

CRITICAL READING OF HISTORICAL SOURCES

→ Who won the Battle of Kadesh?

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"What we see" in history depends on "the perspective we look from". Innovative history education should enable students evaluate historical events from different points of view. This is not only important for a better history education but also for the development of critical thinking and respect for different points of view and different ideas among students. In history classes, studying sources including different points of view to any historical event is an indispensable opportunity to develop students' thinking abilities. These types of activities extend students' comprehension and enable their intellectual skepticism to develop.

In this activity students will analyze the sources of Battle of Kadesh from both sides and understand the shortcomings of "believing one without listening to the other". The activity aims at comparing primary historical documents reflecting the perspectives of two sides of the battle and enabling students to write a text about a historical event based on these documents.



INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

- **All students:** will reach the information of main events and facts about the Battle of Kadesh from primary sources.
- **Most students:** will question the reliability of claims about the Battle of Kadesh written in different sources.
- **Some students:** will evaluate opinions related to different points of view about the Battle of Kadesh.

Grade: 9

Time: 80 minutes.

Key Question:

Who won the Battle of Kadesh?

The Aim of the Lesson:

To be able to analyse critically the sources of Battle of Kadesh from different perspectives.

Curricular links:

Students explain the political, cultural, social and economic structure of early civilizations in Anatolia.

Preparation

Make copies of worksheets for each group.



STARTER

1. Divide your students into groups of 5-6. 5 min.
2. Hand out the **Worksheet-1** to the students and ask them to answer the questions. 8 min.
3. Explain the political and diplomatic context of the Kadesh Battle to the students by using the information and the map on The Information Note. 7 min.
4. Hand out the **Worksheet-2**. Ask students to study the text and the visuals on the worksheet and answer the questions. Then discuss who won the battle according to Egyptian sources
5. Hand out the **Worksheet-3**. Ask students to study Hittite texts and answer the questions. Then discuss the differences between Egyptian and Hittite sources and if their previous opinions about the winner of the battle have changed or not. 20 min.
6. Hand out the **Worksheet-4**. Ask the students to read the text taken from a research paper and answer the questions. Then discuss if there might be other perspectives about the result of Kadesh Battle different from that historian's point of view. 15 min.
7. Hand out the **Worksheets-5 and 6**. Ask students to work in groups and write a historical text about how the Battle of Kadesh took place and who won the battle in the end by using the documents in these worksheets and the documents previously studied. 25 min.

time

Evaluation:

Ask your students to come up with three questions about what they have learned in this class, and answer one of these questions.

Dear...

As “The Voice of the Past” we are planning to publish a special issue about Hittites. We kindly request you to contribute to this issue as a professional historian specialized in ancient ages. It is a well-known fact that the Battle of Kadesh and the Kadesh Treaty signed as a result of this battle have a great importance for both Hittite history and the world history in general. We are planning to publish an article on the Battle of Kadesh in this special issue.

As you know there are certain rules to be followed in historical research. It is necessary to follow these rules for the articles written for our journal. The research is required to be based on primary sources written in those times when the historical event took place. Using sources that belongs to only one side of the war may cause misleading results. Therefore, it is necessary to use sources that reflect all parties’ viewpoints and to compare them with each other. These sources should be evaluated as objectively as possible and necessary inferences should be made.

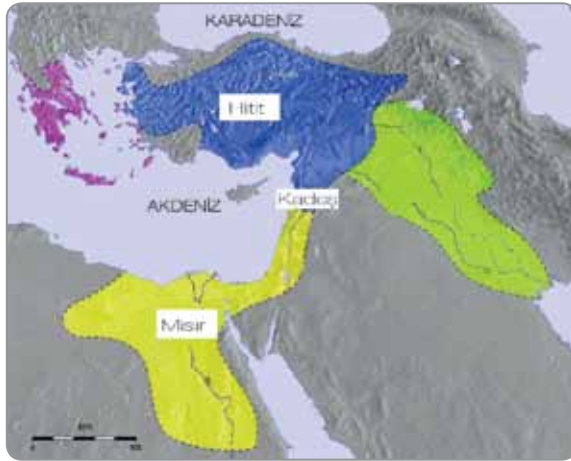


1. What does the letter ask you to do?
2. What are the rules that must be followed in historical research according to the letter?



INFORMATION
NOTE

■ HITTITE – EGYPTIAN CONFLICT



↙ There was a violent struggle going on between Hittites who established a powerful state in Anatolia and Egyptian Kingdom which was another powerful state in the mid-13th century B.C. for the annexation of the land of Syria today. This territory was particularly important for the control of trade routes. The City of Kadesh was strategically significant for this reason. Kadesh is in the west of Syria, by the Orontes River. In those times the area where the City of Kadesh was located was called Kingdom of Amurru named after Amurru people living there. During the 13th century B.C. this city changed hands several times between Egyptians and Hittites.

In 1274 B.C. Egyptian Pharaoh Ramesses II and Hittite King Muwattali II confronted each other near the City of Kadesh. The war which is called the Battle of Kadesh is one of the well-known wars of the ancient times. This is because the war was pictured on the walls and described in written records in detail especially in Egyptian sources. The treaty signed between Egyptians and Hittites after the war in 1269 B.C. is the first written international treaty known in history.

Ramesses II also known as Ramesses the Great reigned between 1279 B.C. – 1213 B.C (for 66 years) in Egypt. Muwattali II reigned the Kingdom of Hittite from 1295 B.C. to 1272 B.C.



■ **Source 1: An extract from the Poem of Pentaour***

The King (Ramesses II) had armed his people and his chariots. He arrived as far as Kadesh. And when the King approached the city, the miserable King of the hostile Hittites had arrived. He had assembled with him all the peoples. Their number was endless; nothing like it had ever been before.

*They (Hittites) stood in ambush northwest of the town of Kadesh. Then they went out from Kadesh, on the side of the south, and threw themselves into the midst of the legion of Ra**, which gave way, and was not prepared for the fight. There King's warriors and chariots gave way before them. The King had placed himself to the north of the town of Kadesh, on the west side of the river Arunatha. Then they came to tell the King the attack of the Hittites.*

Then the King (Ramesses II) arose like his father Monthu. He seized his weapons and put on his armor. The King had quickened his course; he rushed into the middle of the hostile hosts of Hatti. All alone, no other was with him. When Pharaoh had done this, he looked behind him. He was surrounded by two thousand five hundred pairs of horses. His retreat was beset by the bravest heroes of the miserable King of the people of Hatti.

(The King says):

"Not one of my princes, not one of my captains of the chariot, not one of my chief men, not one of my knights was there. My warriors and my chariots had abandoned me. Not one of them was there to take part in the battle. I had met two thousand five hundred pairs of horses. I was in the midst of the charioteers, but they were dashed in pieces before my horses. Not one of them raised his hand to fight. Their courage was sunken in their breasts, their limbs gave way, they could not hurl the dart, nor had they the courage to thrust with the spear. I made them fall into the waters just as the crocodiles fall in. They tumbled down on their faces one after another. I killed them at my pleasure, so that not one looked back behind him, nor did another turn around. I killed them; no one escaped me."

When the earth was again light in the morning [Savaşın ikinci gününde], the King arranged the hosts of his warriors for the fight. He stood there prepared for the battle, like a bull which has whetted his horns. The King had power over the enemies and slew them without their being able to escape. As bodies tumbled before his horses, so they lay there stretched out altogether in their blood.

Then the King of the hostile people of Hatti sent a messenger to pray piteously to the great name of the King (Ramesses II), speaking thus: "Better is peace than war. Give us freedom."

The King assembled all the leaders of the army and they were permitted to hear the contents of the message which the King of Hatti had sent to him. When they had heard these words, they answered to the King: "Excellent, excellent is that!"

Then the King went in peace to the land of Egypt with his princes, with his army, and his charioteers, in serene humour, in the sight of his people. All countries feared the power of the King, as of the lord of both the worlds.

* This text is taken from an Ancient Egyptian source known as Poem of Pentaour. The Poem of Pentaour, written or dictated by Ramesses II, takes place in most of the temples and monuments built in that period. The text below is abridged and adapted from this poem.

** Egyptian army consisted of four large troops: the army of Ra, the army of Amun, the army of Set and the army of Ptah. When the Hittite attack started these four armies were situated far from each other.

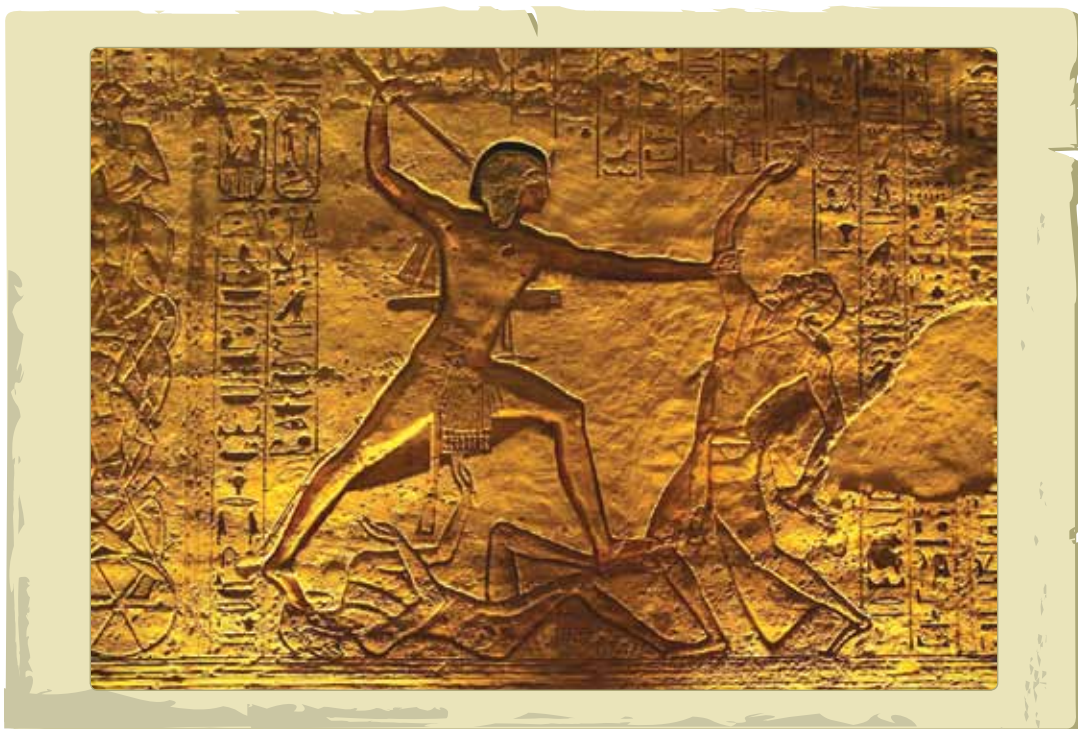


THE BATTLE OF KADESH ACCORDING TO EGYPTIANS

■ Source 2



■ Source 3



1. According to Source 1 how did the Battle of Kadesh progress? Write the important steps of the battle.
2. Draw a portrait of Ramesses according to the sources:
 - What are the five adjectives (qualities) that describe Ramesses II in source 2 and 3 best in your opinion? Discuss what these pictures are trying to tell based on the adjectives you chose.
 - Are the things explained in the texts in accord with the pictures? Try to find expressions corresponding to the five adjectives (qualities) you chose for Ramesses.
 - Ramesses II painted the pictures and wrote the texts in these documents. Why do you think Ramesses had these paintings done?
3. According to these sources who won the battle?



THE BATTLE OF KADESH ACCORDING TO HITTITES

➤ **Note:** Unlike the ancient Egyptian sources, there is no detailed description of Kadesh Battle in the extant Hittite sources. However in Hittite sources there is a small amount of information about the battle. Below there are extracts from two Hittite sources and a Hittite relief explaining The Battle of Kadesh.

■ Source 1

When Muwattalli (...) became king, the people of Amurru [name of the region, in this historical period, including city of Kadesh] broke faith with him, and had this to say to him: "From free individuals we have become vassals. But now we are your vassals no longer!" And they entered into the following of the king of Egypt. Thereupon Muwattalli (...) and the King of Egypt did battle with each other over the people of Amurru. Muwattalli defeated the king of Egypt and destroyed the Land of Amurru with his weapons and subjugated it.

■ Source 2

(This text is taken from a letter of Hattusili, the brother of Muwattalli) Because my brother Muwattalli campaigned against the king of Egypt and the king of Amurru, when he defeated the kings of Egypt and Amurru, he went back to Aba. When Muwattalli, my brother defeated Aba, he ... went back to Hatti (...).

Source: Trevor BRYCE, *The Kingdom of The Hittites*, 2005.

■ Source 3



1. Is there a contradiction between the information given in Hittite sources and Egyptian sources? If so what is it?
2. Which of these two sources is more reliable than the other? Why?
3. How do you think the Battle of Kadesh ended? Evaluate Egyptian and Hittite sources and write your own comment.



THE BATTLE OF KADESH ACCORDING TO A HISTORIAN

■ **Source: Who won the Kadesh Battle?**

Both sides claimed victory. The Egyptian records clearly depict the battle as an overwhelming triumph for the pharaoh. On the other hand our Hittite records, while they contain no surviving account of the battle itself, represent the outcome as a victory for Muwattalli. The likelihood is that after a desperate rally from Ramses and the forces immediately at his disposal, the Egyptian army was saved at the eleventh hour from a devastating defeat, and the battle itself ended in a stalemate; both side sustained heavy losses and neither emerged as the decisive victor.

In the longer term, however, Muwattalli was the ultimate victor. After fending off the Hittites onslaught, Ramesses promptly withdrew his forces far to the south. Not only had he failed to regain for Egypt Hittite subject territories north to Kadesh, but his retreating forces were pursued by Muwattalli into Egyptian-held territory, as far south as the Land of Aba (region of Damascus). (...) For Muwattalli, the most important sequel to the battle of Kadesh was his recapture of the kingdom of Amurru. Control of this kingdom was of critical importance to the security of Hittite rule in Syria.

Source: Trevor BRYCE, *The Kingdom of The Hittites*, 2005.

1. **Who won the battle according to the writer? What are the long-term results of the battle?**
2. **In your opinion, can the writer's inferences be regarded as exact knowledge or just comments?**
 - i. Is there any direct evidence that supports the writer's inferences?
 - ii. Can you say that the writer is certain about his/her inferences by analyzing the language of the text?
3. **Do you agree with the inference of the writer about the result of the battle? Is there a possibility of making a different inference?**



- **Note:** The Treaty of Kadesh, the earliest peace treaty known in history, was concluded between the Hittite and Egyptian empires in 1269 BC, five years after the Battle of Kadesh. Muvattalli II, the King of Hittites, died after the battle and the treaty was concluded between Hattusili III, the following Hittite king and the Egyptian king Ramesses II. The clay tablet containing the text of this treaty, that was found at Boğazköy (Turkey) in 1906, is exposed in Istanbul Archaeological Museum.

■ **Source:** An extract from the Peace Treaty of Kadesh



Tablets containing the text of the Treaty of Kadesh

It is concluded that Reamasesa-Mai-amana (Ramesses II) , the Great King, the king of the land of Egypt, with Hattusili, the Great King, the king of the land of Hatti, his brother, for the land of Egypt and the land of Hatti, in order to establish a good peace and a good fraternity forever among them.

If domestic or foreign enemies marches against one of these two countries and if they ask help from each other, both parties will send their troops and chariots in order to help. If a nobleman flees from Hatti and seeks refuge in Egypt, the king of Egypt will catch him and send back to his country. If people flee from Egypt to Hatti or from Hatti to Egypt, those will be sent back.

Source: <http://www.istanbularkeoloji.gov.tr> (Official web site of Istanbul Archeological Museum)

■ You can write your article about the Battle of Kadesh below.

