



Standing on the Shoulders of Giants Curriculum

EFLA STUDY GUIDE

UNIT 1: Ancient Africa (200,000 B.C.E. – 476 A.C.E.)

CLASS 16: Hannibal Barca (247 B.C.E. – 181/183 B.C.E.)

OVERVIEW

Hannibal Barca, or simply “Hannibal” as most refer to him, is the most legendary African general in history. His astonishing march over the Pyrenees and Alps into Italy with nearly 40 war elephants to crush the Romans during the Second of three Punic Wars has reached [mythical](#) proportions. However, many do not know that Hannibal’s father, Hamilcar Barca, was also a military genius and the leading Carthaginian commander during the First Punic War. Nor do most mention Hasdrubal Barca, Hannibal’s brother, who was also a Carthaginian general of considerable talent. Together, they waged a bitter and [protracted](#) war against Rome from 264 BCE to 202 BCE, defending Carthage for over six decades before it eventually fell to Rome in the Third Punic War, which ended in 146 BCE.

Much of what we know about Hannibal comes from the Greek Writers Polybius in his 40 volume *Histories*, Titus Livius (Livy), in his *The History of Rome*, specifically Book 21, Chapter 1, and to a lesser extent, Appian of Alexandria, in his book *Roman History*. We provide free e-books of all of their books; they are worth the read. Polybius’s account of the Punic Wars is the most cited for several reasons. Polybius was an [erudite](#) scholar who “believed in facts, research, cross-examination of eye witnesses, and above all in travel. Polybius personally traced the route of Hannibal in order to write about his war.” Polybius was a Greek [aristocrat](#) at the time Rome invaded Greece. To maintain order and control over Greece after they left, the Romans took 1,000 hostages back to Rome. Polybius was one of the hostages and went to Rome as a prisoner for sixteen years!

Although Polybius was a prisoner, “he wasn’t thrown into a dungeon in Rome but became the guest and teacher in the household of the great Scipiones. Yes, that’s the family of great Scipio, Hannibal’s [nemesis](#). So he had access to all the family [archives](#),” notes historian. Polybius was charged with writing the history of the war between Rome and Carthage, which the Romans referred to as the Hannibalic Wars. He even accompanied Scipio on campaigns and stood next to him when the Romans finally burned Carthage to the ground after the Third and last Punic War. “As a practical matter, Polybius then had to tell the story of all three wars between Rome and Carthage leading up to this moment. And for that, he talked to people who had known Hannibal, to veterans on both sides, he crossed the Alps and so forth,” notes. This is what makes his account so credible.

Aside from Hannibal’s military feats, much has been [speculated](#) in modern times about his “race.” However, as we have mentioned throughout UNIT 1, “race” is a modern construction as is racism. People in antiquity (history before the modern era or ACE) did not classify themselves or

others into “races.” The concepts of race and racism emerged less than 500 years ago. They were created to justify the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, or the “African Holocaust” as I and other Black historians refer to this episode of African history. As historian Basil Davidson noted, Whites had to rationalize doing to Africans what they could not morally or legally do to White people – that is enslave them for life based solely on their skin color. Therefore, the Whites who **orchestrated** and supported the African Holocaust created the ideology of racism, declaring that Africans had no history, contributed nothing to civilization and had been living in a state of **barbarism** since their existence. African Civilizations such as ancient Kemet/Egypt were all of a sudden attributed to some mythical and extinct “Mediterranean/Asiatic/White race,” even as the images on the walls of the pyramids, monuments and **papyri** clearly depict dark-skinned black Africans with unmistakable African features such as wide noses, thick lips, and wooly hair.

While there are no physical images of Hannibal, his father or his brother, there is no reason to believe that he was anything other than African and all that that entails, including having dark skin. However, virtually all modern images of Hannibal **depict** him as European. White historians and racists have no problem with White images of Hannibal. Yet they vehemently reject any African depictions of Hannibal, even though he was born in Africa and as I stated, there is no physical proof of his “race” either way.

By the time Hannibal was born, Carthage, located in the heart of North Africa, was 500 years old. Although it was originally a Phoenician colony, Carthage had absorbed the **indigenous** Africans already inhabiting the territory. In his book, *Daily Life in Carthage at the Time of Hannibal*, Charles Picard reports:

"The anthropological examination of skeletons found in tombs in Carthage proves that there is no racial unity [...] The so called Semitic type, characterized by the long, perfectly oval face, the thin aquiline nose and the lengthened cranium, enlarged over the nape of the neck has not been found in Carthage. On the other hand, another cranial form, with a fairly short face, prominent parietal bumps, farther forward and lower down than is usual is common [...] most of the Punic population in Carthage had African and even Negro ancestors."

Furthermore, Africans constituted large numbers of the Carthaginian army, which lends support to Hannibal’s African ethnicity. Lastly, there exist silver coins from Carthage that clearly depict an African, whom many believe to be Hannibal or his father. These coins, which you will view in this class, show an unmistakable African with African features such as wooly hair and a broad nose. There is no other **indigenous** “African” Carthaginian of that era who would have **welcomed** such esteem as to have his face minted on a coin. Another telling piece of evidence as to Hannibal’s Africanity is how certain modern Hollywood movies and documentaries (which you will see in this class) reluctantly acknowledge that Hannibal was a “black African.” Even Anheuser-Busch commissioned a “Great Kings & Queens of African series” in 1981 which depict Hannibal as a full-fledged Black African. In short, there is far more evidence that support the fact that Hannibal was a “black” African as opposed to a “white” African, which is why he is included in the *Standing on the Shoulders of Giants* Black history curriculum.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, students will be able to:

- ✓ Discuss the story of Hannibal Barca and his legendary war against Rome.
- ✓ Understand the causes and effects of the Punic Wars between Carthage and Rome.
- ✓ Scrutinize the controversy surrounding Hannibal's "race."
- ✓ Analyze Hannibal's military strategy and understand why he is considered a military genius.

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT: UNIT 1, CLASS 16

Read/View the following:

1. [Hannibal Barca of Carthage, North Africa](#) (15-20 min)
2. [The Punic Wars](#) (15 min)
3. [The Price of Greed: Hannibal's Betrayal by Carthage](#) (15 mins)
4. [Documentary: Hannibal the Annihilator](#) (43:27 min)
5. [History Channel Portrays Hannibal as Black, White People Cry Foul Over 'Historical Revisionism'](#) (1:30 min)
6. [Encyclopedia Britannica.com: Hannibal's ethnicity and physical appearance](#) (15 mins)
7. [Video: HANNIBAL BARCA \(THE NORTH AFRAKAN WARRIOR\)](#) (3:56 min)

Additional Resources:

[The Punic Wars Timeline](#) (20 min)

[Analysis finds defeat of Hannibal 'written in the coins of the Roman Empire'](#) (7 min)

STUDY QUESTIONS

From Hannibal Barca of Carthage, North Africa

1. Where is Carthage located? Have students point to it on a map
2. True or False? Carthage was originally established as a Phoenician colony?
3. True or False? The Phoenicians and Carthaginians were known as skilled sea merchant traders.
4. Is there a picture or description of Hannibal available today?
5. What piece of evidence exists that lends support to the fact that Hannibal was of African ancestry?
6. What caused the First Punic War? Who was the Carthaginian general in command during the First Punic War?
7. How large was Hannibal's army during the Second Punic War and how far did his army travel from Spain to the Alps?
8. What is a mercenary? Who were some of the most noted mercenaries Hannibal used to fight Rome?
9. What other European group did Hannibal have to fight off in route to Rome?
10. How much of his army did Hannibal lose crossing the Alps?
11. What was the result of the Second Punic War?

The Punic Wars

1. What two countries fought in the Punic Wars and how long did the wars last?
2. What are the dates for the First Punic War?
3. What was the cause(s) of the First Punic War?
4. Why did Carthage lose the First Punic War even though Rome had no navy at the time and Carthage had the better military general in Hamilcar Barca, Hannibal's father?
5. What is the name of the Treaty that ended the First Punic War?
6. What are the dates of the Second Punic War?

7. What was the cause(s) of the Second Punic War?
8. After Hannibal learned that the Roman army was sent to capture him, what did he do? What animal did he use to aid his war efforts?
9. What was Quintus Fabius Maximus's strategy to conquer Hannibal? Why didn't it work?
10. What was the result of the Battle of Cannae?
11. How did the Romans respond to their huge loss at the Battle of Cannae?
12. What was the Battle of Zama? What was the result of the battle?
13. What were the consequences Carthage had to pay for losing the Second Punic War? What became of Hannibal after the Second Punic War?
14. What are the dates of the Third Punic War? What were the causes of the Third Punic War?
15. What was the result of the Third Punic War?

From The Price of Greed: Hannibal's Betrayal by Carthage

1. What is the main reason Hannibal was unable to crush the Romans after he defeated them at the Battle of Cannae during the Second Punic War?
2. Unlike his father, who had to rely on mercenaries in the First Punic War, what groups fought for Hannibal and why?
3. What was Hannibal's strategy after he realized that Carthage wasn't going to send him any reinforcements?
4. Who were the first three Roman generals sent to defeat Hannibal? What was their strategy? Was it successful?
5. Why didn't Hannibal continue to march on the city of Rome once he was at its doorstep?
6. How did the Romans outmaneuver Hannibal once he was stalled in Italy?

From Documentary: Hannibal the Annihilator

1. Who is Hannibal's sworn enemy?
2. What was the name of the wars between Carthage and Rome?
3. How many casualties in the 1st Punic War?

4. Who was Hannibal's father? What country did his father take over after the first Punic War?
5. What age was Hannibal when he became Commander of the entire Carthaginian Army?
6. Why does Hannibal not have a Navy during the 2nd Punic War?
7. Who was the Roman General that fought against Hannibal in the 2nd Punic War?
8. Why did Hannibal choose the harsh route to Rome across the Alps? What animal did he carry with him across the Alps?
9. Who were the tribes that attacked Hannibal along the way to Rome?
10. How does Hannibal replenish his forces in Italy on the way to Rome?
11. What is a mercenary?
12. How was the Roman army structured and outfitted? How were they trained?
13. What was Hannibal's strategy against the highly organized and highly structured Roman army?
14. Who was the general the Romans sent to replace Scipio?
15. How did Hannibal's elephants help defeat the Roman strategy?
16. In the Battle of the Trevia, what was the result?

From History Channel Portrays Hannibal as Black, White People Cry Foul Over 'Historical Revisionism'

1. Why is Hannibal's race so important to modern historians? Would Hannibal's "race" have been important in 220 BCE? Why or why not?
2. What do you think? Based on the evidence provided, what "race" would you say Hannibal belonged to?

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

From Encyclopedia Britannica.com: Hannibal's ethnicity and physical appearance (15 mins)

1. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, what "race" was Hannibal?

From Video: HANNIBAL BARCA (THE NORTH AFRAKAN WARRIOR) (3:56 mins)

1. According to the actors in the film, Africans were seen as unintelligent, except for who? Why would obviously racist film producers openly admit in a film that Hannibal Barca was African?