

Name: _____ Date: _____

The Mongols

The Mongols were a nomadic people who lived on the elevated plateau in east central Asia. At about the beginning of the thirteenth century, Genghis Khan united many Mongolian tribes. This group of Mongols raided and destroyed many more highly developed countries and civilizations. For nearly two centuries, the Mongols dominated Asia and parts of Europe; they eventually created the largest empire the world had ever known. The Mongol Empire included the areas known today as Mongolia, China, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Korea, and parts of Russia, Siberia, Turkey, Syria, Pakistan, India, Vietnam, and Cambodia. The Mongolians were able to accomplish this through the military genius of Genghis Khan and by the Mongol warriors who were among the most fierce fighters of all time.

Circle the letter of the answer you believe correctly completes each statement.

- Which of the following was not a responsibility of a Mongol woman?
A. Washing dishes
B. Slitting throats
C. Going into battle
D. Preparing food
- Mongols would never:
A. Marry.
B. Pray.
C. Kill a horse.
D. Take a bath.
- Of the following, which is there no record of Mongols eating?
A. Horses
B. Lice
C. Vegetables
D. Human flesh
- Mongols usually rode mares rather than stallions because:
A. They could drink their milk.
B. They were faster.
C. They had more endurance.
D. They were more obedient.
- Mongols preferred to wear underwear made of what material?
A. Deerskin
B. Wool
C. None
D. Silk
- Genghis Khan had _____ bodyguards.
A. No
B. 10
C. 1,000
D. 10,000
- Mongols lived in:
A. Mobile homes.
B. Caves.
C. Sod homes.
D. Igloos.
- When Genghis Khan conquered a city, he usually:
A. Forbade worship.
B. Killed priests.
C. Gave tax exemptions to churches.
D. Killed craftsmen.

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The Mongols (cont.)

9. Every time Genghis Khan completed a successful battle, he:
- A. Added a horse to his herd.
 - B. Branded a star in his horse.
 - C. Went on vacation.
 - D. Added a wife to his family.
10. If someone stepped on the tent flap of a person's house, they were:
- A. Forced to apologize.
 - B. Put to death.
 - C. Made a slave.
 - D. Provided a new tent.
11. When a Mongol man died, his youngest son inherited:
- A. Nothing.
 - B. His father's wives.
 - C. All of the household items.
 - D. His horses.
12. On one occasion, Kublai Khan ordered a group of _____ to attack and conquer a province.
- A. Jugglers
 - B. Children
 - C. Women
 - D. Priests
13. A few minutes after the Mongols attacked a city, they often:
- A. Stopped to pray.
 - B. Sang loud songs.
 - C. Lined up for instructions.
 - D. Retreated.
14. Mongols tenderized their dried meat by:
- A. Putting it under their saddles.
 - B. Using Yeng's Meat Tenderizer.
 - C. Using salt.
 - D. Using a Flamenco dance.
15. Mongols were afraid of:
- A. Nothing.
 - B. Mice.
 - C. Spiders.
 - D. Thunder.
16. Whenever a Mongol warrior went on a military conquest, he always brought along a:
- A. Prayer book.
 - B. Sewing kit.
 - C. Compass.
 - D. Slave.
17. Which of the following weapons were **not** used by the Mongols in battle?
- A. Rockets
 - B. Germ warfare
 - C. Grenades
 - D. Shields
18. The Khan would tell the future by reading:
- A. Tea leaves.
 - B. Hairballs.
 - C. Sheep bones.
 - D. Nostradamus.

The Mongols Answers

1. **A. Washing dishes.** Mongol women did not generally participate in battles, unless the outcome of a fight was in doubt. Women had been trained from childhood, along with boys, to be excellent riders and archers. In addition, after a battle, one of the chores of a woman was to go to the battlefield and kill those who were wounded by slitting their throats. The Mongols never washed eating vessels or instruments.
2. **D. Take a bath.** Mongols refused to wash because they believed that very powerful spirits lived in the rivers and streams, and if they polluted the water by bathing in it, it would offend the spirits. For the same reason, they would never wash their clothes or eating vessels. They would wear their clothes until they literally fell apart. Sometimes, they would take off their clothes and beat them until most of the lice fell out, and then they would put them back on again.
3. **C. Vegetables.** Mongols ate just about anything they could find—dogs, foxes, horses, and wolves, but their diet consisted mainly of meat and a few dairy products. Almost every part of the animal was eaten. Even after the meat was cleaned off the bones, Mongols would break the bones open and eat the marrow before they threw the bone away. In all of the accounts of Mongol history, there is no reference to them eating vegetables or bread. While they did not generally consider lice a food, it was not uncommon for them to pop one in their mouths, if they found one crawling on them. Lice were a constant companion to the Mongols.
4. **A. They could drink their milk.** Mare's milk was a common food staple for Mongols. They would drink fresh mare's milk, or they dried it to take with them on journeys.
5. **D. Silk.** A Mongol's underwear was often made of fleece or wool, but he preferred to wear silk. The advantage of wearing silk underwear was not just comfort. Silk is an amazingly tough fabric. The Mongols had learned from the Chinese that if a soldier was hit by an arrow while wearing silk underwear, the arrowhead would not pierce the silk. The silk would wrap itself around the arrowhead. In order to remove the arrow from the warrior, all that was necessary was to pull the silk around the arrow, and it would come out with a minimum amount of damage.
6. **D. 10,000.** In order to be sure his commanders were loyal, Genghis Khan required that the commander's son or younger brother work for Genghis Khan as his guard or as a member of his household staff. If the commander was disloyal or acted in a cowardly manner,



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- the son or the younger brother would be executed. Many of these bodyguards traveled with their own families during a military campaign, so the house and court of Genghis Khan was as large as many cities.
7. **A. Mobile homes.** Mongols were a nomadic people, not staying in one place but moving often. They lived in homes called *gers*, that could be broken down and transported from one place to another. These were basically mobile homes that were almost round and had six sides. Each had a wooden frame covered with felt that was held in place by leather straps. The felt was treated with animal fat, making it weatherproof. The floor was made of planks covered with felt. There was a hearth where the family burned dried animal dung, which was used for cooking and heating. There was a hole in the roof for the smoke to escape and for light. The most important Mongols had separate *gers* for sleeping and cooking. Some Mongols even had separate *gers* for guests. Wealthy Mongols had a separate *ger* for each wife. Most *gers* were about 16 feet in diameter, but Genghis Khan's home could accommodate more than 100 people. Most Mongol homes could be taken apart and folded to make transporting them easier, but some were raised onto a heavy ox cart and moved without being taken apart. One European wrote that he once saw a cart with 22 oxen pulling one house. The driver was standing in the doorway of the house with the reins in his hands.
 8. **C. Gave tax exemptions to churches.** Genghis Khan allowed all those he conquered to practice religion in any way they chose.
 9. **D. Added a wife to his family.** When Genghis Khan died, he had 500 wives.
 10. **B. Put to death.** There were felt idols next to the doorway of a Mongol's house. These idols represented the gods of good fortune and the gods of happiness. If someone accidentally stepped on the tent flap of a person's house, it was considered such an insult to these gods that the person who did it was put to death.
 11. **B. His father's wives.** When a Mongol man died, all of his possessions, including his livestock and pasture land, was inherited by his sons. The oldest son was given the pasture land and animals farthest from the family's home base. The next oldest son was given the livestock and pasture land next to that of the oldest son, closer to the family's home base. This process would continue with each younger son inheriting livestock and land closer to the home base. The youngest son would be given the land the family considered the home base, as well as all of the father's wives, except his own mother. The youngest son would then become the husband of his stepmothers and the father of his stepbrothers and stepsisters.
 12. **A. Jugglers.** Mongols were serious people but liked entertainment. There were dancers, acrobats, and even jugglers who entertained wealthy families. But even entertainers were expected to be warriors. On one occasion, Kublai Khan told the jugglers of his court to go and conquer a province. He said that he would give them a leader and troops to accompany them. The jugglers did what they were told and were successful in conquering the province.

The Mongols Answers (cont.)

13. **D. Retreated.** The Mongols used many ingenious battle tactics. On one occasion, they dammed up a river and then later broke the dam to flood the city. On another occasion when they were fighting on a frozen river, the Mongols scattered grit on their side of the ice and tied felt to their horses' hooves. While their enemies were slipping, sliding, and falling down, the Mongols kept their balance; they fought almost as effectively as if they were on land. However, their favorite tactic was the fake retreat. They would fight for awhile and then retreat on horseback. Their enemies would leave the safety of their city and follow, thinking they were winning. As they chased, the Mongols would twist in their saddles and shoot arrows at them. The Mongols had perfected their archery skills on horseback while hunting, so they would not only kill many of those pursuing them, but they would also kill many of their enemies' horses. When the remaining pursuers were completely exhausted, a fresh wave of Mongols, who had been hiding, would descend and massacre them.
14. **A. Putting it under their saddles.**
15. **D. Thunder.**
16. **B. Sewing kit.** The kit included an awl to pierce holes and sinews for stitching armor.
17. **D. Shields.** While Mongols used a shield on sentry duty, they did not use this shield in battle. The shield used on sentry duty was made of leather or wicker. They used catapults to send rocks and burning tar into the cities and onto walls and gates. When they went to war with China, they encountered rockets and grenades since the Chinese had invented gunpowder. The grenades were actually pods of clay packed with explosives and tossed by catapults or even by hand. Bamboo tube rockets were launched from a longbow. The Mongols adopted these weapons.
- In 1345, as the Mongols were laying siege to the city of Kaffa on the Black Sea, a strange sickness spread through the Mongol army, killing many and weakening their efforts. Instead of giving up and going home, the Mongols used their catapults to send corpses of those who had died of the disease over the city walls. When those inside the walls removed the Mongol corpses, they became infected and eventually infected others in the city. This is one of the first recorded cases of biological warfare. The disease was not contained in the city of Kaffa. It spread throughout the Mediterranean and Europe. The disease was known as the Black Death. It eventually killed one in every three Europeans.
18. **C. Sheep bones.** The Mongols believed that a shaman or the Khan could tell the future by reading sheep bones. If the tribe needed to make a decision about something important, the Khan had a slave bring him three shoulder blades from sheep. The Khan would hold the bones as he was thinking about the problem that was troubling the tribe. Then he would give the bones to the slave to be burned. When the bones turned black, they were returned to the Khan for inspection. If the fire split the bones lengthwise, in a straight line, the answer to his question was "yes." If, on the other hand, the bones cracked horizontally, then the answer was "no."