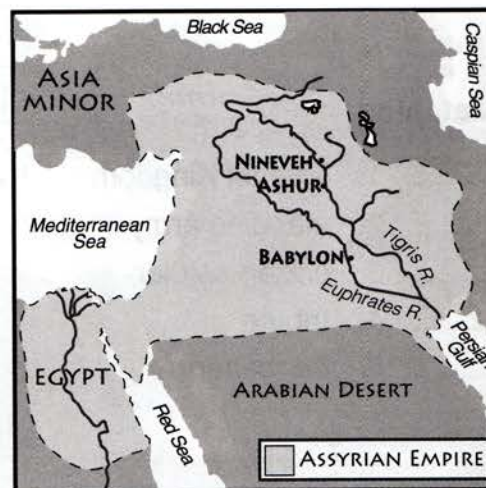


The Assyrians

Assyria was a civilization in Mesopotamia on the upper Tigris River. The civilization lasted many centuries but was greatest between 1600 and 612 B.C. The Assyrians were a Semitic-speaking people who arrived in Mesopotamia about 2000 B.C. Assyria was named after its original capital, **Ashur**. Ashur gained its independence in about 1365 B.C.

Assyrian Advantages and Disadvantages

Assyria had several advantages over Babylonia. Assyrians could farm without the elaborate irrigation that was needed in Babylonia. The land received water from the Tigris River and its tributaries, and it also got a moderate amount of rainfall annually. Also, Assyria had rocks and stones that could be used for building. Assyria had two disadvantages, however. The Assyrian land was harder to cultivate, and they were often attacked by barbarians who raided their villages.



An Assyrian Lamassu

Assyrians developed a thriving trade in Anatolia (Asia Minor). Eventually, the Hittites drove the Assyrians out of Anatolia. During the time of the Babylonian Kingdom, Assyrian power in Mesopotamia grew weaker. By 1550 B.C., Assyria was part of the Mitanni Kingdom. The notable achievement of the **Mitanni Kingdom** was that it introduced trained horses and chariots into this part of the world.

The Assyrian Army

Gradually, Assyrian power grew and expanded by 1100 B.C. The Assyrians developed a **standing army**, which is composed of soldiers who choose the army as their career. When the soldiers are not fighting, they are still in the army, training to fight. This was a new idea in this period. Other countries fought their wars with citizen-soldiers. A **citizen-soldier** fights a war, and after it is over, he returns home and resumes his life working at his former craft or career. The Assyrian soldiers were fierce and cruel warriors. They had weapons made of iron rather than copper or bronze. They also had battering rams. They not only had foot soldiers, they had archers, chariots, and a cavalry. Whenever they captured enemies, they would either murder them or make them slaves.

The Assyrian Kingdom

Captured cities were plundered and looted. Citizens of conquered cities were required to pay taxes and **tribute** to the Assyrians. The Assyrians built forts close to these cities, and a governor was appointed for each fort. The governor reported directly to the king by sending reports by messengers on horseback—the first mail delivery service.

However, the kingdom became too large to maintain. There were too few soldiers, so mercenaries were hired to serve in the army. A **mercenary** is a foreign soldier hired by another country to fight in its army. Eventually, the Assyrians were vanquished by the Medes, Chaldeans, and the Babylonians. The capital city of **Nineveh** was razed.

ASSYRIAN CIVILIZATION AT A GLANCE

WHERE: Northern Mesopotamia

WHEN: 1600 B.C.–612 B.C.

ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Created the first library
- Built a system of roads
- Ruled their extended kingdom with appointed governors
- First to develop a standing army
- Developed a mail service

Name: _____ Date: _____

Knowledge Check

Matching

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| _____ 1. Mitanni Kingdom | a. a foreign soldier hired by another country to fight in its army |
| _____ 2. standing army | b. a soldier who returns home and resumes his life when the fighting is over |
| _____ 3. citizen-soldier | c. composed of soldiers who choose the army as a career; when they are not fighting, they are training |
| _____ 4. tribute | d. introduced trained horses and chariots to the Mesopotamian region |
| _____ 5. mercenary | e. payment that conquered people were required to pay to the conquerors |

Multiple Choice

6. What was the name of Assyria's original capital?

a. Nineveh	b. Babylon
c. Ur	d. Ashur

7. How did the governors send reports to the king?

a. carrier pigeons	b. messengers on horseback
c. smoke signals	d. messages floated down river

8. Of what material were the Assyrians' weapons made?

a. iron	b. stone
c. bronze	d. copper

Constructed Response

9. Compare the Assyrian lands with Babylonia. Use details from the reading selection to help support your answer.
