

About the Book

Text Type: Nonfiction/Informational/Historical Page Count: 20 Word Count: 1,884

Book Summary

For five centuries starting around 27 BC, the leaders of the Roman Empire ruled over large areas of Europe. Eventually, the empire became so vast that it had to be divided between two emperors. This division reduced the power of the empire, leaving them open to attack. A ferocious leader named Attila the Hun attacked the Roman Empire. Aetius, a Roman general, persuaded several tribes in the empire and form an army. This huge army defeated Attila at the monumental Battle of Chalons. Photographs, maps, and illustrations support the text.

About the Lesson

Targeted Reading Strategy

- Ask and answer questions

Objectives

- Use the reading strategy of asking and answering questions to understand text
- Sequence events
- Identify and understand the use of adjectives
- Understand how to read pronunciations in parentheses

Materials

Green text indicates resources available on the website

- Book—*The Roman Empire Faces Attila* (copy for each student)
- Chalkboard or dry erase board
- Dictionaries
- KWLS, sequence events, adjectives, pronunciation worksheets
- World maps
- Discussion cards



Indicates an opportunity for students to mark in the book. (All activities may be demonstrated by projecting book on interactive whiteboard or completed with paper and pencil if books are reused.)

Vocabulary

- Content words:
 Story critical: *allies (n.), barbarians (n.), dowry (n.), empire (n.), rampaged (v.), siege (n.)*
 Enrichment: *diplomacy (n.), Germanic (adj.), humanity (n.), prestige (n.), sack (v.), scourge (n.)*

Before Reading

Build Background

- Write the name *Attila the Hun* on the board. Ask students to tell what they already know about the leader and his troops.
- Create a KWLS chart on the board and hand out the [KWLS worksheet](#). Review or explain that the *K* stands for knowledge we know, the *W* stands for information we want to know, the *L* stands for the knowledge we learned, and the *S* stands for what we still want to know about the topic. As various topics are discussed, fill in the first column (*K*) on the board with information students know about the topic. Have students complete the same section of their [KWLS worksheet](#).
- Ask students what they would like to know about Attila and the Huns. Have them fill in the second section (*W*) of their chart. Write their questions on the class chart.

Preview the Book

Introduce the Book

- Give students their copy of the book. Guide them to the front and back covers and read the title. Have students discuss what they see on the covers. Encourage them to offer ideas as to what type of book it is and what it might be about.
- Show students the title page. Discuss the information on the page (title of book, author's name). Point out the glossary and index, and ask volunteers to explain the use of each.

Introduce the Reading Strategy: **Ask and answer questions**

- Discuss with students how having prior knowledge about the topic, and asking and answering questions while reading, can help readers understand and remember the information in a book.
- Direct students to the table of contents. Remind them that the table of contents provides an overview of the information in a book and how it is organized. After previewing the table of contents, use it to model asking questions.

Think-aloud: I can use the table of contents to think of questions I would like to have answered about Attila and the Huns. For example, section 1 is titled "Terror from Asia." This makes me wonder who or what was the cause of the terror. I also wonder whether Attila came from Asia. I'll have to read the book to find out. I'll write these questions on the chart.

- Have students look at the other section titles. Have them write any questions they have based on the covers and table of contents in the W section of their **KWLS worksheet**.
- Have students preview the rest of the book, looking at the photographs, maps, and illustrations. Invite students to read through the glossary and index. Have them add any additional questions they might have on their KWLS worksheet. Invite students to share their questions aloud. Write shared questions on the class chart.
- As students read, encourage them to use other reading strategies in addition to the targeted strategy presented in this section.

Introduce the Comprehension Skill: **Sequence events**

- Review or explain that stories are generally told in order from beginning to end.
- Model sequencing the main events of the story *The Three Little Pigs*. Write key words about each event in order on the board as you describe them to students.

Think-aloud: If I want to retell the story The Three Little Pigs, I need to include certain events in order to tell the story correctly. In this story, the first event is that the first little pig builds a house out of straw. Next, the second little pig builds a house out of sticks. Then the third pig builds a house out of bricks. After that, the wolf blows down the first pig's house. Then he blows down the second pig's house. Last, he tries to blow down the third pig's house, but he can't.

- Explain that certain words are often used to explain a sequence of events. Read the list of events on the board to students in order, using words such as *first*, *next*, *then*, and *last*. Ask students to identify these sequencing words from the example.
- Have a volunteer use the key words on the board to sequence the events of the story out of order. Ask students to explain why the order of the steps is important (the sequence does not make sense out of order). Discuss with students that a story does not make sense when the events are out of order.
- Point out the difference between the sequence of events listed on the board and a retelling of *The Three Little Pigs* (the retelling contains more detail and description; the list shows only the events that were most important for someone to understand the story). Ask students to provide examples of details from the story that are not included in the sequence of events.

Introduce the Vocabulary

- As students preview the book, ask them to talk about what they see in the photographs, maps, and illustrations. Reinforce the vocabulary words they will encounter in the text.
- Explain to students that sometimes they will not find any context clues that define an unfamiliar word. Model how students can use the glossary or a dictionary to locate a word's meaning. Have a volunteer read the definition for barbarians in the glossary. Confirm the meaning of barbarians by having students follow along on page 4 as you read the sentence in which the word barbarians is found.

Lesson Plan *(continued)*

The Roman Empire Faces Attila

- Write the word *barbarians* on the board. List examples of things that people might do to be considered *barbarians* (attack villages, kill people, burn houses down, take over governments, and so on). Have students decide whether being described as a barbarian is a positive or negative trait.
- Point out that not all content vocabulary words are defined in the glossary (such as *devastating*, *ferocious*, and *executed*). Have students locate those words in the dictionary and have volunteers read the definitions aloud. Ask them to suggest other words that have the same or similar meaning.

Set the Purpose

- Have students think about what they already know about Attila and the Huns as they read the book to find answers to their questions, and write what they learned in the *L* section of their KWLS worksheet.

During Reading

Student Reading

- **Guide the reading:** Have students read to the end of page 8. Remind them to look for information about Attila and the Huns that will answer questions on their KWLS worksheet. Encourage students who finish early to go back and reread.
- When students have finished reading, have them circle any questions on their KWLS worksheet that were answered and write any new questions that were generated.
- Model answering a question and filling in the third section (*L*) of the KWLS chart.
Think-aloud: I wanted to know who or what caused terror, and whether Attila came from Asia. I found out that the Huns were ferocious horsemen who thundered into the heart of Europe from northcentral Asia. They first attacked the Roman Empire in the AD 370s, and wherever they went they left death and destruction behind them. I also read that Attila became their leader when they were at the height of their power. I wonder whether anyone ever stood up to Attila and his men--and won the battle. I will write this question on my chart.
- Have students write answers to the questions they circled in the *L* section of their KWLS worksheet. Invite them to share the information they learned and the questions they generated as they read the book. Record shared responses on the class KWLS chart.




Discuss and have students circle the events in their book that are most important to tell the history of the Huns. These include: Huns leave northcentral Asia, arriving in Europe in the AD 370s. Roman armies conquered the ancient world in 27 BC. The Roman Empire ruled as a united entity for five centuries. By the mid-300s, the power of the empire had weakened. By AD 400, the Roman Empire divided into two halves. In AD 376, Germanic people attacked the Roman Empire, and so on. Point out that some of the facts are given out of historical order because the author provides an overview of main events before filling in details. Explain the change from BC to AD. Write the events listed above on the board. Invite students to order the dates correctly. Introduce and explain the **sequence events worksheet**. Have students write the information from the board on their own worksheet.

- Ask students to tell what the story is mostly about so far (the history of the fall of the Roman Empire and the rise of the Huns to power). Review the circled events on the board and in their book. Point out that the other information includes details that make the book interesting but are not important to the sequence of historical events.
- **Check for understanding:** Have students read to the end of page 11. Have them write any answers they found while reading in the *L* section of their KWLS worksheet and additional questions they raised in the *W* section. Invite them to share the information they learned and the questions they generated as they read pages 9 through 11. Write shared responses on the class KWLS chart.
- Ask students to circle additional important story events in the book. Discuss the important events as a class. Allow time for students to make additions and corrections on their worksheet.
- Have students read the remainder of the book. Remind them to continue to look for and write answers to their KWLS worksheet questions, and to look for important events to record. Encourage them to add new questions they might have to their KWLS worksheet as they read.

Lesson Plan *(continued)*

The Roman Empire Faces Attila

-  Have students make a question mark in their book beside any word they do not understand or cannot pronounce. Encourage them to use the strategies they have learned to read each word and figure out its meaning.

After Reading

- Ask students what words, if any, they marked in their book. Use this opportunity to model how they can read these words using decoding strategies and context clues.

Reflect on the Reading Strategy

- Think-aloud:** *I wanted to know whether anyone ever stood up to Attila and his men--and won the battle. I read that Aetius, the Roman Empire's last great general, convinced some of the Germanic tribes to join forces with him and together they defeated Attila at the Battle of Chalons. I also read that the following year Aetius and the Emperor Valentinian asked Pope Leo I to meet with Attila. The two men met, and Attila agreed to stop his attacks in Italy. I'd like to know more about the pope's meeting with Attila. I will write this in the S column of my chart.*
- Ask students to share questions they added to their KWLS worksheet while reading, and ask them what questions were answered (or not answered) in the text. Have students write answers they found while reading in the L column of their KWLS worksheet.
- Reinforce that asking questions before and during reading, and looking for the answers while reading, keeps readers interested in the topic. It also encourages them to keep reading to find answers to their questions and helps them understand and enjoy what they have read.
- Point out to students that all of their questions may not have been answered in this text. Brainstorm other sources they might use to locate additional information to answer their questions. Invite students to fill in the final section (S) of their KWLS worksheet with information they would still like to know about Attila and the Huns.

Reflect on the Comprehension Skill

- Discussion:** Review the sequence of events that were identified and written on the board. Practice restating them using sequencing words (*first, next, then, after that*, and so on). Point out to students how it is important to use their own words to write about each event.
- Independent practice:** Allow time for students to finish and review the [sequence events worksheet](#). Supply a long sheet of poster paper and markers for students to complete a poster-size timeline to display in the hallway. Have them work as a group to include all of the major events that were depicted in the book. Encourage them to refer to their completed worksheets as often as needed.
- Enduring understanding:** In this book, you learned about the fall of the Roman Empire, as it faced Attila and the Huns. After the Roman Empire was divided in half, it never again enjoyed the power and success it did as one united empire. Now that you know this information, how do you feel about the cliché? "united we stand, divided we fall"? Can you think of other instances when this old adage might ring true? Is it always a bad thing to be divided and fall?

Build Skills

Grammar and Mechanics: Adjectives

- Review or explain that *adjectives* are words that describe nouns or pronouns. An adjective tells *which one, how many, or what kind*.
- Write the following sentences on the board. Ask students to count the number of adjectives in each sentence.

They were seeking protection from a terrible new enemy from the east.


The angry Visigoths rebelled.


The once-successful empire was growing old and tired.

Lesson Plan *(continued)*

The Roman Empire Faces Attila

- Have individual students come to the board and circle the adjective(s) in each sentence (*terrible, new, angry, once-successful, old, and tired*). Then have them underline the noun that each adjective describes (*enemy, Visigoths, and empire*). Discuss how the last sentence contains three different adjectives that describe one noun (*once-successful, old, and tired* all describe *empire*). Point out that *once-successful* is a hyphenated compound adjective.
- Explain that the adjective doesn't always precede the noun or pronoun, as seen in the last sentence.
- Point to the circled adjectives in the first sentence (*terrible* and *new*). Ask students to determine whether the adjectives are telling which one, how many, or what kind (they describe *what kind* of enemy). Repeat the exercise with the other two sentences.

 Have students use the inside back cover of their book to write adjective along with the definition of the term (a word describing a noun or pronoun that tells which one, how many, or what kind) to help them remember the terminology.

 **Check for understanding:** Give students highlighters, and have them work in pairs to reread section 7, "Attila and the Pope." Have them highlight all of the adjectives they find. Discuss the results as a group, identifying the noun that each adjective describes and whether the adjective is telling which one, how many, or what kind.

- **Independent practice:** Have students complete the [adjectives worksheet](#). Discuss the answers as a group once everyone has finished.

Word Work: **Pronunciation**

- Review or explain that *pronunciation* refers to how to articulate, or say, a word. Discuss how some words might be difficult to pronounce, such as words from another language. Point out to students that when authors anticipate difficulty with the pronunciation of a word, they write the word's pronunciation within parentheses directly after the word. This helps readers to say the word and continue to read fluently through the text. Explain that when reading aloud a word that is followed by its pronunciation, there is no need to say the word twice.
- Tell students that when writing the pronunciation for a word, the word is broken into syllables. Review that a syllable is a part of a word that is spoken with an uninterrupted sound of the voice. Words are broken into syllables by their sound, and each syllable has one vowel sound.
- Direct students to page 8. Ask them to find the pronunciation within parentheses (thee-uh-DOH-shee-us). Point out that the word is broken into five syllables by hyphens. Review or explain that when reading these broken syllables aloud, the syllable(s) written in all capital letters are read with more emphasis. Practice pronouncing the name Theodosius with the class, emphasizing the third syllable.
- Direct students to page 4. Ask them to find the pronunciation within parentheses (AT-uh-luh or uh-TIL-uh). Point out that in this instance, the author supplies two different ways of pronouncing the same name, each of which is acceptable. Ask students how many syllables the word is broken into (3) and which of the syllables in the word gets the emphasis. (In the first instance, the first syllable, AT, gets the emphasis. In the second instance, the second syllable, TIL, gets the emphasis.) Discuss the reasons why historical names might sometimes have two different pronunciations (historians might disagree about which is correct). Have students turn to a neighbor and practice pronouncing the name *Attila* both ways.
- **Check for understanding:** Have students identify the word on page 11 that has the pronunciation given within parentheses (ho-NOR-ee-uh). Ask them how many syllables the word has (4). Ask students which syllable gets the emphasis (the second syllable, NOR). Have them turn to a neighbor and practice pronouncing the name *Honorio*. Listen to individual responses.
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [pronunciation worksheet](#). If time allows, discuss their answers.

Build Fluency

Independent Reading

- Allow students to read their book independently. Additionally, partners can take turns reading parts of the book to each other.

Home Connection

- Give students their book to take home to read with parents, caregivers, siblings, or friends. Have students also take home their completed KWLS worksheet and explain what each column means. Have them tell about the information they wrote on the chart.

Extend the Reading

Informational Writing Connection

Provide print and Internet sources for students to further research the Battle of Chalons. Have them read to find out information such as: where on a map the battlefield was located, whether a present-day memorial exists at the site, how many people died, whether Aetius's army was revered for defeating Attila, and any other interesting information they find. Have them record their data on index cards and share the facts in a roundtable discussion.

Visit [Writing A-Z](#) for a lesson and leveled materials on informational report writing.

Social Studies Connection

Supply each student with a copy of a world map. Explain how current-day country names and borders are different than they were in the AD 400s. Discuss why this happens. Then have students locate and mark on their map the current-day locations for the lands mentioned in the book. Allow time for students to discuss what they have learned. Hang one large poster map in the classroom with agreed-upon labels and locations for all of the battles and conquests of the Huns.

Skill Review

[Discussion cards](#) covering comprehension skills and strategies not explicitly taught with the book are provided as an extension activity. The following is a list of some ways these cards can be used with students:

- Use as discussion starters for literature circles.
- Have students choose one or more card and write a response, either as an essay or as a journal entry.
- Distribute before reading the book and have students use one of the questions as a purpose for reading.
- Cut apart and use the cards as game cards with a board game.
- Conduct a class discussion as a review before the book quiz.

Assessment

Monitor students to determine if they can:

- consistently ask relevant questions about a topic prior to and during reading; locate answers to their questions and write them on a worksheet
- accurately sequence events in the text during discussion and on a worksheet
- correctly identify the use of adjectives in the text during discussion and on a worksheet
- understand and read pronunciations in parentheses; identify syllables and emphasis within the syllables during discussion and on a worksheet

Comprehension Checks

- [Book Quiz](#)
- [Retelling Rubric](#)