Name: _____

Date: _____

ANCIENT GREECE
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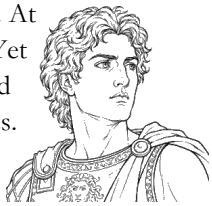
Alexander the Great



Alexander's enemies underestimated him. At twenty, they dismissed him as a "mere boy." Yet before dying mysteriously at thirty-two, he had built one of the ancient world's largest empires.

A Young King

Alexander's father was King Philip II of Macedonia, a frontier kingdom north of Greece. Philip trained him in warfare, and by sixteen, the prince was leading an army. Then, in 336 BCE, Philip was assassinated. At twenty, Alexander became king.

Philip's armies had conquered many of the Greek poli. But after Philip's death, many Greeks believed they could throw off Macedonian rule. They were wrong. The young king marched on the rebellious polis of Thebes and destroyed it. The destruction warned the other Greek poli not to challenge his rule.

Invading Persia

With the Greek peninsula under his control, Alexander turned east toward Persia, the longtime enemy of Greece and the mightiest empire in the world. In 334 BCE, he led 40,000 soldiers and 30,000 sailors across the sea into Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). Every sword, shield, horse, and day's food had to move with the army as it swept toward King Darius III.

Alexander's army was less than half the size of the Persian forces, but he forced Darius to fight on a narrow strip of land between the mountains and the sea. The cramped battlefield prevented the Persians from surrounding the smaller Macedonian army. Alexander then led a fierce cavalry charge toward Darius himself. When the Persian king fled, much of his army fled with him. Alexander captured Darius's mother, wife, and daughters, treating them with respect and keeping them with his court.

Egypt and Alexandria

Alexander then moved south to Egypt, where he was welcomed as a hero for freeing the people from Persian rule. They declared him a pharaoh and a god. The young conqueror founded Alexandria, which became the greatest center of learning in the ancient world. Its famous library collected hundreds of thousands of scrolls from across the Mediterranean, making it the intellectual capital of the Hellenistic world.

The Fall of Persia

Alexander marched east to face Darius again. The Persian king chose a wide, open plain where his larger army could surround the Macedonians. Spotting a gap, he led his cavalry straight toward Darius. The Persian king fled again, and his army collapsed.

Darius was murdered by his own advisers while trying to escape. Alexander marched to the Persian capital of Persepolis, where his soldiers carried away enormous treasures, making them wealthier than they had ever imagined.

Alexander the Leader

Although still a young man, Alexander was one of history's greatest military commanders. He inspired fierce loyalty by leading from the front. Instead of directing battles from a safe distance, he charged into combat alongside his men, never asking them to face dangers he wouldn't face himself.

As a child, Alexander was tutored by Aristotle, who taught him that Greek culture was superior to all others. But conquering Persia changed his thinking. Instead of forcing the Persians to adopt Greek ways, he embraced Persian customs, wore Persian clothing, took the title "King of Kings," and married a Persian noblewoman.

The End of the Journey

By 326 BCE, Alexander's army had marched to the edge of the Indian subcontinent. He wanted to press east, but his weary soldiers refused. After years of constant marching, fighting, and heavy monsoon rains, they had reached their limit. Reluctantly, Alexander agreed to turn back.

Alexander was only thirty-two when he fell ill and died in 323 BCE. Having named no clear successor, the vast empire he built in under thirteen years broke apart almost immediately.

Alexander's Legacy

Alexander changed the world far beyond the battlefield. His conquests mixed Greek ideas with local traditions across Egypt, Persia, and Asia. Historians call this blended culture Hellenistic civilization. Long after Alexander's empire dissolved, it continued to drive advances in science, philosophy, mathematics, and art.

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Fill in the Blanks

Aristotle sought e__p__a__a__i__ns for storms, earthquakes, and harvests that others attributed to the g_____, earning him the title "F__t__er of N__t__r__l History." Born in M__c__d__n__a, son of the king's p__y__i__i__n, he traveled to A__h__ns at age s__v__n__e__n to study at Plato's A__a__e__y, remaining nearly t__e__ty years. Shortly after Plato died in 347 BCE, Aristotle left Athens and studied marine animals, organizing nature by s__a__ed traits. In 343 BCE, King P__i__ip of M__c__d__n asked Aristotle to t__t__r his t__i__t__en-year-old son, A__e__a__d__r, who later sent his former teacher unusual p__a__ts and a__i__a__s from his c__n__u__r__d empire. In 335 BCE, Aristotle founded the L__c__um, one of history's first r__s__a__ch centers. Aristotle left A__h__ns after A__e__a__d__r's death in 323 BCE and died the following year.

Answer in Complete Sentence

*1. Why did many people in Athens consider Aristotle to be an outsider?

2. How did Aristotle organize plants and animals?

3. What made the Lyceum different from Plato's Academy?

4. Why did Aristotle leave Athens after Alexander died?

*5. Why is Aristotle still revered despite is many mistakes?

*This is a higher order learning question. You must answer the question to the best of your ability, but any reasonable answer will be graded as correct.

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