

Notes on Quiz #4: Dawn of the Iron Age

1. The use of iron was revolutionary as a basis for metalworking (tools and weapons) because
 - a. iron was easy to smelt and fashion
 - b. iron goods were prestigious thanks to their association with the Underworld
 - c. iron ore is very common and easy to procure and control in large quantities
 - d. when combined with clay, iron could be produced in different color tones

Iron weapons are not significantly harder or stronger than bronze. Iron ore is very common and easy to procure and control in large quantities. This meant that iron-holding societies were stronger militarily and had a higher standard of living, because they could make many more weapons and many more tools. — This contrasts with bronze because bronze required two components, copper and tin, and controlling sources of both was difficult; bronze was also difficult to produce. As a result, bronze was a luxury good, reserved for the elite, and bronze agricultural tools and weapons were produced only for the wealthy few. — The mass production of iron tools and weapons helps shift the center of gravity from the few to the many, as well as bringing about improved health (increased birth rate, reduced death rate), greater distribution of resources, and mass armies capable of more ambitious conquest and occupation of conquered territories.

2. The Phoenicians were known for all of the following EXCEPT:
 - a. having no cities
 - b. successful, wide-ranging sea trade
 - c. Tyrian purple
 - d. the alphabet

The Phoenicians were the Semitic inhabitants of several cities in the coastal north of Canaan (modern-day Lebanon). They were ideally located to import raw materials from inland and then engage in trade around the Mediterranean coast in both directions. They developed a lucrative extensive Mediterranean trade route based on luxury goods that they manufactured from imported materials like raw textiles and marble and from their two most important local commodities—cedar wood and murex, the purple dye they converted into a coveted status symbol throughout the Mediterranean world. — Also their invention of the phonetic alphabet was spread throughout their trading network, introducing literacy to the Dark Age Greeks, the Etruscans, and the Latins.

3. According to the text, a language that became commonly used in many lands because of how widespread its speakers were, becoming a kind of lingua franca or common tongue, was
 - a. Dothraki
 - b. Aramaean
 - c. Parseltongue
 - d. Sindarin

The Aramaean language was widely used as a lingua franca throughout the Fertile Crescent, because it was possible to find Aramaeans in many different cities in Assyria, Canaan, and beyond.

4. All of the following are true of the Philistines EXCEPT:

- a. They were an Indo-European culture, surrounded by Semitic peoples
- b. They possessed iron-working technology and used iron swords
- c. They left behind lots of records and literature to richly inform us of their culture and history
- d. They were likely descended from the Sea Peoples, whose migrations helped end the Bronze Age

The Philistines were a powerful people, likely descended from Indo-European refugees of the Bronze Age Aegean (the Sea Peoples), who were masters of iron and culturally very different from the surrounding Semites. However, we know little about them because they left almost no records or literature.

5. According to tradition, the Hebrew tribes were divided and in conflict with each other until they begged for “a king to judge us like all the nations” after

- a. the Exodus from Egypt
- b. the arrival in the Promised Land
- c. the Battle of Jericho
- d. the Philistines’ theft of the Ark of the Covenant

The need to recover the Ark, which housed the original Torah, from the hostile Philistines (who had also forbidden the use of iron to the Hebrews) drove the tribes to set aside their hostility and ask the high priest Samuel to name a single king over all the Israelites, Saul.

Optional Extra Credit

EC. Now that you’ve finished reading *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, what do you think the story is truly about? What moments from the story most exemplify this?

This question is subjective; possible answers include the Sumerian awareness of universality of death and the consequent need to achieve lasting contributions that surpass it; the untrustworthiness of the gods requiring mortals to ensure their own fate; the importance of the bonds with others over the self; the nature of men as beasts and the role of women to convert them to citizens as mothers/wives; etc.