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This image depicts an artist's interpretation of Attila the Hun. It is a mixed-media figure created by artist/historian George S. Stuart and photographed by Peter d'Aprix. From the [George S. Stuart Gallery of Historical Figures®](#) Archive, the image is provided for all uses with appropriate attribution. Any derivatives must be shared in the same manner.

In all recorded history, rarely has a man been feared as much as Attila, king of the fifth-century Huns. The length of his rule - a mere eight years - pales when compared with the vast spread of his carnage. He was, to use a common phrase, a legend in his own lifetime.

Although a fearsome king of a fearsome people, Attila drank from a wooden cup while his guests drank from goblets of gold. Relying on dedicated foreign advisors, Attila decimated town after town. A man of contradictions, according to the only surviving record written by an historian (Priscus) who apparently knew him, Attila died in his prime after a night of heavy drinking.

Who was Attila? How did he expand an empire from the Urals (in today's Russia) to the Rhine (in today's Germany) when the only means of transportation, at the time, was riding a horse?

The king of the Huns, and his men, were experts at riding horses and using reflex bows. They lived on plunder (from conquered towns and people) and tribute (gathered from those who preferred to pay instead of die).

Ammianus Marcellinus, writing about fifty years before Attila's reign, describes a brutal method (confirmed by archeological evidence) which the Huns used to teach their children about pain: Every boy had his face slashed as an infant. The point of the mutilation was to help the child endure agony, but the resulting facial features caused others to fear the Huns.

Once, when Attila was king, illness of his troops - not the strength of their opponents - saved the city of Constantinople - today's Istanbul. Isaac of Antioch tells us what happened:

*The sinners [his word for the Huns] drew the bow and put their arrows on the string - and preparation had perfected itself and the host was on the point of coming quickly - then sickness [dysentery and, likely, malaria] blew through it and hurled the host [Attila and his men] into wilderness. He whose heart was strong for battle [the Hun warrior] waxed feeble through sickness. He who was skilled in shooting with the bow, sickness of the bowels overthrew him - the riders of the steed slumbered and slept and the cruel army was silenced.*

But not for long.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/WHO-WAS-ATTILA-Night-at-the-Museum>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/WHO-WAS-ATTILA-Night-at-the-Museum>

## Media Stream



### Attila the Hun - Medieval Drawing

Image and information, courtesy National Library of Hungary (which virtually reconstructs [King Matthias' Library](#)).

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### Attila the Hun - From Chronica Hungarorum

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### Attila - The Feast of Attila

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### Hunnic Empire - Greatest Extent, 453

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### Attila - King of the Huns (Chronicon Pictum)

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### Reflex Bow - Weapon of Attila and His Huns

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PD

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### Constantinople - Drawing from Nuremberg Chronicle

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