

bio. CLASSROOM

BIO: Genghis Khan Classroom Guide



Introduction:

Throughout much of the 13th century, Genghis Khan and his descendents led Mongol armies into cities and villages throughout Asia and Eastern Europe, conquering a vast territory. Through brutal, yet brilliant military tactics, the Mongols established the world's largest contiguous empire in less than 100 years. At its height, the empire stretched from China's Yellow Sea to the gates of Vienna, Austria - a total of 12 million square miles. In order to consolidate his power and achieve the rapid expansion of the Mongol Empire, Genghis Khan amassed grand armies and developed sophisticated military techniques. Several major dynasties and civilizations were destroyed by the rise of Khan's power and the destructive force of the Mongol armies as they established dominance. *Genghis Khan* follows the story of this notable leader, and traces the path of Mongol expansion from its origins through its eventual demise.

This one-hour Biography explores Genghis Khan's life and legacy, giving students insights into his leadership tactics and the historical context from which the Mongol Empire emerged. By the end of the 13th century, Kublai Khan, grandson of Genghis, ruled over much of China, improving its infrastructure and making connections with Europe. In the process, the Mongol leadership increased Europe's knowledge of Asia, established major trade routes between East and West, and unified large regions in western Russia and China that remain united today. This documentary provides educators and students with an introduction into the life of Genghis Khan, the methods he used to achieve power, and the rise and fall of the Mongol Empire.

Objectives and Curriculum Links:

Genghis Khan - A Ruthless Legacy would be useful for middle school and high school classes on World and/or Global History, World Civilization, and World Cultures courses. It is appropriate for high school students. Objectives: After viewing this program, students will be able to 1) understand the rise of the Mongol Empire and its consequences, 2) understand the chronology of the Mongol conquests of 1206 to 1279 on China, Southeast and Southwest Asia, Russia, and Europe, 3) understand how Mongol traditions influenced Genghis Khan's success as a leader, 4) understand how the Mongol's military and strategic tactics helped them build an empire, 5) understand how Mongol trade and communication networks influenced cultural and technological changes throughout Eurasia.

Vocabulary:

Using the dictionary at www.merriamwebster.com, an internet resource such as www.history.com, or an encyclopedia, students should define or explain the significance of the following terms:

- Batu
- Decimate
- Diplomacy
- Jin (Chin) Dynasty
- Kublai Khan
- Marco Polo
- Mongke Koko Tengri
- Pax Mongolica
- Tartar Tribe
- Transgression
- Xanadu (Shandu)
- Xi Xia Dynasty
- Yassa

Discussion Questions:

1. What lessons did Genghis Khan learn from his mother and his early life in tribal Mongolia that he later used to form the Mongol Empire?
2. How do you think early experiences in the life of Genghis Khan contributed to his quest to dominate the Mongol tribes and unify them into a powerful force?
3. List five adjectives that describe Genghis Khan as leader of the Mongol Empire. How do you think he would have been described in his historical context? Discuss.
4. Why do you think Genghis Khan used such brutal tactics in combating and subduing rival tribes and dynasties? What effect might such tactics have on would-be enemies?
5. Throughout this documentary, Genghis Khan's tactics are described as particularly violent. Do you think his strategies were more violent than other powerful leaders of his era? What kinds of sources would you use to evaluate him in contrast to other leaders?
6. Why do you think Genghis Khan's armies were so superior to opposing armies? Identify three Mongolian military tactics and/or equipment that support your answer and explain their use.
7. In what ways can it be said that Genghis Khan was a spiritual man? How does this spirituality align with his conquering ways? Do you think he had contradictions at the core of his personality?
8. Advancement within the Mongol military and government was not based on traditional lines of heredity or ethnicity but on the merit of the individual. What do you think of this method of promotion?

9. As the Mongol empire grew, it increasingly consisted of a diverse group of peoples and cultures. What do you think were the benefits and challenges of holding together an empire with such diversity and breadth?
10. Why do you think the funeral escort went to such extreme measures to keep Genghis Khan's burial site a secret?
11. Overall, how would you describe the importance and legacy of the Mongol Empire?

Extended Activities:

1. During the reign of the Mongols, 12 million square miles of Eurasia fell under their control. Have students look at a map of the Mongol territory at its height covering the Eastern Hemisphere. Have students locate and label the boundaries of the Mongol Empire at its height. In small groups, students can also create their own maps of the empire on poster-board or another format.
2. The Mongol Empire is remembered as one of the most important power blocs in world history. Ask students to read more about this empire (a good place to start is Bio's online Genghis Khan website located at <http://www.biography.com/genghis-khan/>.) Students should then write up a one-page summary, in bullet-point format, of the major characteristics and accomplishments of this empire. Students should share these papers with the larger class or group and discuss what they included, and why.
3. Ask students to construct a timeline of the major events in the life of Genghis Khan. They can use illustrations, quotes from historical accounts, and maps to highlight his life accomplishments.
4. Genghis Khan, like many world leaders, has a mixed legacy. A powerful leader who created an enormous empire, he is remembered for his keen strategy and military savvy. However, the methods he used to consolidate power were often ruthless and destructive. Ask students to choose another legendary historical figure (i.e. Alexander the Great, Hernando Cortez, Napoleon, etc) and write a 3-5 page paper comparing and contrasting the similarities and differences between Genghis Khan and the historical figure of their choice.
5. Working in small groups, ask students to design a museum display that would present the life and times of Genghis Khan and his grandson Kublai Khan. Include maps, pictures of key individuals, images and descriptions of weapons and battle tactics, and accounts of tribal life.

Websites:

Genghis Khan on Bio.com:

<http://www.biography.com/genghis-khan/>

Royal Alberta Museum Genghis Khan Timeline:

<http://www.royalalbertamuseum.ca/vexhibit/genghis/timeline.htm>

More background on Genghis Khan:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/programmes/timewatch/diary_genghis_01.shtml

Books:

Iggulden, Conn. Genghis: Birth of an Empire. (Dell, 2008).

Morgan, David. The Mongols (Peoples of Europe Series). (Wiley-Blackwell, 2007).

Rossabi, Morris. Kubilai Khan: His Life and Times. (University of California Press, 1989).

Weatherford, Jack. Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World. (Three Rivers, 2005).