

Nimrud

On land | Iraq | 13th-7th century BCE | Grades 6-8

Name _____ Date _____

Nimrud's royal tombs held more than 50 kilograms of gold jewelry, hidden under a palace floor.

Read the story

Nimrud, called Kalhu by the Assyrians, became the capital of the Assyrian Empire when King Ashurnasirpal II rebuilt it around 879 BCE. He threw a famous party to celebrate, and a carved stone says nearly 70,000 guests came for ten days.

The palace walls were lined with carved stone panels showing kings hunting lions, fighting battles and meeting gods. At the doorways stood lamassu, huge winged bulls or lions with human heads, meant to protect the king.

In 1988 and 1989, Iraqi archaeologists found tombs of Assyrian queens beneath the palace floor, full of gold crowns, earrings and bracelets. Nimrud was destroyed in 612 BCE, when the Assyrian Empire fell to the Babylonians and Medes.

How it ended

In 612 BCE, the Babylonians and Medes attacked Assyria and burned its cities, including Nimrud. The mound sat quietly for over 2,000 years. In 2015 it was badly damaged on purpose, which made protecting heritage a worldwide concern.

Key words

- lamassu: an Assyrian guardian figure with a bull or lion body, wings and a human head
- cuneiform: wedge-shaped writing pressed into clay
- heritage: things from the past that people value and protect

Wow facts

- Thousands of carved ivory pieces were found at Nimrud, some dropped into a well.
- A stone stela records a 10-day feast for about 70,000 guests.
- The Assyrian queens' tomb gold weighed more than 50 kilograms.

Talk about it

1. Why do you think some groups destroy ancient sites, and why is that a loss for everyone?

2. What can museums do to protect heritage from war?

Try this

Draw a map of Nimrud as it looked at its busiest. Label three things people did there.

Quick quiz

Circle the best answer.

1. What is a lamassu?

- A. A winged guardian with a human head
- B. A type of chariot
- C. A clay tablet
- D. A river boat

2. Which empire made Nimrud its capital?

- A. Roman
- B. Assyrian
- C. Inca
- D. Egyptian

3. What was found under the palace floor in 1988?

- A. A river
- B. Royal tombs full of gold
- C. A dinosaur
- D. A library of books

Go further

Open ruinscape.live/nimrud/ for photos, the Then and Now picture where there is one, and links to museum collections and research. On the globe, Lyra Kael can fly the class there and answer questions.

Answer key (for teachers)

1. A. Lamassu guarded Assyrian palace gates.
2. B. Nimrud was a capital of the Assyrian Empire.
3. B. Tombs of Assyrian queens held gold jewelry.