Structured Reading—The Hittites

Highlight the key information in the paragraph—never highlight more than 6 words at a time

The Hittites lived in the ancient region of Anatolia (modern-day Turkey) from around 1700BCE. They developed a culture and expanded their territories into an empire which rivalled, and threatened Egypt.

The Hittite Empire was strongest under the reign of King Suppiluliuma I (c.1344-1322 BCE) and his son Mursilli II (c.1321-1295 BCE) after which it got weaker, after repeated attacks by groups called the Sea Peoples and the Kaska tribe, it was finally captured by the Assyrians.

The Hittites were at their strongest during the New Kingdom (1400-1200 BCE), also known as the Hittite Empire. Although there were Hittite kings before him, this history really begins with King Suppiluliuma I who took the throne c. 1344 BCE.

Under Suppiluliumas I (c. 1380–c. 1346 BCE), the empire was most powerful. He defeated the Arzawa tribe, but he mainly fought against the kingdom of Mitanni to the southeast. He also took over part of Syria.

Under Muwatallis (c. 1320–c. 1294 BCE) the Hittites fought to control Syria against a stronger Egypt (under Pharaohs Seti I and Ramses II) and this led to one of the greatest battles of the ancient world, which took place at Kadesh in 1299 BCE. Though Ramses claimed a great victory, the result was probably a draw, and 16 years later, under Hattusilis III (c. 1275–c. 1250 BCE), a peace treaty, mutual defence agreement, and royal marriage were agreed between the Hittites and the Egyptians.

The fall of the Hittite empire (c. 1193 BCE) was sudden and may have been caused by the invasions by the Sea Peoples. While the middle of the empire was captured by a group called the Phrygians, some areas retained their Hittite identity for another five centuries, changing into small independent city-states, which were gradually taken over by Assyria until by 710 BCE the last traces of Hittite independence had disappeared.