia, Egypt, Palestine
- Reached peak under Ashurbanipal (668–627 B.C.)
- Assyrians chose native kings, governors to rule conquered lands
- Conquered rulers paid **tribute**—payment for army’s protection
 - Assyrians destroyed cities if no tribute was paid, and exiled people

A Huge Empire

- Assyrians made many enemies by their cruelty
 - exiled peoples tried to gather forces to fight Assyrians
 - Assyrians put down many revolts

Assyria Crumbles

- Assyrian Empire fell in 609 B.C.
 - defeated by combined forces of the Medes and Chaldeans
 - victors burned Assyrian capital city of Nineveh

REVIEW QUESTION

Why did the Assyrians receive tribute?

A New Babylonian Empire

ESSENTIAL QUESTION Who replaced the Assyrian Empire?

Chaldeans Take Assyrian Lands

- Chaldeans ruled much of former Assyrian Empire
 - sometimes called New Babylonians because Babylon was capital
- Chaldean empire peaked from 605 to 562 B.C. under Nebuchadnezzar II
 - took Mediterranean trading cities, drove Egyptians out of Syria
- Nebuchadnezzar seized Jerusalem when Hebrews rebelled in 598 B.C.
 - destroyed temple, held Hebrews captive in Babylon for about 50 years

Height of Wealth and Power

- Nebuchadnezzar built Babylon's Ishtar Gate, Tower of Babel ziggurat
- Built **Hanging Gardens of Babylon**, one of Seven Wonders of the World
 - artificial mountain covered with trees, plants

The Empire Fades

- Weak rulers followed Nebuchadnezzar II
- Internal conflicts over religion divided Chaldean people
 - made it easy for Cyrus of Persia to conquer land

REVIEW QUESTION

What were some features of the Chaldean capital of Babylon?

Lesson Summary

- The Assyrian military used new kinds of weapons and ways of fighting. The military was very cruel to captured peoples.
- The Assyrians' highly organized government controlled the conquered lands.
- The Chaldeans conquered Assyrian lands. Their empire reached its peak under Nebuchadnezzar II.

Why It Matters Now...

The Assyrian Empire showed that to control large areas of land with many people, an empire must have a highly organized government and a strong military.