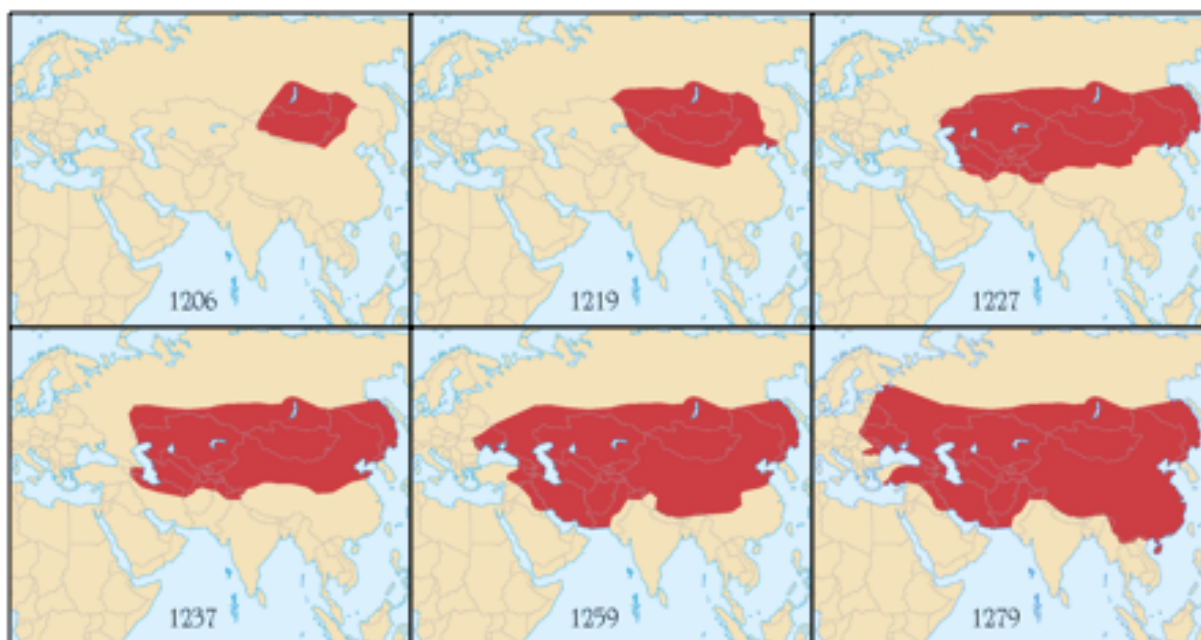


Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Aim: How did the Mongols establish their empire?

**Do Now:** Below is a series of maps in chronological order. *What are your observations? What questions do you have?*




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*In 1200 CE, the Mongols lived on the grasslands of Central Asia in small, pastoral-nomadic clans. These clans were led by a chieftain and often fought with each other over disputes about honor, their animals, and rights to grazing and hunting territory. To the south of Mongolia, China's brilliant Song dynasty was prospering, and to its west, the Islamic caliphates and sultanates were renowned centers of culture and learning. In 1206, a Mongol who became known as Genghis Khan united the clans and began a decades long process of conquest. By 1294 the Mongol empire became the largest ever contiguous land empire in world history.*

- 1. If you were Genghis Khan, what strategies would you use to unite the Mongol clans and ensure their unity and loyalty to you?**

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2. The above pictures depict some of the geographical characteristics that shaped the ancient Mongols' lives. Write down geographic characteristics that you observe, then for each analyze how it may have benefitted or challenged their lifestyle.

Geographic Characteristic	Benefits	Challenges

3. What can you gather about the Mongols' military tactics from the picture below?



“Their arms are bows, iron maces, and in some instances, spears; but the first is the weapon at which they are the most expert, being accustomed, from children, to employ it in their sports. They wear defensive armor made from buffalo and hides of other beasts, dried by the fire, and thus rendered extremely hard and strong. They are brave in battle, almost to desperation, setting little value upon their lives, and exposing themselves without hesitation to all manner of danger. Their disposition is cruel. They are capable of supporting every kind of privation, and when there is a necessity for it, can live for a month on the milk of their mares, and upon such wild animals as they may chance to catch. Their horses are fed upon grass alone, and do not require barley or other grain. The men are trained to remain on horseback during two days and two nights, without dismounting.... No people on earth can surpass them in fortitude under difficulties, nor show greater patience under wants of every kind. They are most obedient to their chiefs, and are maintained at small expense.”

--*Travels* by Marco Polo (a European traveler). Written in 1298 based on his travels from 1274 to 1290.

4. Based on the above account, how did the Mongols' way of life and military tactics make them so successful in conquest?
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5. The green area in the above map shows the *steppe*, a large expanse of relatively flat and unforested grassland stretching throughout Eastern Europe and Asia. Given what you know about the Mongols' way of life, how did the existence of the steppe impact their extremely rapid and vast expansion of the Mongolian empire?
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"If you do not pay homage,  
we will take your prosperity.

If you do not have prosperity,  
We will take your children.

If you do not have children,  
We will take your wife.

If you do not have a wife,  
We will take your head."  
--Genghis Khan's tax laws

"That summer Genghis Khan pitched his camp on the Snowy mountain. He sent soldiers out against the Tangqut people who had rebelled against him... The whole tribe was completely wiped out. Then he showed favor to his generals, saying: "Take what you want, until you can carry no more... Make their fine sons follow behind you, holding your falcons. Bring up their daughters to arrange your wives' skirts.

--Anonymous eyewitness  
primary source account

"Temujin (Ghenghis Khan's original name) had a reputation of being generous to those who joined his, giving them furs and horses and allowing them to keep their religion. Many who were suffering under unkind leaders switched their allegiance to him saying, 'Temujin dresses his people in his own clothes; he permits them to ride his own horses."

--*Genghis Khan* by Michel Hoang

"Ogedei (the son of Genghis Khan) allowed his sublime thoughts to overflow lavishly into the most just and charitable of good deeds, into the eradication of injustices and enmity, into the development of cities and districts, as well as into the construction of various buildings. He never neglected any measure designed to strengthen the framework of peace, and to lay the foundation of prosperity.

--*History of the Mongols* by Rashid al-Din, approximately 1241. Al-Din was a Mongol official.

6. The quotes in the above boxes demonstrate the Mongol ruling style. Compare the quotes in the left box to the quotes on the right box. What different kinds of ruling styles did the Mongols have, and how might their ruling styles have helped them establish control over an area?

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## Crash Course World History #17

### “Wait for it... The Mongols!”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=szxPar0BcMo>

*Watch the above following 11-minute clip on the Mongols, filling out the worksheet below as you watch. John Green talks quickly, so it's helpful to turn the subtitles on and be prepared to rewind if necessary.*

1. The Mongols were nomads. Nomads migrate according to climate conditions so they can feed their \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Nomads don't generally produce manufactured goods, which means they need to \_\_\_\_\_, so they almost always live near settled people.
3. Pastoral nomads tend to be more \_\_\_\_\_, especially where women are concerned.
4. Genghis or C\_\_\_\_\_ Khan was born around 1162 with the name \_\_\_\_\_ to a lowly clan chief.
5. He united the tribes by promoting people based on m\_\_\_\_\_, and by bringing l\_\_\_\_\_ classes of conquered people into his own tribe.
6. After Genghis died in 1227, his son O\_\_\_\_\_ Khan expanded the empire even more. Genghis' grandson, Mongke Khan, captured Baghdad, the capital of the A\_\_\_\_\_ Empire. Another grandson, K\_\_\_\_\_ Khan conquered China's Song Dynasty in 1279.
7. Historians believe there are currently about \_\_\_\_\_ million direct descendants of Genghis Khan on the earth.
8. After Genghis' death, the Mongol empire was split into four pieces called K\_\_\_\_\_, which meant it didn't stay unified.
9. Genghis Khan's army was built on s\_\_\_\_\_ and a\_\_\_\_\_.
10. The Mongols adopted g\_\_\_\_\_, probably introducing it to Europeans.
11. The Mongols reinvigorated cross-Eurasian S\_\_\_\_\_ R\_\_\_\_\_ trade, which they valued because they could tax it, so they made travel very safe.

12. The Mongols increased communication through Eurasia by developing the y\_\_\_\_\_ system, using road side rest stops or relay stations as well as a kind of passport.
13. The Mongols were not skilled at record-keeping or other writing-based kinds of skills, so they forcibly r\_\_\_\_\_ administrators, who were frequently Muslim, to other parts of the empire.
14. The Mongols were unprecedentedly \_\_\_\_\_ of different religions and did not expect conquered people to adopt their own shamanistic religion.
15. Genghis Khan was seriously brutal, believing, “The greatest \_\_\_\_\_ is to vanquish your enemies, to chase them before you, to rob them of their wealth, to see those dear to them bathed in tears, to clasp to your bosom their wives and daughters.”
16. The Mongol empire didn’t last long – either losing its Mongol identity through cultural integration, or through being replaced. Within \_\_\_\_\_ years they’d left China and been replaced by the \_\_\_\_\_ Dynasty.
17. Because they opened up cross-Eurasian trade, the Mongols were probably responsible for the spread of the \_\_\_\_\_.

Choose one of John Green’s concluding questions below, and answer with your well-supported opinion.

- The Mongols promoted religious diversity but also cared very little for promoting societal artistic output. Which is more valuable?
- The Mongols used a particularly brutal form of imperialism, but it only lasted a short time. Is this better or worse than other conquerors’ forms of milder imperialism that maintained control over areas for many centuries?
- Are certain kinds of warfare that the Mongols participated in inherently wrong, or do their accomplishments outweigh their methods?

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## Aim: How did the Mongols establish their empire?

### TEACHER GUIDE & ANSWER KEY

**Do Now:** Below is a series of maps in chronological order. *What are your observations? What questions do you have?*

Student answers will vary. Possible student questions may include: What do the red parts mean? Does this show a country conquering territory/expanding? Who did this? How did they grow so much so fast? Why did they mostly expand horizontally and not really vertically? What happened after 1279?

#### **1. If you were Genghis Khan, what strategies would you use to unite the Mongol clans and ensure their unity and loyalty to you?**

Student answers will vary. Common student answers include: aggressive military tactics to gain power by force, forming an alliance with another powerful clan through marriage, giving rewards to those who are loyal to you, etc.

Let students know that Genghis used most of their ideas. Some background to share with them: When he was a teenager (still called “Temujin” at that point, the name he was given at birth) he rose to leadership within his own tribe. His father was poisoned and Temujin soon killed his older brother in an argument over power. A bit later, Temujin’s first wife and his mother were kidnapped by a rival clan. When he daringly rescued his wife, Temujin showed his strength and became his clan’s leader. Establishing loyalty was very important to him, which he enforced by becoming “blood brothers” with important allies by cutting their fingers and mixing their blood with each other. He led his clan to many victories over rival clans and brutally killed or impoverished their leaders. He also increased his popularity throughout all the Mongols by allowing lower status people to join his clan and also giving talented people from other clans high positions in his own, thus appointing by meritocracy rather than by high-status birth. He wanted to establish unity as a Mongol people and not just a collection of separate clans, so when new clans joined him, he separated its members and had them join with other parts of his growing organization. In 1206 the Mongols held a council called a “kurultai” and chose Temujin to be the ruler over all the clans and he was declared “Genghis (or Chinggis) Khan.” In Mongolian, “khan” means “ruler” and the closest translation of “Genghis” seems to be “oceanic” or “widespread.” The title “Genghis Khan” may have meant, then, “Universal Ruler.”

2. The above pictures depict some of the geographical characteristics that shaped the ancient Mongols' lives. Write down geographic characteristics that you observe, then for each analyze how it may have benefitted or challenged their lifestyle.

Geographic Characteristic	Benefits	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Mountainous/high above sea level</li> <li>-Not directly near water/coast</li> <li>-Flat grasslands and dry, arid plains (<i>steppe</i>)</li> <li>-Lots of grazing animals and wild horses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Protection from enemies/invaders</li> <li>-adapt easily to a nomadic lifestyle; build collapsible, easily transportable homes to follow grazing animals</li> <li>-depend on horses and animal herds for subsistence</li> <li>-became extremely skilled riders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-isolation from other cultures and innovations except for brief trading interactions</li> <li>-dependence on nomadic pastoralist herding lifestyle means Mongols can't easily thrive outside the steppe region</li> <li>-no advanced buildings/cities</li> </ul>

3. What can you gather about the Mongols' military tactics from the picture below?

The horse was integral to Mongol military strategy. They fought on horseback using spears and swords and were also very skilled at archery – able to ride and shoot backward at the same time. They would be able to cover large distances very quickly on horseback and attack from a distance with a bow and arrow, but also mow down enemies on foot by trampling them with their horse or attacking with a sword from horseback. They would have been terrifying military opponents.

4. Based on the above account, how did the Mongols' way of life and military tactics make them so successful in conquest?

The Mongols' way of life made them equally successful in military conquest. Living in difficult, harsh conditions made them tough with excellent endurance. They had an organized clan structure with strong loyalty ingrained, translating well to warfare. Living a life on horseback hunting and herding their animals made them extremely skilled at riding and shooting arrows from horseback. They used their animals for everything: for food, for shelter, even for making a kind of armor from their hides. You may want to share with students a famous old Mongol proverb: "If the horse dies, I die; if it lives, I survive" and discuss its meaning. Be sure to also discuss what kinds of biases/exaggerations may be seen in Marco Polo's words and why he might have them.

(Students may also find fascinating the many stories of Mongol soldiers being sent on long, galloping journeys across the steppe. They were said to ride for days, only stopping to sleep briefly. They traveled very lightly and if they became thirsty or hungry along the way, the stories say they would nick open a vein in their horse and drink from the blood that spurted out. The blood was rich in nutrients and iron and would satisfy their thirst and hunger along the way. Literal fast food!)



- 5. The green area in the above map shows the *steppe*, a large expanse of relatively flat and unforested grassland stretching throughout Eastern Europe and Asia. Given what you know about the Mongols' way of life, how did the existence of the steppe impact their extremely rapid and vast expansion of the Mongolian empire?**

Along the steppe, there was absolutely no one who could stop the Mongols' rapid expansion of their empire. Their way of life and military techniques were ideally suited to its conditions. It is interesting that the location of the steppe in Eurasia correlates almost exactly to the location of the expanding Mongolian empire. Anywhere their horses and herds were able to easily travel, they could conquer and maintain governance through relatively sophisticated communication systems. It was much harder for them to conquer and maintain rule in areas south of the steppe, where the geography was not conducive to the Mongol way of life – mountainous barriers, marshy/swampy/jungle-like conditions, or deserts.

The Mongols did learn how to adapt quickly to different environments, however. Students may be interested in the story of their attempted invasion of Japan after taking control of Song dynasty China. For the first time ever, the horse-riding Mongols built a fleet of ships to cross the sea into Japan. They tried twice, in 1274 and 1281. Both times, a strong typhoon arose and the storm sank most of the Mongols' ships, causing the invasions to fail and the Japanese to remain free of Mongol rule. The Japanese called these typhoons that saved them "kamikaze" or "divine winds." Later, in WWII, the word "kamikaze" and all its historical significance for the Japanese was used as the formal term for the suicide attacks by Japanese pilots using their planes as bombs to crash into Allied ships.

- 6. The quotes in the above boxes demonstrate the Mongol ruling style. Compare the quotes in the left box to the quotes on the right box. What different kinds of ruling styles did the Mongols have, and how might their ruling styles have helped them establish control over an area?**

The quotes in the left box show a ruling style based on brutality. People would have complied with the Mongols and obeyed out of fear. There are accounts of whole cities surrendering in advance when they heard the Mongols were coming – their reputation of terror was an effective ruling mechanism. The quotes in the right box, however, show the Mongol leaders as being generous and quick to reward loyalty. Once they had conquered an area, they seemed not to be tyrannical, but aimed at making life better for the regular person. This "bad cop/good cop" routine working in tandem was probably quite effective in displacing rulers and also winning the allegiance and cooperation of the lower classes they ruled.

Be sure to also discuss the implications of point of view in each source excerpt examined. Are they all trustworthy? How might they be biased? The first is a tax law on record, but it's very possible it was an exaggeration and declared more to enforce cooperation than meant to be enforced exactly. The second is an eyewitness account ostensibly from the time period, which makes it more trustworthy, but it is anonymous and the person who wrote it down could have made it up or had motives impacting the negative portrayal of the Mongols it gives. The third is a quote from a reputable secondary source academic book, but not a primary source – although it does contain a primary source quote. The fourth is a documented primary source quote from

the time period and also from an Arabic Muslim whose land was conquered by the Mongols. He still writes positively of them, despite this fact, which seems to give it more legitimacy. However, he was given a position of authority under the Mongols, so he may have a biased reason to think favorably of them.

### CRASH COURSE WORKSHEET ANSWERS:

1. The Mongols were nomads. Nomads migrate according to climate conditions so they can feed their flocks.
2. Nomads don't generally produce manufactured goods, which means they need to trade, so they almost always live near settled people.
3. Pastoral nomads tend to be more egalitarian, especially where women are concerned.
4. Genghis or Chinggis Khan was born around 1162 with the name Temujin to a lowly clan chief.
5. He united the tribes by promoting people based on merit, and by bringing lower classes of conquered people into his own tribe.
6. After Genghis died in 1227, his son Ogedei Khan expanded the empire even more. Genghis' grandson, Mongke Khan, captured Baghdad, the capital of the Abbasid Empire. Another grandson, Kublai Khan conquered China's Song Dynasty in 1279.
7. Historians believe there are currently about sixteen million direct descendants of Genghis Khan on the earth. *(Because he raped so many women!!)*
8. After Genghis' death, the Mongol empire was split into four pieces called Khanates, which meant it didn't stay unified.
9. Genghis Khan's army was built on speed and archery.
10. The Mongols adopted gunpowder, probably introducing it to Europeans.
11. The Mongols reinvigorated cross-Eurasian Silk Road trade, which they valued because they could tax it, so they made travel very safe.
12. The Mongols increased communication through Eurasia by developing the yam system, using road side rest stops or relay stations as well as a kind of passport.

13. The Mongols were not skilled at record-keeping or other writing-based kinds of skills, so they forcibly **relocated** \_\_\_\_\_ administrators, who were frequently Muslim, to other parts of the empire.
14. The Mongols were unprecedentedly \_\_\_\_\_ **tolerant** \_\_\_\_\_ of different religions and did not expect conquered people to adopt their own shamanistic religion.
15. Genghis Khan was seriously brutal, believing, “The greatest \_\_\_\_\_ **happiness** \_\_\_\_\_ is to vanquish your enemies, to chase them before you, to rob them of their wealth, to see those dear to them bathed in tears, to clasp to your bosom their wives and daughters.”
16. The Mongol empire didn’t last long – either losing its Mongol identity through cultural integration, or through being replaced. Within \_\_\_\_\_ **80** \_\_\_\_\_ years they’d left China and been replaced by the \_\_\_\_\_ **Ming** \_\_\_\_\_ Dynasty.
17. Because they opened up cross-Eurasian trade, the Mongols were probably responsible for the spread of the \_\_\_\_\_ **Black** \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ **Death** \_\_\_\_\_.

Choose one of John Green’s concluding questions below, and answer with your well-supported opinion.

- The Mongols promoted religious diversity but also cared very little for promoting societal artistic output. Which is more valuable?
- The Mongols used a particularly brutal form of imperialism, but it only lasted a short time. Is this better or worse than other conquerors’ forms of milder imperialism that maintained control over areas for many centuries?
- Are certain kinds of warfare that the Mongols participated in inherently wrong, or do their accomplishments outweigh their methods?

Student answers will vary, but should be well-written, well-supported, and demonstrate understanding of the Mongols’ lifestyle, culture, conquest, impact, etc.