

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Alexander the Great

Alexander the Great was a young general who amassed the largest empire of the ancient world in just thirteen years. His career was brief because he died a young man, but Alexander's legacy was a blending of cultures we now call the Hellenistic civilization.

Alexander's father was King Philip of Macedonia. Macedonia is a mountainous land north of the Greek peninsula. From a young age, Phillip trained Alexander in warfare and by the age of sixteen, the young man was leading an army on his own. Alexander succeeded his father in power at age nineteen after Philip's assassination in 336BCE.

Philip's armies had conquered most of the Greek poli by that time, but the Greeks believed they could free themselves of Macedonian rule since their new king was a "mere boy." Alexander proved the Greeks wrong by leading an army that captured Thebes; the young general burned all but one home in the polis as a warning to the other Greeks. Alexander then turned his attention to Persia, the longtime enemy of Greece and the mightiest empire in the world at that time.

In 333BCE, Alexander led an army of 40,000 soldiers, 30,000 sailors and 100 ships into Asia Minor (modern day Turkey). Alexander's forces conquered several Persian provinces before turning south to face the army of Persian King Darius III.

Alexander's army was less than half the size of the Persian forces, but the Macedonian outmaneuvered the Persians, causing Darius to flee the battlefield. Alexander captured the wife and daughters of Darius. The young general treated the Persian king's family with great respect and the woman accompanied him for the rest of his life.

In 332BCE, Alexander moved south to Egypt. The Egyptian people welcomed the conquering general as a hero. They declared Alexander a pharaoh and a god because he freed them from harsh Persian rule. The young general founded Alexandria, a city that would become the greatest center of learning in the ancient world. A library in Alexandria housed the accumulated knowledge of the Greeks. The library operated until the seventh century of the Common Era, long after the fall of the Greek and Roman civilizations.



Alexander marched his army east where they again defeated the forces of King Darius. Darius again fled the battlefield, but the Persian king was killed soon after by his advisors. Alexander's army looted the Persian capital at Persepolis, but the young general divided the treasures of Persepolis among his soldiers, making the men richer than they could have ever expected to be.

Although a young man, Alexander was a military genius, possibly the greatest warrior of all time. His troops were better trained and organized than the Persian army. Alexander's soldiers admired their leader because of his personal courage. Alexander led his soldiers in battle instead of remaining behind the lines. The troops saw that the young general was sharing their danger and was not asking them to take any risks he would not take himself.

As a child, Alexander was tutored by the Greek philosopher Aristotle. Aristotle taught Alexander that the Greeks were the most advanced people in the world and that all other cultures were barbarians. Once Alexander conquered the Persians, he had a change of heart. Alexander adopted many Persian customs. He took the Persian title "King of Kings" and married one of the daughters King Darius abandoned on the battlefield.

Alexander's army marched as far east as the edge of the Indian subcontinent in 326 BCE, but the heavy monsoon rains and a revolt among his soldiers forced the young general to end his conquests.

Alexander was only thirty-three years old in 323BCE, when he fell ill from a fever and died. The great conqueror was too young to make plans for a successor, so the empire Alexander created in less than thirteen years quickly crumbled after his death.

Alexander changed the world, but not through his accomplishments on the battlefield. Alexander's empire combined Greek culture with the customs of Persia and the other lands he conquered. Later historians called this combination of cultures the Hellenistic civilization. Hellenism is a word derived from the Greeks' traditional name for themselves. Long after Alexander's empire fell apart, Hellenism produced great advances in science, philosophy, and drama.

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### Fill in the Blanks

Alexander the Great became king of M\_\_c\_\_d\_\_n\_\_a while still a \*t\_\_e\_\_a\_\_er after the \*m\_\_r\_\_er of his father. The \*G\_\_e\_\_ks tried to free themselves of M\_\_c\_\_d\_\_n\_\_an rule, but A\_\_e\_\_a\_\_d\_\_r proved himself to be more than a “mere boy” by c\_\_p\_\_u\_\_i\_\_g and burning T\_\_e\_\_es as a warning to others.

Alexander was a m\_\_l\_\_t\_\_ry genius who expanded his e\_\_p\_\_re as far east as I\_\_d\_\_a. While in Egypt, the people hailed the Macedonian \*g\_\_n\_\_r\_\_l as a p\_\_a\_\_a\_\_h. Alexander was taught by A\_\_i\_\_t\_\_t\_\_e that the Greeks were s\_\_p\_\_r\_\_or to other cultures, but as his empire grew, Alexander came r\_\_s\_\_e\_\_t other cultures. The mix of Greek, P\_\_r\_\_i\_\_n and other cultures that resulted from Alexander’s e\_\_p\_\_re is called H\_\_l\_\_e\_\_i\_\_m. Alexander’s empire c\_\_u\_\_b\_\_ed shortly after his d\_\_a\_\_h at age 33, but his legacy included great advances in s\_\_i\_\_n\_\_e, philosophy and d\_\_a\_\_a.

### Answer in complete sentences

\*1. Explain why history remembers Alexander as “Alexander the Great?”

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2. How did destroying the city of Thebes prove Alexander to be more than a “mere boy?”

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\*3. Explain how Alexander rejected what Aristotle taught him about foreign cultures once the young general defeated Persia.

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4. In what year was Alexander the Great born? [Remember Alexander was born before the Common Era]

5. What was the Hellenistic Civilization? Why was the Hellenistic Civilization important?

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6. What was significant about the library built in Alexandria, Egypt?

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