

# Genghis Khan

c. 1167–1227



**HOW HE AFFECTED THE WORLD** Genghis Khan was a fierce warrior, brilliant military leader, and wise ruler. About 700 years ago, he conquered most of Asia on behalf of Mongolia. He built the largest, most powerful empire the world had ever seen.



*As you read the biography below, think about how Genghis Khan's fierceness, intelligence, and tolerance helped him build a huge empire.*

Genghis Khan was born in a ger in the hills of northern Mongolia. His family belonged to one of many nomadic clans that herded sheep in and around the Gobi Desert. By the age of 25, he had united all of the wandering Mongol tribes into one unit and assumed leadership over them.

Genghis Khan spent five years organizing this new state. He divided the people using a military system—into groups of 10, 100, 1,000 and 10,000. He made sure every group had plenty of food and supplies. He promoted education, law and order, and kept very strict **discipline**. Genghis Khan was highly respected, and the people obeyed his laws.

By 1206, Genghis Khan began to expand his empire. He planned brilliant military strategies and soon conquered neighboring groups. His armies even **breached** the Great Wall to take over China. He then turned westward to face the powerful Turkish Empire. The fierce reputation of Genghis Khan and his armies had already spread across Asia. When the Mongol armies arrived, many groups surrendered without a fight. Khan won victory against the Turks, greatly expanding the Mongol Empire.



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## VOCABULARY

**discipline** control

**breached** broke through

**tolerant** respectful of others' beliefs

**revolt** uprising against the government

In 1222, he conquered Russia. His empire now included nearly the entire continent of Asia, the largest the world had ever seen.

Although Genghis Khan was vicious in battle, he was mild and **tolerant** as a ruler. Many of the conquered peoples experienced better daily conditions than they had before. Khan provided safety and food, and he allowed each culture to practice their own religion and speak their own language.

Genghis Khan died around the age of 60 during a trip to China to stop a **revolt**. Khan's sons and grandsons continued to successfully rule the Mongol Empire for more than 150 years after his death. The fantastic military achievements of Genghis Kahn remain unmatched by any other leader. He is one of the most admired, feared, and respected world leaders in history.

### WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

**1. Recall** How did Genghis Khan organize his people?

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**2. Contrast** Describe Genghis Khan as a warrior and as a ruler.

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### ACTIVITY

Imagine that you are Genghis Khan, and you are trying to decide who will be your successor. Write a job description for the position of ruler over the Mongolian Empire. Include a list of qualities the candidate must have and some of the job responsibilities they will have to perform.