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## TOPIC: THE ASSYRIANS

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**SUBJECT:** HISTORY

**LEVEL/AGE:** 10-11 YEARS OLD

**FOREKNOWLEDGE:** RIVER VALLEY CIVILIZATIONS

**LENGTH:** 6 PAGES (DURATION: 75 MINUTES)

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## LEARNING OUTCOMES

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At the end of this lesson, the pupils will know:

- What are the critical elements of the civilization of the Assyrians
- The reason why the Assyrians are remembered in history
- The evolution of Assyrian civilization and the reasons for the end of the empire



### RESOURCES

Conceptual and geographical maps of the Assyrian empire

Images of archaeological remains

YouTube video

Virtual visit to the British Museum

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## TEACHING METHODS

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Explanatory video

Synthesis through a conceptual map

Review activities in pairs

Exercises and worksheets

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## ACTIVITIES

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### INTRODUCTION (5-20 MINUTES)

[The rise and fall of the Assyrian Empire - Marian H Feldman](#), TED-Ed:

This proposed video provides a very entertaining, concise, but comprehensive introduction. It allows one to focus on some key aspects and to understand the extent of the Assyrian empire. Subtitles can easily be set in all languages directly from YouTube.

A [virtual visit](#) to the British Museum is also available, with one of the rooms dedicated to Nineveh, the capital of the powerful ancient Assyrian empire (Room 9). The Museum also teaches about the Assyrians' culture and history and preserves the Epic of Gilgamesh, a masterpiece of Babylonian and Assyrian literature.

The carved stone panels that are on display belong to King Sennacherib's palace; who was king of Assyria from 704 to 681 BC and famous for his construction projects.

This activity may take some time. It is advisable to plan the path in advance to show the students or suggest what to see first.

### THEORY PART (20 MINUTES)

After watching the video or completing the visit, provide this conceptual map that will help memorise key concepts, which also includes a geographical map of the Assyrian empire.

Download them [here](#) and [here](#).

# THE ASSYRIANS



## CULTURE

They adopted the cuneiform script invented by the Sumerians

With Ashurbanipal, they reached the height of cultural splendour, the establishment of the library



## RELIGION

They were polytheists. The deities were violent and cruel

The main god was Ashur, the god of war. He protected the army in battle

The statue of the god was placed in the cities they conquered

## ARMY

It was very organised

They made powerful weapons out of iron

They dominated the Mesopotamian region with the policy of terror; they plundered and enslaved the subjugated peoples

They used iron weapons, much more resistant than the bronze ones used by their enemies

## COMPARED TO BABYLONIANS

They inhabited the same region, Mesopotamia (the northern and southern parts, respectively)

They spoke two very similar languages and wrote with the same cuneiform characters

They had a related culture and some common deities.

## SOCIETY

It was made up of:

King, he was the head of the army

Warriors, priests and nobles

Peasants, artisans and servants

Slaves, who worked in the fields

## ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

Agriculture

Farming

Crafts

They were the first to establish control and maintain a system of roads throughout their empire, with a system of stations where they could refresh and change horses

They invented ingenious war machines

## WHERE

Initially they were nomads, coming from the Caucasus mountains

It was a low-fertile area poor in raw materials, surrounded by hostile peoples

They settled in the Mesopotamian area called Assyria, north of the Tigris

The most important cities were Ashur and Nineveh

The famous Library built by Ashurbanipal was located in Nineveh

## WHEN

Around 1500 BC

They reached their peak splendor in 650 BC, with Ashurbanipal

They were defeated in 612 BC, by the Babylonians

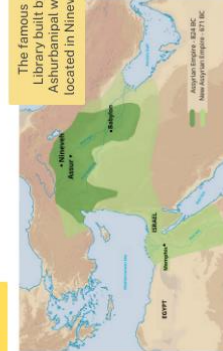
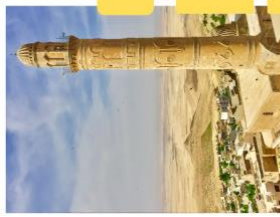
## WHO

They were a people of shepherds and farmers

They became ruthless warriors

For this reason they conquered many territories and created an empire

They were always hated and feared; they never found allies. This was the cause of their demise



The map focuses on the Assyrians and provides information about:

- Who they were, where and when they lived
- Economic activities
- Society and political system
- Comparison with the Babylonians
- Information about their army, religion, and culture

Analyse the map together, reviewing the various concepts individually.

### HANDS-ON PART (15 MINUTES)

To assimilate the concepts newly presented, working in pairs, each student asks their partner to report a piece of information related to a specific theme among those on the conceptual map.

For example: "Tell me something related to the culture of the Assyrians."

The rule of thumb for the activity is to never repeat information that has already been given. It should involve about 20 questions so that almost all the information on the map (which totals about 30 elements) emerges.

### EXERCISE PART (10 MINUTES)

#### First exercise: Multiple choice quiz:

Mark the correct answer with an X and justify your choice.

1) What characteristics did the Assyrians have?

- They were a people dedicated to art
- They were a people dedicated to agriculture and pastoralism
- They were a people dedicated to war

2) In what year did they settle in Mesopotamia?

- From 1,500 BC until 612 BC
- From 2,500 BC until 612 BC
- From 3,500 BC until 615 BC

- 3)** What was the name of the Assyrian capital?
- Ur
  - Nineveh
  - Akkad
- 4)** Which god was the most powerful?
- The god of war Ashurbanipal
  - The god of the earth Ashur
  - The god of war Assur
- 5)** What origins did slaves have?
- They were prisoners deported from the conquered territories
  - They were foreigners present in the territory
  - They were lazy farmers
- 6)** What did they become very skilled at?
- Building war machines and temples
  - Building aqueducts and roads
  - Building roads and war machines
- 7)** What did the Assyrian capital Nineveh become famous for?
- An immense garden
  - An immense tower
  - An immense library
- 8)** What caused the end of the Assyrian empire?
- A flood
  - The merge with the Babylonian empire
  - The rebellion of a coalition of rival peoples
- 9)** What was the characteristic of King Ashurbanipal?
- He was cultured and a lover of culture
  - He was a skilled strategist
  - He was considered a demigod

**10)** What was one reason for their army's success?

- o They used iron weapons
- o They made the slaves fight
- o They formed alliances with the enemy

### **Second exercise: Words and images about the Assyrians**

Recalling the information you have acquired about the Assyrians:

- Find three adjectives that you think define them well
- Write down three words that stuck in your mind
- Draw a scene that might represent them

### **SYNTHESIS/SUMMARY** (MAX 10 MINUTES)

Using the support you deem to be the most suitable and relevant to your pupils, list the **keep in mind** elements of the lessons:

- **The origin of the Assyrians**
- **The places where they ruled**
- **The main economic activities**
- **The religion**
- **The culture**
- **The organisation of society**
- **The army**

The teacher can use the conceptual map provided to focus on the main topics. The introduction video or the virtual visit to the British Museum may also be used as a concluding activity.

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## BIBLIOGRAPHY & RESOURCES

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