

Name _____

Date _____

The Scythians

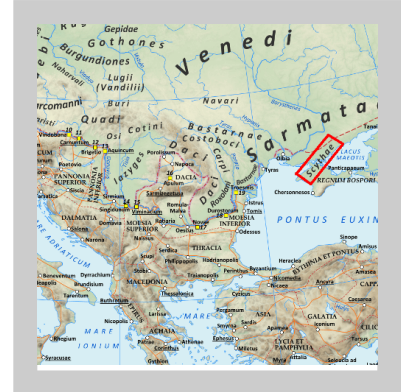
With painstaking attention to detail, Tamara Talbot Rice provides a thorough survey of Scythian history and culture in *The Scythians*. Building upon research done first by Herodotus and more recently by scholars E. H. Minns and Rostovtzeff, Rice draws on her travels throughout the Near and Middle East to enrich her account of the Scythian nomads' way of life.

In her discussion, Rice challenges the traditionally held notions of Scythians as bloodthirsty savages by offering well-researched findings on Scythian art and religion. She divides her findings into chapters on history, daily life, tombs, worldly goods, and art, and also includes a chapter on the Scythian legacy in Slavic Russia. Rice's section on Scythian art is most impressive, as she presents a detailed assessment of artistic connections to both Neolithic works and more modern styles. Her argument that Scythian art can be seen as a "missing link" between Eastern and Western art styles is vividly supported by the lengthy appendix of comparative illustrations.

Rice presents many other convincing examples of cultural blending across central Asia, linking customs such as Scythian burial practices, eating habits, and religious rites with those of the Chinese, Assyrians, and Ionian tribes, among others. Her claim that the Scythians helped introduce horsemanship into Western Europe is also well argued, as she draws on numerous sources both ancient and modern to substantiate it. Her original research into horsemanship includes such elements as a five-page discussion on the varieties of saddles used by Scythians and their neighbors. Rice also offers comparisons of the different bridles, bits, and other pieces of riding equipment favored by Scythian nomads.

This book is brimming with engaging information about the Scythian way of life. Rice's attempts to give the reader an authentic account of life as a Scythian nomad are innovative and insightful. Despite the book's many positive features, however, it is not a perfect resource due to its age and its lack of ancient sources. Because this book was published over forty years ago, some of Rice's information has been annulled by more recent archaeological and historical finds. Furthermore, although her modern sources are rich in geographic diversity, Rice makes no mention of ancient writers other than Herodotus and Xenophon. Considering these two factors, scholars should be careful not to limit their studies of Scythia to this book. However, one may indeed safely build a Scythian library around it, as it remains ever-enlightening in its detailed and well-wrought prose.

- 1) This passage would most likely be found in a scholarly journal devoted to
- A. modern art
 - B. literature or linguistics
 - C. international relations or politics
 - D. world religions
 - E. history or anthropology



- 2) According to the author, Scythians are typically thought of as
- A. especially religious
 - B. learned philosophers
 - C. exceptionally violent
 - D. gifted artists
 - E. untrustworthy nomads
- 3) Tamara Talbot Rice apparently believes that Scythian art
- A. proves that Scythians were not the bloodthirsty killers that history proclaims them to be
 - B. reinforces traditional notions about nomadic artists
 - C. demonstrates a connection to both Eastern and Western art
 - D. is very similar to modern art produced by cultures in the same geographical location
 - E. far surpasses the artwork produced by other cultures of the period
- 4) The author apparently believes that Rice's discussion of horsemanship is
- A. thoroughly researched
 - B. too broad
 - C. too detailed
 - D. outdated, but convincing
 - E. fascinating
- 5) As used in the final paragraph, which is the best synonym for **annulled**?
- A. exposed
 - B. underestimated
 - C. reinforced
 - D. invalidated
 - E. concealed

6) In the final paragraph, which of the following criticisms does the author make about *The Scythians* ?

- I. Rice limits her study to certain geographical areas.
- II. The book itself is outdated.
- III. Ancient writers are underrepresented as sources.

- A. I only
- B. II only
- C. I and II only
- D. II and III only
- E. I, II, and III

7) Ultimately, the author recommends that scholars of the Scythians should regard Rice’s book as

- A. an excellent but limited resource
- B. interesting, but ultimately useless because of its age
- C. more valuable for scholars of modern cultural studies
- D. the primary authority on Scythian culture
- E. less valuable than the works of scholars E. H. Minns and M. Rostovtzeff

8) Why is it problematic that “Rice makes no mention of ancient writers other than Herodotus and Xenophon”? How does this impact the overall quality of Rice’s book? Explain.

Answers and Explanations

1) E

Core Standard: **Key Ideas and Details**

According to the passage, Rice's book is about the Scythians, an ancient nomadic tribe. In paragraph 1, the author describes it as "a thorough survey of Scythian history and culture." The author also mentions that the book's topics cover the art, culture, lifestyle, and religion of the Scythians, and the passage suggests that the book discusses links to similar elements in other cultures. This focus on the history of a culture and on connections between cultures mean that a review of such a book would most likely be found in a scholarly journal devoted to history or anthropology. Therefore **(E)** is correct.

Although the passage does state that the book discusses Scythian art, it also covers history, daily life, horsemanship, and religion. Furthermore, Scythian art would not be considered modern. This eliminates **(A)**.

The passage does not suggest that Rice's book relates to literature or linguistics in any way. This means **(B)** is incorrect.

The passage does not suggest that Rice's book relates to international relations or politics in any way. This means **(C)** is incorrect.

Although the passage does state that the book discusses Scythian religion, the broader focus is on the history and culture of the Scythians, so **(D)** is not the best choice.

2) C

Core Standard: **Key Ideas and Details**

In paragraph 2, the author writes: "In her discussion, Rice challenges the traditionally held notions of Scythians as bloodthirsty savages by offering well-researched findings on Scythian art and religion." According to the author, Scythians are typically thought of as "bloodthirsty savages," which means that they were thought of as exceptionally violent and uncivilized. Therefore **(C)** is correct.

Although Rice writes about Scythian religion, this does not imply that they are typically thought of as especially religious, so **(A)** is incorrect.

The passage does not provide information to suggest that the Scythians are typically thought of as learned philosophers, so **(B)** is incorrect.

Although Rice writes about Scythian art, this does not imply that they are typically thought of as gifted artists. This makes **(D)** incorrect.

While the Scythians are described as nomads, the passage does not provide information to suggest that they are typically thought of as untrustworthy. This eliminates **(E)**.

3) C

Core Standard: **Integration of Knowledge**

In paragraph 2, the author notes that Rice uses an “appendix of comparative illustrations” to support the argument that “Scythian art can be seen as a ‘missing link’ between Eastern and Western art styles.” Even if readers are unfamiliar with the term “missing link” (which originally referred to the hypothetical fossil indicating a transitional form between humans and apes, but now can refer to any transitional figure or object), we can infer that Scythian art somehow serves as a connecting piece between Eastern and Western art styles. This inference is confirmed in paragraph 3, when the author writes that “Rice presents many other convincing examples of cultural blending across central Asia.” This sentence suggests that Scythian art, discussed in the previous paragraph, is also an example of cultural blending, in this case a blending between Eastern and Western art. Based on this information, we can conclude that Rice apparently believes that Scythian art demonstrates a connection to both Eastern and Western art. Therefore **(C)** is correct.

Although the author writes that “Rice challenges the traditionally held notions of Scythians as bloodthirsty savages by offering well-researched findings on Scythian art and religion,” we do not know whether Rice herself believes that Scythian art definitively proves that Scythians were not the bloodthirsty killers that history proclaims them to be. Though Rice may be expanding the traditional depiction of the Scythians, she does not necessarily refute the older notion entirely. This means **(A)** is incorrect.

The passage does not provide information to support choices **(B)**, **(D)**, and **(E)**. Therefore they are incorrect.

4) A

Core Standard: **Integration of Knowledge**

In paragraph 3, the author describes Rice’s claims about Scythian horsemanship as “well-argued.” According to the author, Rice used a variety of sources to substantiate her argument, and her “original research” includes “a five-page discussion on the varieties of saddles used by Scythians and their neighbors.” From this we can infer that the author considers this level of detail to indicate that Rice’s discussion of Scythian horsemanship is thoroughly researched. Therefore **(A)** is correct.

The passage does not provide information to support choices **(B)**, **(C)**, and **(E)**. Therefore they are incorrect.

In the final paragraph, the author states that “some of Rice’s information has been annulled by more recent archaeological and historical finds” and is therefore outdated, but we do not know whether her discussion of horsemanship is included in this information. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect.

5) D

Core Standard: **Craft and Structure**

annul (*verb*): to make void or null; abolish; invalidate.

In the final paragraph, the author writes: “Because this book was published over forty years ago, some of Rice’s information has been annulled by more recent archaeological and historical finds.” The author provides this information as a criticism of the book, stating that “it is not a perfect resource due to its age.” If Rice’s book is forty years old, and more recent discoveries have thus invalidated some of her information, this flaw would prevent it from being a “perfect resource.” This means that *invalidated* is a good synonym for *annulled*. Therefore **(D)** is correct.

Exposed means uncovered or revealed. It does not make sense that more recent discoveries would uncover Rice's older research, nor would this be a flaw of the book. This means **(A)** is incorrect.

Underestimated means minimized or undervalued. Although other scholars could underestimate Rice's information, more recent discoveries could not underestimate it. Furthermore, this would not be a flaw of the book itself. This makes **(B)** incorrect.

Reinforced means supported or strengthened. If Rice's information had been supported by more recent discoveries, this would be an asset, not a flaw. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect.

Concealed means hidden or disguised. While it is possible that newer discoveries could conceal older research, this would not constitute a flaw of Rice's book. This makes **(E)** incorrect.

6) D

Core Standard: **Key Ideas and Details**

The author states that Rice's "modern sources are rich in geographic diversity." This means that she does not limit her study to certain geographical areas. This eliminates **option (I)**.

In the final paragraph, the author argues that Rice's book is imperfect due to "its age and its lack of ancient sources." The author goes on to say that "Rice makes no mention of ancient writers other than Herodotus and Xenophon." This means both that the book is outdated and also that ancient writers are underrepresented as sources. This supports **option (II)** and **option (III)**. Therefore **(D)** is correct.

7) A

Core Standard: **Integration of Knowledge**

In the final paragraph, the author describes Rice's book as "ever-enlightening in its detailed and Well-wrought prose," but suggests that because it is outdated and does not thoroughly incorporate ancient writers, "scholars should be careful not to limit their studies of Scythia to this book." From this we can infer that the author recommends that scholars of the Scythians should regard Rice's book as an excellent but limited resource. Therefore **(A)** is correct.

The author claims that the book is outdated but does not suggest it is useless because of its age. This means **(B)** is incorrect.

The author does not suggest that the book is more valuable for scholars of modern cultural studies, so **(C)** is incorrect.

While the author considers the book to be an authority on Scythian culture, he or she notes two major flaws and does not suggest that it is the primary authority on Scythian culture. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect.

The author does not compare the value of Rice's book to the works of scholars E.H. Minns and M. Rostovtzeff, so **(E)** is incorrect.