The Dorians

There are many theories about the origins of the Dorians. According to Greek mythology, their name comes from a city in central Greece called Doris. Stories tell of how a Mycenaean ruler named Eurystheus, drove the three sons of Hercules from Doris. The three brothers later took revenge by invading the mainland of Greece to reclaim what they saw as their rightful territory. Unlike the Minoans and Mycenaeans, there is little other archeological evidence to offer much information about these people.



What is known is that the Dorians invaded mainland Greece around 1100 B.C. Although they were not as advanced as the Mycenaeans, they did have one very important advantage. The iron slashing sword (at left) was much stronger than the bronze swords used by the Mycenaeans. Not only were the Dorian weapons superior, but their warriors arrived in the area at a time when the Mycenaean civilization was already in decline, making them an easy target. The Dorian invasion led to a period of violence and lawlessness known as the Dark Ages. Although few, if any, written records exist from this period, it is believed that most farm crops were destroyed and trade came to a halt.

However, not all was lost. Some Mycenaeans were able to flee from the Dorian invasion and went to the Aegean islands or to the western coast of the Asia Minor (later known as Ionia), where they preserved their Greek traditions. Those who remained on the mainland mixed with the Dorians to form a new culture.

The new civilization that formed during the chaos of the Dorian invasion was a tribal society. People were organized into clans and ruled by kings. Wealth was based on land ownership, which resulted in a small, rich, and privileged class that controlled the masses. Many people made their living by plundering their neighbors. Eventually, the rich landowners grew tired of answering to the greedy kings, and overthrew them by about 750 B.C.

In some areas, the Dorians were heavily influenced by the Greek people and adopted many of their ways. The Dorians merged with the mainland Greeks who had not fled during the Dark Ages.

In other areas, the Dorians held onto their power. These settlements were very warlike and kept to themselves. Eventually, these small, remote villages grew into independent communities known as city-states. These self-governing cities grew and thrived and eventually developed the ideas, knowledge and culture that are associated with Ancient Greece today.

**1. Textual Evidence:** Which paragraph gives textual evidence to explain why the Dorians were successful in defeating the Mycenaeans?

A. paragraph 1

B. paragraph 2

C. paragraph 3

D. paragraph 4

**2. Summarizing:** Which statement offers the best summary of the passage?

A. The Dorians invaded mainland Greece while the Mycenaeans were an easy target, causing many of them to flee to Ionia where they preserved their Greek traditions.

B. Although their origins are unknown, historians know that the Dorians invaded mainland Greece around 1100 BC, creating a period known as the Dark Ages, and creating lasting changes to the culture of the Greeks.

C. In some areas, the Dorians were heavily influenced by the Greek people and adopted their customs. In other areas, the Dorians held onto their power.

D. A new civilization in Greece formed from the mixing of the Dorians and Mycenaeans in Greece.

**3. Supporting details:** Which detail below best supports the idea that the Dorians created a tribal society?

A. People were organized into clans and ruled by kings.

B. Those who remained on the island mixed with the Dorians to form a new culture.

C. Not only were the Dorians weapons superior, but they arrived at a time when the Mycenaean civilization was already in a decline.

D. Eventually, these small, remote villages grew into independent city-states.

**4. Text Structure**: Which best describes the structure of this text?

A. Cause and effect

B. Compare and contrast

C. Problem and solution

D. Description

**5. Author’s purpose:** The statement that best describes this author’s purpose is:

A. To explain who the Dorians in ancient Greece were.

B. To show why the Dorians defeated the Mycenaeans in ancient Greece.

C. To show where the Greeks of Ionia came from.

D. To show how the Dark Ages in Greece began.