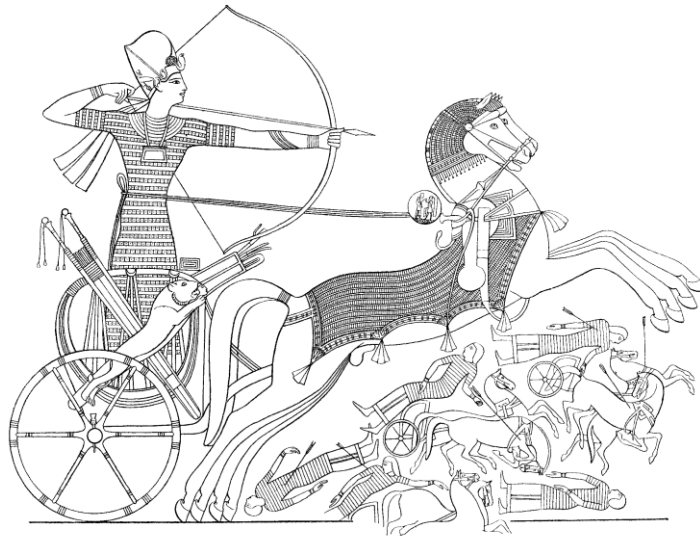




Trade and Conflict in Ancient Egypt

The Battle of Kadesh

A well-known campaign in Egypt's colourful history is the Battle of Kadesh, waged by Ramesses II. The outcome of the battle remains contested because historical sources provide us with conflicting information.



Step 1: Preliminary class discussion

Ramesses would've declared that his actions at the Battle of Kadesh were the 'effects' that came from the actions of his enemy (the 'causes'). As you watched the program, you heard the account of the battle; think about whether we can view the events simply as a logical sequence of 'causes and effects'. Discuss your ideas as a class.

Step 2: Read the description

Working in pairs, read this description of the Battle of Kadesh and underline **3** key decisions made by **each** side that directly affected the outcome. Underline Egyptian decisions in **blue** and Hittite decisions in **red**. Be prepared to explain your choices.

Ramesses II wanted to retake the city of Kadesh held by the Hittites. The Hittites were a people who had been threatening to overrun Egypt for decades. They had settlements in Palestine and Syria. These regions had been conquered by Ramesses' father, Seti I, but had gradually fallen under the control of the Hittites again. The Hittites had also banded together with the Coalition of Kadesh that Egypt defeated at the Battle of Megiddo.

As Ramesses' 20 000 strong army advanced north, Muwatalli II – leader of the Hittites – sent two spies pretending to be innocent travelers to 'accidentally' stumble upon the Egyptian army and give them false information regarding the whereabouts of the Hittite army. They told Ramesses that the Hittite army was far away in the north. Ramesses raced to Kadesh hoping to capture it quickly. But, in fact the Hittite army was lying in ambush, ready to attack, just east of the city.





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Stretched along the road through the Orontes valley, the first division of Egypt's army reached Kadesh. They established camp and waited for the other divisions advancing from the south. That night, Ramesses' men captured two Hittite scouts in Kadesh. After being beaten and tortured the scouts confessed and gave up their army's real position and plan. But it was too late for the Egyptian army.

The Hittites crossed the Orontes River, surrounded Egypt's second division and cut off their escape routes. Muwatalli led the chariot force and infantry as they attacked the Egyptians. His first division destroyed, Ramesses was saved by another division who came up behind the Hittites and forced them into the river.

Despite being caught by surprise and suffering great losses the Egyptians retained the battlefield.

The Battle of Kadesh involved the largest number of chariots in an ancient conflict, with an estimated 5 to 6000 chariots involved. The battle continued the next day but neither side was able to win decisively. Ramesses decided to retreat with his severely diminished army. Meanwhile, the Hittites pushed south to Damascus to stop Egypt from re-establishing control in the region.

While both leaders claimed victory in the Battle of Kadesh, historians view it as the beginning of the end of the golden age of the Egyptian empire. Egypt lost its influence over Hittite territory and was stopped from further expansion into modern day Syria. Ramesses also signed a treaty with the Hittites – possibly the first major peace treaty in history, evidence that there was no clear victor.

Step 3. Draw a diagram

With your work partner, take an A3 sheet of paper and using a bird's eye view, draw a plan and execution of the battle. Label your diagram with annotations to explain each key element.

Step 4. Independently answers these questions.

a) Where did Ramesses order a biased Egyptian version of the Battle of Kadesh be recorded?

b) What happened to Ramesses after the Battle of Kadesh?

