

# Alexander the Great

A Reading A-Z Level Z2 Leveled Book  
Word Count: 2,266

## Connections

### Writing

Research two kings who ruled Macedonia before Alexander. Write an essay comparing Alexander the Great to these kings.

### Social Studies

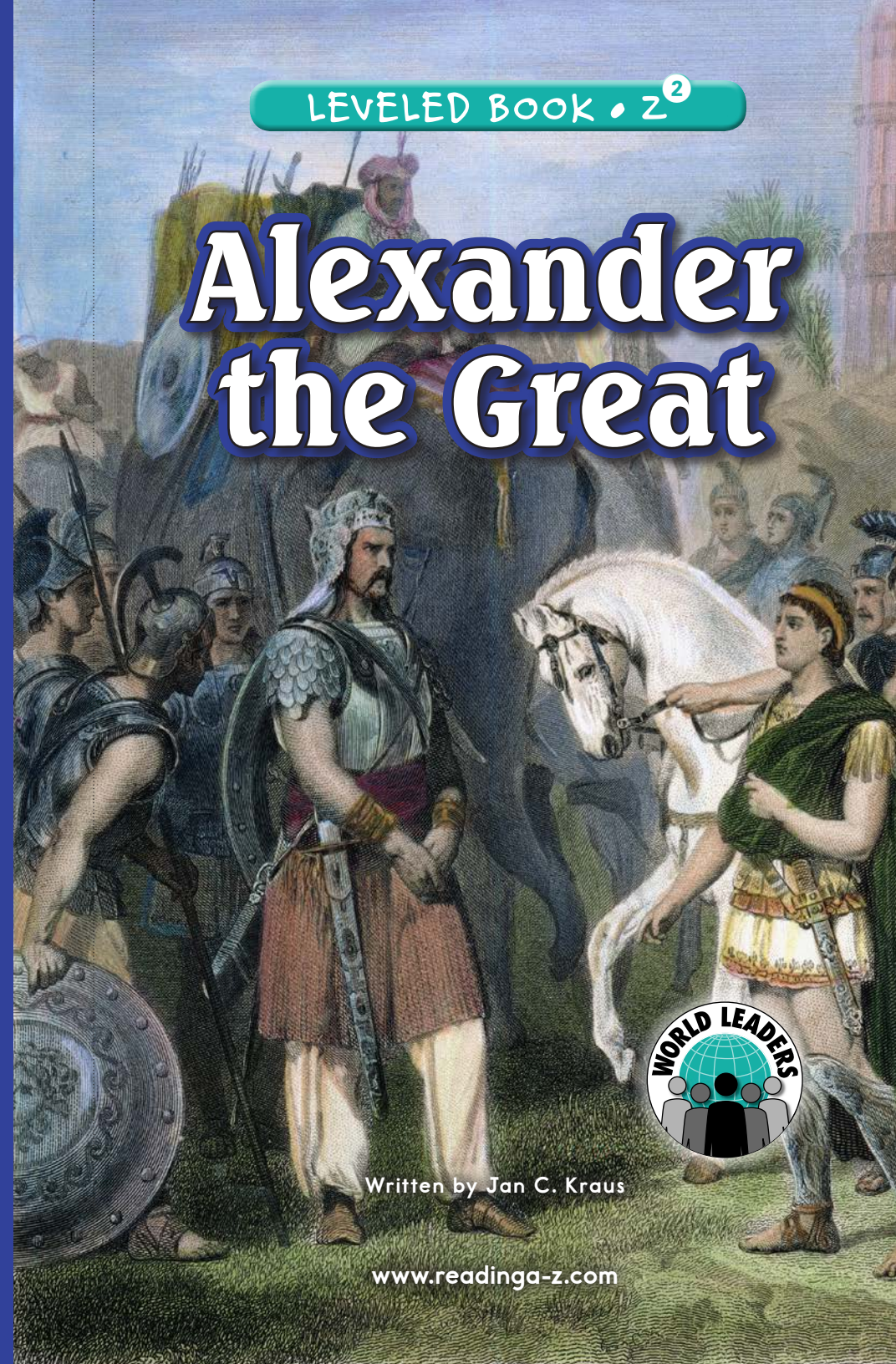
Research more information about the customs of ancient Macedonia and Persia. Write an essay comparing the two cultures.

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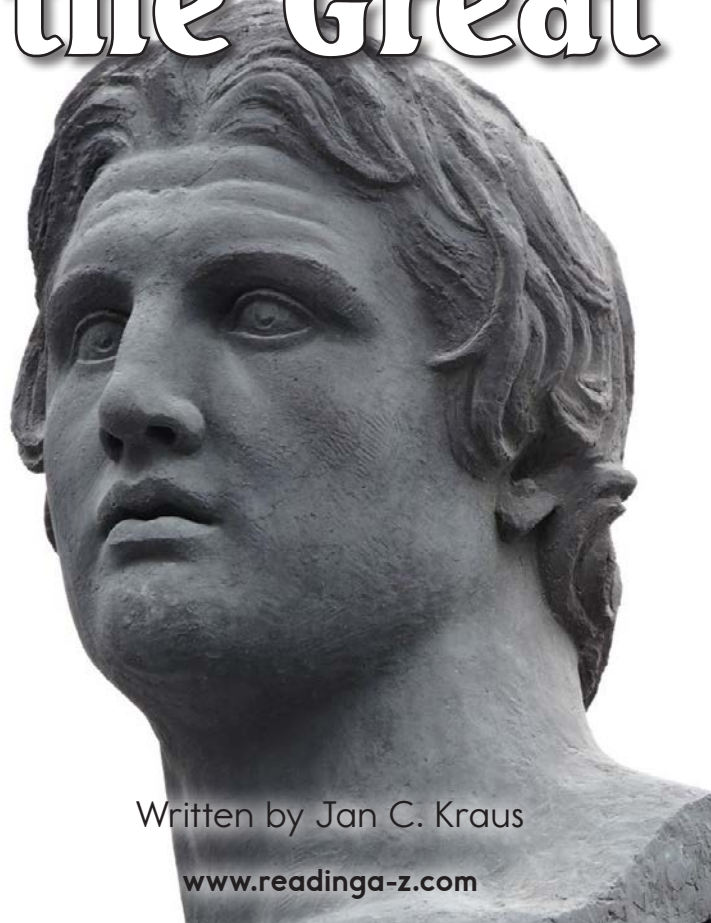
# Alexander the Great



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## Focus Question

How did Alexander the Great use his education and training to build his empire?

## Words to Know

ambitious	flanked
assassinated	fleet
botanists	infantry
cavalry	philosopher
city-states	regent
ethics	surveyors

Front cover: Alexander the Great accepts the surrender of an enemy in India.

Title page: A statue of Alexander the Great

Page 3: Artwork shows Alexander training his horse named Bucephalus.

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### Correlation

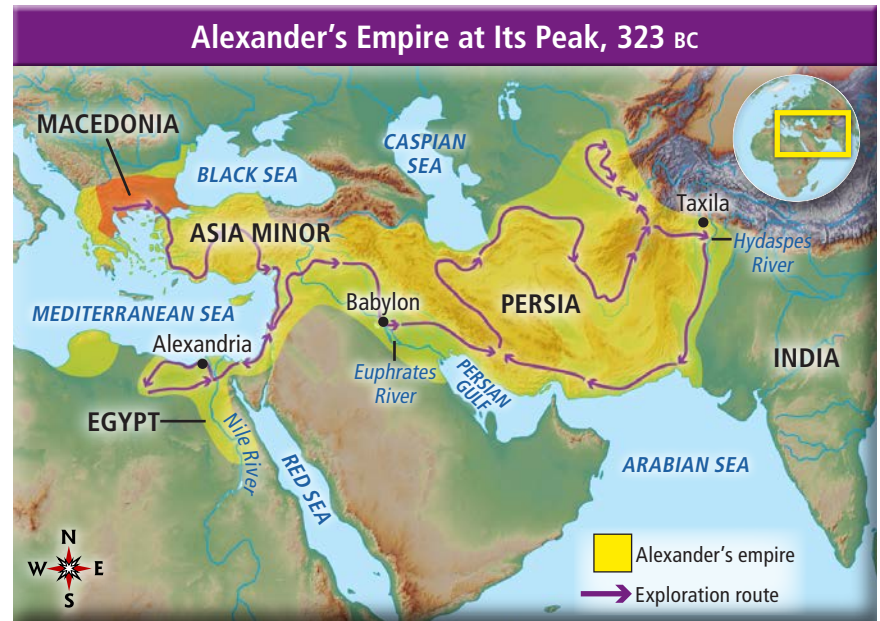
#### LEVEL Z2

Fountas & Pinnell	Y-Z
Reading Recovery	N/A
DRA	70+



### Table of Contents

Alexander the Great, King of the World . . . . .	4
Growing Up as a Prince . . . . .	5
Becoming a King . . . . .	8
Conquering the World . . . . .	9
The Legacy of Alexander the Great . . . . .	18
Glossary . . . . .	20



### Alexander the Great, King of the World

More than 2,300 years ago in the city of Pella in the kingdom of Macedonia, a prince named Alexander III was born. In his short life, Alexander would conquer nations and kingdoms in lands near and far and would become one of the most significant leaders the world had ever known.

Alexander was not only a conqueror with a drive for land and power, but also an explorer with a tremendous drive to go beyond places anyone had ever traveled before. Taught by one of the most learned men of his time, Aristotle, Alexander appreciated new ideas and had a thirst for knowledge. He wanted to go farther and learn more.

## Growing Up as a Prince

Alexander was born in 356 BC. King Philip II, his **ambitious** father, had learned about military strategy from observing the strong armies of neighboring Greece while he was captive there as a young man. When he returned home, he seized the Macedonian throne from Amyntas, his nephew. Philip established his rule of Macedonia and the surrounding Greek states with a superior and well-trained army. Having learned from the best generals of his time and still at an early age, Philip became a very powerful man.

Alexander's mother, Olympias, was not a native-born Macedonian and feared that because of this fact, Alexander might not inherit the throne and she would lose her position. She raised her son to be king and would settle for nothing else.



### Callisthenes

How do we know about a man who lived so long ago? A man named Callisthenes (kuh-LIS-thuh-nee-z) documented Alexander's life. Fortunately, other historians consulted Callisthenes's account before it was lost forever. Much of what we know about Alexander comes from these later writings.



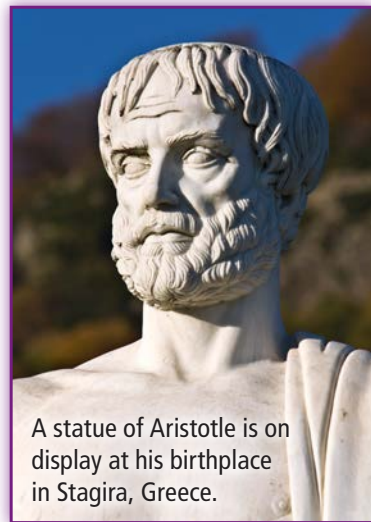
A statue of Alexander riding his horse Bucephalus stands in Pella, Greece, today.

Alexander inherited the ambitions of both parents. At the age of twelve, he demonstrated his strong will when his father refused to buy a superb but nervous horse named Bucephalus (byoo-SEF-uh-luhs). Noticing that the unbroken horse was frightened by its shadow, Alexander stepped in and took control. He knew that by using the reins to turn Bucephalus's head away from his shadow, he could calm it down. Alexander then jumped on the horse's back and rode away with ease. Bucephalus became his constant companion.

As a prince growing up, Alexander made friends with other boys of the noble class. He gained a lasting friendship in a young man named Hephaestion. The two boys trained for war and studied together. Hephaestion would eventually become a loyal officer in Alexander's army.

As king of Macedonia, Alexander's father was often away as he gained control of other parts of Greece. Philip entrusted his son's education and training to experts in areas that would prepare Alexander to become king. In order to be proficient in battle, young men in Greece first learned to ride horses and hunt. These skills, along with fighting with a sword, javelin, and bow, would allow them to succeed in brutal battles. Men were expected to pass tests of manhood by killing a wild boar and killing a man in battle. Alexander succeeded at both.

As part of his education and training, Alexander also studied history, politics, and **ethics**. When he was thirteen, his father brought Aristotle, a well-known Greek **philosopher**, to Macedonia to be Alexander's teacher. People respected Aristotle for his intelligence and knowledge. Aristotle inspired Alexander's interest in literature, science, medicine, and philosophy. His lifelong appreciation of culture and art are also attributed to Aristotle's teachings.



A statue of Aristotle is on display at his birthplace in Stagira, Greece.

## Becoming a King

Philip left Macedonia for battle in 340 BC and put Alexander in charge as **regent**. At sixteen, Alexander stopped a small revolution in Philip's absence. While still in his teens, Alexander commanded a section of troops during some of his father's battles. Alexander honed military skills that prepared him to be king, but things changed in 337 BC when Philip divorced Olympias and married a native Macedonian. If Philip and his new wife had a child, Alexander's claim to the throne would be threatened.

At this time, Philip started to think more about expanding his empire. Persia, the dominant empire of Asia, was an enemy of Greece. Darius I and his son Xerxes (ZURK-seez) had taken lands claimed by Greece more than one hundred years earlier. Philip wanted to take back some of the lands. He also planned to expand his empire and wealth by conquering Asia with his recently gained Greek allies, the League of Corinth. The league was an organization unifying Greek **city-states'** armies in order to liberate Greek cities that had been captured by Persians.

In 336 BC, as Alexander and his mother feared, Philip's wife gave birth to a daughter. In the same year, King Philip was **assassinated**.

Olympias had Philip's new wife and baby killed. Alexander became king at the age of twenty.

### Conquering the World

Alexander's first order of business after becoming king was to call on the support of his father's army. Alexander had earned the trust of the soldiers while under his father's command, and he needed a strong army to attack Persia, now under the rule of Darius III. He intended to follow through with his father's plan to rule Persia.



Alexander would need more than just his father's army. As a member of the League of Corinth, Macedonia was supported by most of Greece's other city-states. However, some leaders in Thebes and other Greek states had not been in support of Philip's growing power, and an increasing number did not want to support Alexander's ambitious plans. Alexander was facing the possibility of a revolution that could put an end to the Macedonian control of Greece and thwart his plans to move into Asia.

Determined not to lose control of Greece, Alexander met any opposition head-on. He was a very persuasive speaker, but he was also not against using intimidation or force in order to maintain control.

For example, when Thebes and other Greek city-states of the League of Corinth, as well as the territories surrounding Macedonia, began to oppose Alexander, his army stopped the rebellion and made an example of the people of Thebes by killing six thousand citizens and selling another thirty thousand into slavery. His severe actions secured the submission of all the Greek city-states. A year after becoming king, Alexander was ready to carry out his plan to travel to new lands, explore new cultures, and conquer the Persian Empire.

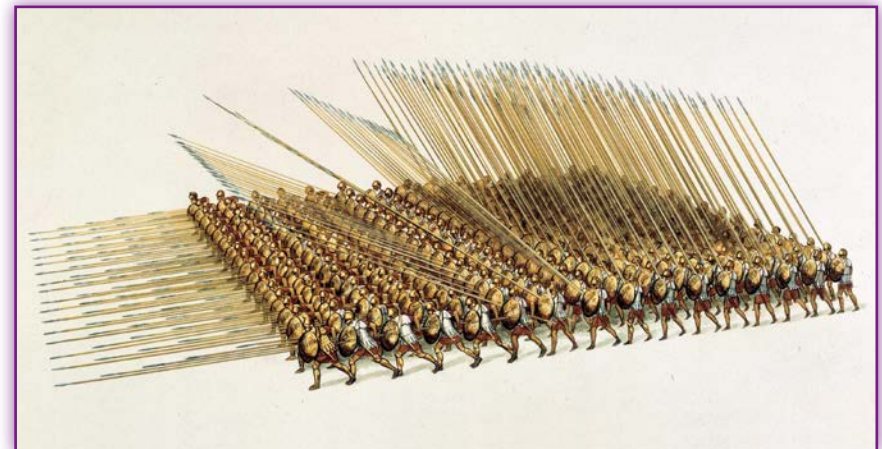
In the spring of 334 BC, Alexander began his march to Asia. Alexander took with him a host of **botanists**, zoologists, and **surveyors** to study the lands he was about to see. He traveled by boat through the Hellespont, a narrow waterway that connects the Aegean Sea to the Sea of Marmara. When he landed in Asia Minor (now Turkey), Alexander threw his spear into the ground, staking his claim with dramatic flair. His gesture was intended to pay tribute to the warriors and heroes who came before him.

Soon after, Alexander and his army encountered the Persian army at the Granicus River. Both armies were made up of foot soldiers and soldiers on horseback.



The Persian king, Darius III, did not join in the fight. Historians say the Persian army was not as prepared as the Macedonian army and didn't have a strong plan. Alexander's speed and stronger weapons overwhelmed them. Alexander and his men won the battle. In the heat of the fight, which probably lasted about an hour, Alexander was almost killed by an ax but was said to have been saved by one of his childhood companions.

The Persian army was faced with a well-trained Greek army of thousands, including masterful archers, a **cavalry**, and an **infantry**. The army also used a tight formation of foot soldiers called a *phalanx*, in which soldiers marched shoulder to shoulder wearing helmets and body armor, and carrying shields, daggers, and spears.



Foot soldiers in phalanx formation moved in after the cavalry to fight anyone left standing.

None of this would amount to anything, however, without Alexander's strong vision and leadership. He led by example and went ahead of his armies in battle. When they went without water, he did, too. When horses died and soldiers were forced to walk, Alexander walked as well. He employed weapons experts and engineers, communicated his military strategies deftly, and battled with speed and flexibility.

Alexander continued to reclaim cities along the Aegean Sea. In the fall of 333 BC, Darius III and his army faced Alexander and the Greek army in the Battle of Issus. This time, the Persian army outnumbered the Macedonians.

Alexander led his infantry, **flanked** by cavalry, into battle. Despite the numbers of Persian soldiers, Alexander's army won the bloody battle, but Darius fled to Babylon—abandoning his army as well as his wife and children who were captured. This was a decisive win; it meant that Alexander was a step closer to ruling the Persian Empire.



A stone carving depicts Alexander on his horse in the Battle of Issus.

Next, Alexander headed south to conquer the Persian **fleet** by capturing the cities along the Mediterranean Sea in Syria and Phoenicia (Lebanon today). Those that didn't surrender faced bloodshed. The city of Tyre resisted for seven months and Alexander's army killed many of its citizens before it was finally defeated.

With Tyre captured, Alexander and his men continued along the shore, arriving in Egypt in the fall of 332 BC. The Persian leader there quickly surrendered, letting Alexander take control. The Greeks and Macedonians respected Egypt and its history as a civilization that had lasted for centuries. Alexander appointed Egyptian governors and encouraged Egyptian religion. Egypt, weary of Persian rule and many wars, welcomed him.

While there, Alexander founded the city of Alexandria where the Nile River flows into the Mediterranean Sea. It was the first of twenty cities that would bear his name, but it was the only one that would be created according to his plans.

With his new city underway, Alexander was ready to expand his empire again by conquering new sections of the Persian Empire. He left Egypt in the summer of 331 BC and reached the city of Babylon in Mesopotamia (now Iraq). He then moved farther east by crossing the Euphrates



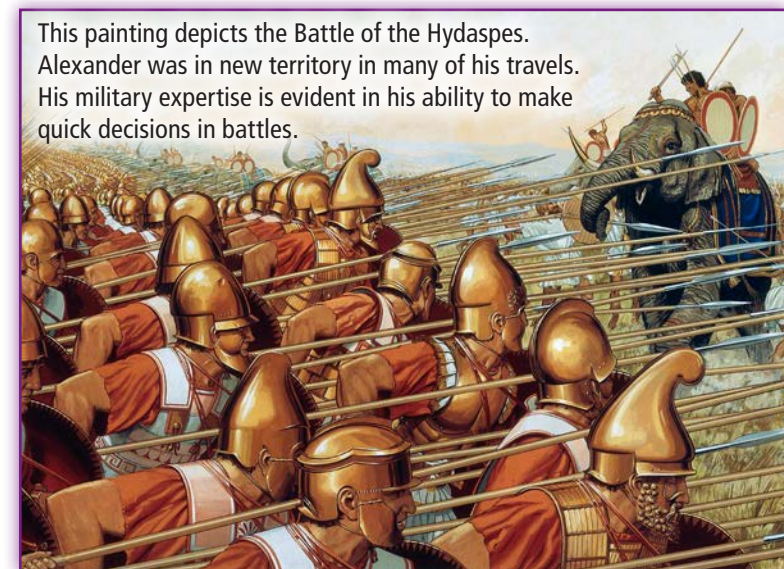
River, which flows into the Persian Gulf. He was near his old enemy Darius.

After the defeat at Issus, Darius rebuilt the Persian army and prepared to meet Alexander again. In October of 331 BC, the two armies fought in the Battle of Gaugamela. Once again, the Persians outnumbered the Macedonians, but this time they were gathered and ready for battle before the Macedonian army even reached the village. Nonetheless, Alexander, his officers, and his army overwhelmed Darius and the Persians. Darius again fled the battlefield in defeat.

The Macedonian army lost one thousand soldiers, while the Persians lost more than fifty thousand. The victory at the Battle of Gaugamela put Alexander even closer to becoming the new ruler of the Persian Empire. Embracing that thought, Alexander moved quickly through Asia to establish his rule, further exploring the culture of Persia and attempting to capture Darius. Before he was able to, however, Bessus, a local ruler, killed Darius, made himself king, and planned to continue to fight Alexander. Alexander shifted his focus to defeating Bessus, eventually capturing him and having him killed for murdering Darius.

Alexander took control of more land and people, and in 324 BC he married a local princess as well as Stateira, the daughter of Darius III. Many of his officers married Persian women as well. After that, his lifestyle transformed to include Persian ways. He began dressing in Persian clothing and even expected Macedonians to honor him as the Persians did—with low bows.

The Macedonians did not all agree with Alexander's changes, and many who had been on the road for as long as ten years were tired and wanted to go home. Alexander wanted to expand the empire farther east. In 327 BC, he convinced his men to push into land they called India, the area that includes Afghanistan and Pakistan today.



This painting depicts the Battle of the Hydaspes. Alexander was in new territory in many of his travels. His military expertise is evident in his ability to make quick decisions in battles.

Alexander invaded, killing thousands of local tribes who resisted. In one fight, Alexander was severely injured when an arrow punctured his lung, but he recovered.

In the spring of 326 BC, Alexander arrived in the city of Taxila, whose ruler, Taxiles, did not resist Alexander and instead gave him troops and offered an important battle resource in the region—elephants. In return, he asked Alexander to battle Taxiles’s enemy Porus, who ruled nearby Indian lands. Alexander would need to subdue him in order to continue his march east.

In June, Alexander and his troops arrived at the Hydaspes (hy-DAS-pee-z) River to fight Porus and his army. It is not clear whether Alexander used elephants in the fight. We do know that Porus’s elephants, having done damage to the Greeks, eventually panicked due to the intensity of the fight and retreated. Porus surrendered to Alexander. It was Alexander’s last big battle.

Despite Alexander’s efforts to convince his followers to go farther east, there was mutiny among the weary troops. They convinced Alexander to return home. Alexander made it to Babylon before he came down with a fever. In June 323 BC, Alexander the Great died.

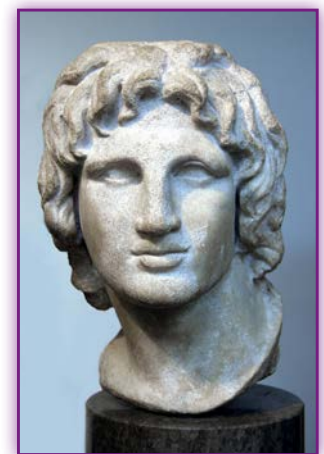
## The Legacy of Alexander the Great

Alexander the Great reigned for twelve years and eight months. He was thirty-three years old when he died. He never lost a battle.

Alexander was brutal at times; the estimated number of people his armies killed is close to 750,000. Still, he is considered an excellent leader and military commander. Unifying his followers by sharing his vision and leading in war with superb understanding of battle, Alexander took back the Greek cities that Persia ruled. Furthermore, he extended his empire to Egypt and a large portion of central Asia, areas that had never been explored by Europeans.

Alexander became a model for generations of military leaders who followed. He opened doors of knowledge in his explorations, learning about new religion and government. He also introduced the people he encountered to Greek culture and created a world that was more open to trade of new materials and, more importantly, new ideas.

When he died, Alexander was taken to Alexandria, Egypt, where he was placed in a golden casket. He received honors there and in Greece.



## Alexander Conquers the World



356 BC: Born in Macedonia



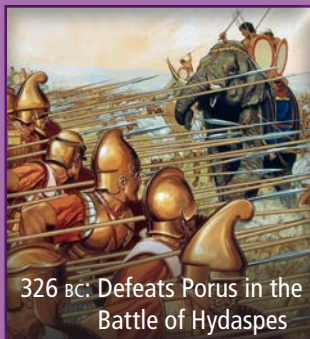
344 BC: Bucephalus becomes Alexander's horse

340 BC: Stops a revolt on Macedonia's eastern border

334 BC: Advances into Persia, wins the Battle of Granicus

332 BC: Captures Tyre and then invades Egypt, where he is welcomed

330 BC: Darius is killed



326 BC: Defeats Porus in the Battle of Hydaspes

360 BC

355

350

345

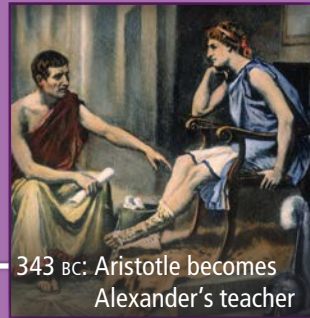
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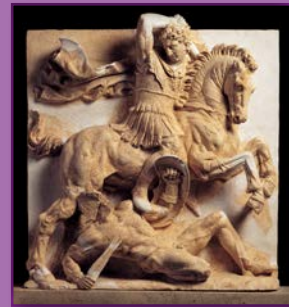
325

320 BC



343 BC: Aristotle becomes Alexander's teacher

336 BC: Philip is killed; Alexander becomes king of Macedonia



333 BC: Defeats the Persian army led by Darius at the Battle of Issus

331 BC: Defeats Darius and the Persians in the Battle of Gaugamela

327 BC: Continues to conquer central Asia; pushes into India

323 BC: Dies in Babylon

## Glossary

<b>ambitious</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	having a strong desire to succeed or achieve (p. 5)
<b>assassinated</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	killed in a planned attack, often for political purposes (p. 8)
<b>botanists</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	people who study plants (p. 11)
<b>cavalry</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a group of soldiers who fight while mounted on horses; a troop of soldiers who fight in armored vehicles (p. 12)
<b>city-states</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	cities or urban areas that act as independent countries (p. 8)
<b>ethics</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	moral principles that guide a person's behavior (p. 7)
<b>flanked</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	positioned at one or two sides of something or someone (p. 13)
<b>fleet</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a group of ships or other vehicles operating under one commander or owner (p. 14)
<b>infantry</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	soldiers trained and given weapons and gear to fight on foot (p. 12)
<b>philosopher</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a person who seeks knowledge and truth about life; someone who studies philosophy (p. 7)
<b>regent</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a person who reigns over a kingdom in place of a monarch who is unable to rule at that time (p. 8)
<b>surveyors</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	people who measure and identify the physical features of areas of land (p. 11)