

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?

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?
