

Boudicca

Who was Boudicca?

Boudicca was the wife of Prasutagus, the ruler of a Celtic tribe called the Iceni. The Iceni lived in a region of Britain that is now called Norfolk.

Prasutagus and the Roman Agreement

When Romans settled in the southern Britain in AD 43 they made an agreement with Prasutagus so that he would be able to continue as the ruler of the Iceni. When Prasutagus died, the Romans turned on the Iceni. They stole from the Iceni tribesmen, made people slaves and they had Boudicca and her daughters whipped.

What did Boudicca look like?

According to Dio, a Roman writer, she was tall and had red hair hanging below her waist. She had a harsh voice and piercing glare, and habitually wore a large golden necklace (perhaps a torc), a many-coloured tunic, and a thick cloak fastened by a brooch.



Famous Speech

"I am fighting as someone like you who has lost their freedom. I am fighting for my bruised body. The gods will grant us the revenge we deserve. Think of how many of us are fighting, and why. Then you will win this battle or die. That is what I, a woman, plan to do. Let the men live as slaves if they want. I won't!"

The Rebellion

In about AD 60, the Roman Governor was sent to North Wales to lead an army. While he was away Boudicca led an attack against the tribe's Roman rulers with several other tribes. Her army were called the Britons.

They managed to destroy Camulodunum (Colchester), the capital of Roman Britain, and defeated the Roman IX legion.

Attack on Londinium

Hearing the news of Boudicca's revolt, the Roman Governor rushed back from Wales. He tried to evacuate Londinium (London) as he guessed this would be the next target for the Britons. Boudicca and her army destroyed Londinium and Verulamium (St Albans). Over 70,000 people were killed in the attacks by the Britons.



Defeat

The Roman army regrouped in the Midlands and finally defeated the Britons in the battle of Watling Street. No one knows what really happened to Boudicca. Some say she killed herself when she knew the Romans had defeated her, others say she fell ill and died.

Boudicca Questions

Read the information sheet and answer these questions in full sentences.

1. What tribe did Boudicca belong to and where did they live?

2. What deal did Prasutagus make with the Romans? Did the Romans stick to the deal?

3. In her speech, what does Boudicca say the men can do if they want?

4. When did Boudicca and her army attack Camulodunum?

5. Where else did Boudicca and her army destroy?

6. What kind of a person do you think Boudicca was? What clues can you infer from the text?

Boudicca Questions

7. Historians do not know how Boudicca died. What sort of evidence would they be looking for to answer this question?

8. Many people were killed in the battles Boudicca fought. Was she right to do what she did?

9. If the Romans had stuck to their deal, do you think Boudicca and the Iceni would have lived happily alongside the Romans?

10. What do you think happened to Boudicca? Can you support your answer with a reasoned argument?

Boudicca Answers

Read the information sheet and answer these questions in full sentences.

1. What tribe did Boudicca belong to and where did they live?

Boudicca belonged to the Iceni tribe and they lived in Norfolk.

2. What deal did Prasutagus make with the Romans?

When the Romans settled in Britain, Prasutagus made a deal with them so that he could continue to rule the Iceni.

3. In her speech, what does Boudicca say the men can do if they want?

In her speech, Boudicca said that men could continue to live as slaves but that she did not want to.

4. When did Boudicca and her army attack Camulodunum?

Boudicca and her army attacked Camulodunum in roughly AD 60.

5. Where else did Boudicca and her army destroy?

Boudicca and her army also destroyed Londinium and Verulamium.

6. What kind of a person do you think Boudicca was? What clues can you infer from the text?

Example answer

I think Boudicca was a proud person who did not want to be treated badly by the Romans and did not want the people of her tribe to be treated badly. She must have been a good leader as her army won several battles.

7. Historians do not know how Boudicca died. What sort of evidence would they be looking for to answer this question?

Example answer

Historians would need either a body (or skeleton) that was definitely hers to investigate how she died or an account that they know to be truthful.

8. Many people were killed in the battles Boudicca fought. Was she right to do what she did?

Example answer

This is a difficult question because on the one hand, the Romans were not right to end their agreement as they did but then lots of people were killed which is not very nice.

9. If the Romans had stuck to their deal, do you think Boudicca and the Iceni would have lived happily alongside the Romans?

Example answer

I think Boudicca would have always tried to do the very best for her people and if the Romans had stuck to the agreement I think there would have been peace.

10. What do you think happened to Boudicca? Can you support your answer with a reasoned argument?

Example answer

You can tell by how her people were willing to follow her into battle against well trained soldiers, that they loved her. I think Boudicca managed to escape and was hidden away from the Romans until she died.