

Notes on Quiz #1: The Greek Dark Age

1. Historians sometimes call Early Iron Age Hellas the “Greek Dark Age” because
 - a. There was a problem with the sun
 - b. Everyone was poor and covered in dirt
 - c. The archeological record goes suddenly blank after the collapse of the Bronze Age
 - d. Black clothing became the norm

The “dark age” is dark to us, because we have much more difficulty “seeing” this period than the surrounding ones, for several reasons. (a) With the collapse of the Bronze Age civilization of the Mycenaean Greeks around 1100 BCE and the abandonment of cities that resulted, the Greeks lost all urban technologies including writing, so there is no documentary evidence giving us direct testimony until a new writing system is developed around 750 BCE. (b) The dispersed, rural civilization of the dark age is also harder to study archeologically because their extremely localized, agricultural economies produced much fewer material goods, because their communities are spread out and difficult to locate and excavate, and because the larger ones became the foundations of cities still occupied today in the modern Aegean.

2. Things that continued unchanged from Mycenaean times into the Early Iron Age include all of the following EXCEPT:
 - a. Palace-city industry
 - b. Everyday agriculture
 - c. Religious rituals and worship
 - d. Use of the Greek language and storytelling about the past

The Greeks abandoned their cities with the collapse of the Bronze Age, and their palace-city industry failed. But there was great continuity in the countryside, including agricultural practices, rural religious practices, and the use of Greek and the process of storytelling.

3. Signs of economic and cultural growth in the 9th century BCE include all of the following EXCEPT:
 - a. A shift from Protogeometric to more aesthetic and ambitious Geometric vase decoration
 - b. A market for more elaborate craft goods
 - c. Vast houses occupied by the superwealthy
 - d. Domestic luxury items like fine gold jewelry and ivory carvings

There was significant economic growth in the “Dark Age,” including advanced aesthetics and markets for such goods, but housing remained largely uniform and the wealthy did not build palaces as in the Bronze Age.

4. The prominence of independent local chieftains during the Dark Age is suggested by all of the following EXCEPT:
 - a. *Basileus*, the Mycenaean word for village chieftain, became the usual term for ruler or king
 - b. A “chieftain’s house” with an added curved courtyard was found in various settlements
 - c. *Wanax*, the Mycenaean word for great king, was now used only for legendary or mythical overlords like Zeus and Agamemnon
 - d. Only the most important man in each village was buried; the rest of the bodies were thrown away

Dark Age communities were independent and led by a chieftain (*basileus*), rather than ruled by a king, and burials reflected a wide range of community members.

5. Homer is credited as the author of

- a. *Iliad* and *Odyssey*
- b. *Ilysey* and *Odiad*
- c. *Theogony* and *Magogany*
- d. *Kukla*, *Fran*, and *Ollie*

Homer is the author of two key epic poems, *Iliad* (the story of the war with Troy, which was also called Ilios) and *Odyssey* (the story of Odysseus and his journeys).

Optional Extra Credit

EC. Why are the works of Homer important?

Homer's works preserve the cultural and social conditions of his own time, the 8th century BCE, the last century of the dark age. Key elements include the dominance of chiefs—the local basileus who was both leader and best warrior, represented in Homer as the heroes from all the Greek localities like Achilles, Ajax, and Odysseus. Men were judged on bravery and honor (*timē*), and were expected to strive to surpass (*aretē*) in competition with their peers (*agon*). Strangers arriving in another Greek city expected to be treated with guest-friendship (*xenia*), a reciprocal pledge of protection, lodging, and assistance symbolized by gifts. This diplomacy and intercity relations were focused through (a) the trade taking place between them and (b) the personal relationships of their chiefs.