

Notes on Quiz #3: Dawn of the Iron Age

1. What's different about iron, compared to bronze? How did the shift to iron change things?

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. Who were the Phoenicians, and why were they so successful? How did they affect other Mediterranean societies?

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. 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.

EC1. 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

EC2. What kinds of dangers did the Hebrews face when they returned to Canaan? In what ways did they overcome them?

The first great challenge they faced was how to ensure the survival of the religion of Moses in the seductive atmosphere of Canaan. The sensuous fertility rites and worldly appeal of Canaan religion and society threatened to draw Hebrews away into the Canaanite cities.

The second great challenge was their loose, tribal structure, in which any concerted actions were undertaken as temporary alliances between tribes. This unfocused, dispersed structure made the Hebrews vulnerable, weak in both offense to take the land and cities they needed to survive in the already populated Canaan and in defense against more powerful, wealthy inhabitants (both Canaanites and Philistines). The solution was to create a warrior king, but the Hebrews, remembering the oppressive power of the pharaohs from whom they had fled, were resistant to having a king until forced by necessity.