



# Alexander *the Great*

by Geraldine Callaway



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**HOUGHTON MIFFLIN HARCOURT**  
School Publishers

ILLUSTRATION CREDIT: 3, 9 Joe LeMonnier / Melissa Turk

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Printed in China

ISBN-10: 0-547-29908-7

ISBN-13: 978-0-547-29908-2

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 0940 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11

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Alexander the Great was born in 356 B.C.E.

## INTRODUCTION

Long ago, a prince was born in Macedonia (mas ih DOH nee uh), a part of ancient Greece. In his short life, he led armies over thousands of miles. Some cities he destroyed. Others he spared. Still others he built. He freed many people, but he made others slaves. Over time, his legend grew. Most people know him as Alexander the Great.

People have been telling stories about this man for hundreds of years. But how much of the legend is true? What is so great about Alexander the Great?

## GROWING UP

Alexander lived about 2,300 years ago. He was close to his mother, Olympias. He did not always get along with his father, King Philip II.

Philip ruled Macedonia for 23 years. Each city in Macedonia ruled itself, much like a state. Geography made the city-states independent. Steep, rocky hills divided the cities. Travel between cities was slow. People from different cities were not used to working together. They fought a lot.

Alexander would one day rule Macedonia.



 Philip found ways to unite the city-states of Macedonia into a kingdom. Other big city-states lay to the south. Philip gained control over most of them during his **reign**. He now ruled over most of the Greek world. Through it all, his son watched and learned.

Alexander had other teachers, too. One of his uncles was very strict. From him, Alexander learned about self-control. Another teacher showed him the beauty of music and the arts. Alexander's parents wished to find him the very best teacher. When Alexander was 13, they hired Aristotle (ar uh STAHL tuhl) as his tutor.

## LESSONS OF A LIFETIME

Aristotle was one of the best thinkers of his time. He taught Alexander how to look at problems. They talked about right and wrong. Alexander may have learned a lot from Aristotle. He had his own ideas, too.

Today, some people might think Aristotle was a snob! He thought Greeks were the most worthy people on Earth. He did not want Greeks to marry outsiders. Alexander hated this idea. Alexander's mother was an outsider. Some Greeks thought her people were not as good as they were.

 Alexander's father disliked her for that reason. They were not a happy family. Alexander later married a non-Greek. Many of his soldiers did, too.

## THE MAKING OF A WARRIOR

Alexander grew up during a rough time. The young prince had many chances to fight. Through it all, he learned how to be a leader. At 16, he practiced being king. His father rode off to battle. Alexander took charge of the throne. Soon, a crisis came up. In the north, rebels tried to take over a city. Alexander quickly stopped it.

 Aristotle (right) tutors a young Alexander.



 Four years later, Alexander faced a bigger crisis. Somebody murdered his father. Alexander became king of the Greek world. He was only 20 years old.

Philip's death disturbed the Greek world. Word about the new king spread, and trouble started. People in the north began fighting. Greek cities in the south spoke of an uprising. Alexander rose to the task. He put down the rebels in the north. Then he rode to one of the biggest Greek cities. He asked its people to lay down their weapons. They refused. Alexander's army stormed the city and tore it down. The other Greek cities saw what he had done. They obeyed Alexander and gave him **crucial** support. He needed their strength to make his next move.

## ALEXANDER'S GOAL

Back then, the Greeks did not like the Persians. They often fought each other in battle. At the time, the Persians ruled over a big part of Asia. The **conquest** of Asia became Alexander's goal. Much of the Greek world was on his side. He felt it was time to act.

Alexander needed a great army to reach this goal. Luckily, he had the might of his father's soldiers. No other army fought so well.



## 🔊 ALEXANDER'S HORSE

A man brought a wild horse to Alexander's father one day. The horse kicked and screamed. Alexander knew just what to do. He moved the horse so it could not see its shadow. No longer afraid, the horse let Alexander mount him. Alexander proudly rode in front of his father. Alexander rode "Oxhead" on his journey through Asia. The horse died in battle. Alexander founded a city in India to honor his trusted friend.

 Alexander had his own strengths, too. He was not simply brave. Alexander was bold. He never gave up. These traits helped him again and again.

In 11 years, he and his army covered thousands of miles. They fought long, bloody battles. They braved harsh weather. They suffered painful wounds. They lived close to one another, so sickness spread.



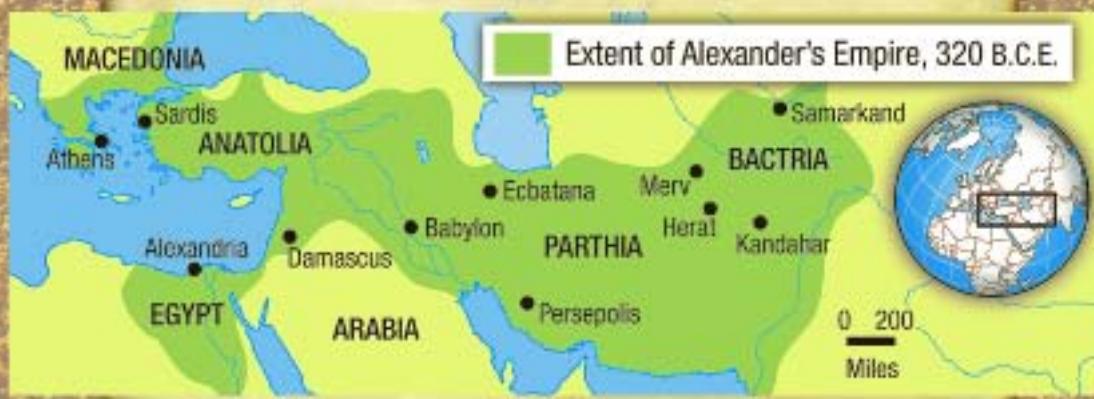
 Alexander's soldiers fought many battles against the Persians.

## A LONG ROAD TRIP

We do not have a copy of Alexander's battle plan today. If we did, it might look something like this:

- 1 March the army through the Persian Empire.
- 2 Take each city, one by one.
- 3 Be nice to those who give in easily.
- 4 Be mean to those who resist.
- 5 Capture the Persian king.
- 6 Crown yourself King of Asia.

Alexander did all of these things.



 find the enemy. They became bored in between battles. Through it all, they needed to eat and be entertained. Cooks, doctors, animals, and supplies traveled with the army. Alexander was in charge of it all. He had to keep his army fit, happy, and ready to fight.



 King Porus of India surrenders to Alexander the Great in 326 B.C.E.

## A COMPLEX LEADER

Stories tell what a great leader Alexander was. He got his soldiers to do their best. He could have lived richly while on the road. Instead, he lived simply, as his army did. He fought beside them, and sometimes he got wounded. His actions earned their respect. He also earned their fear.



🔊 Alexander sometimes lost his self-control. He thought that a friend of his wanted to take over the army. One terrible day, he killed his friend in anger. After, he felt great sorrow over what he had done.

## 🔊 FROM MAN TO MYTH?

Another story describes how Alexander told his officers to bow down before him. His officers grumbled. They thought they should only bow down before gods.

Greek myths speak of how cosmic forces turned men into gods. Many people treated Alexander like he was a god. It seemed that he believed it himself.

On his journey, Alexander claimed Egypt. He visited a temple of the Egyptian god Amen. Stories say he asked Amen if he, too, was a god. It seems Alexander was happy with the reply. He minted coins stamped with his image. His face looks like other pictures that the Greeks made of their gods.

To create such a coin meant he probably believed he was a god.



🔊 This coin shows Alexander's image.



🔊 Alexander thought he had a lot in common with the Greek god Hercules.

🔊 At least, he wanted others to believe it! Egyptians used the coins in their trade. Many people saw them and used them. The coins spread throughout the growing Greek world.

## 🔊 AN EARLY DEATH

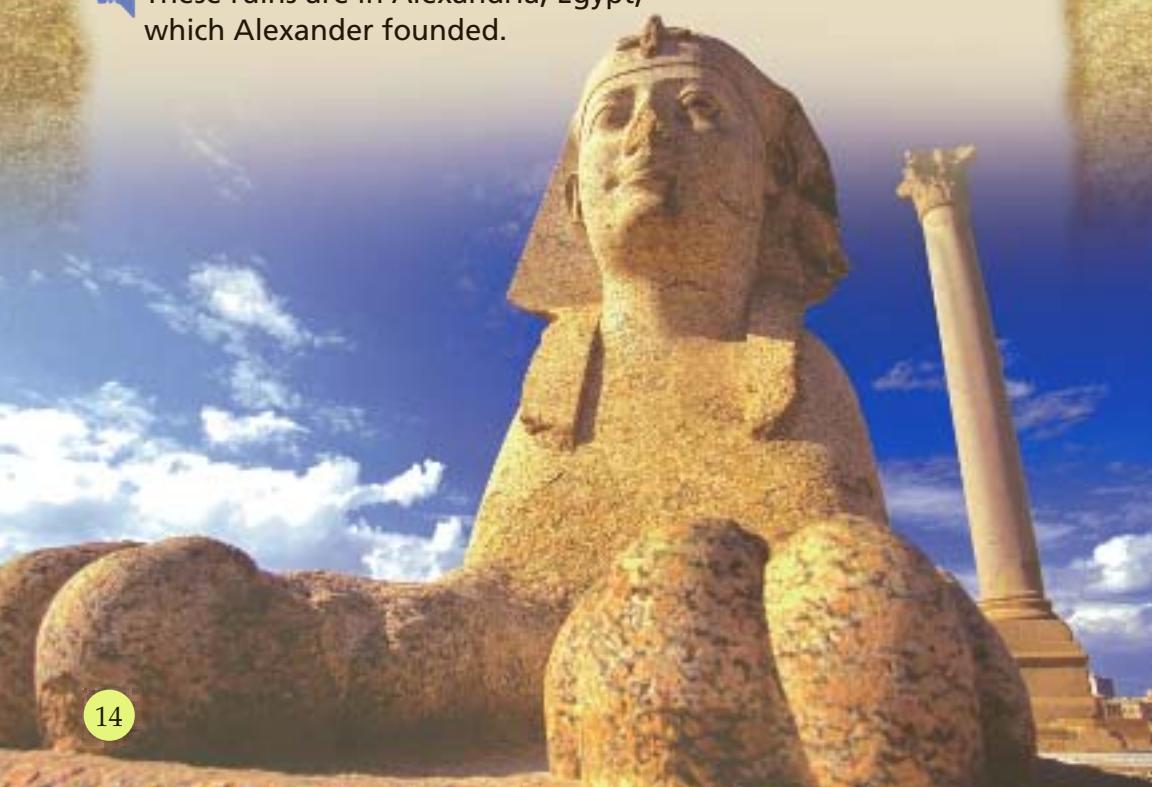
It turns out Alexander was human after all. In 323 B.C.E., Alexander came down with a fever. He died a few days later. He was only 33 years old. After he died, the empire broke apart. But Alexander had made a great impact in his short life.

## 🔊 ALEXANDER'S GREATNESS

Alexander founded many cities on his trips. Greeks and native peoples lived in these cities. They married. Cultures mixed. In this way, Greek language and culture spread to all parts of his empire.

Some of his cities became great learning centers. Because of Alexander, people made progress in arts and sciences. He showed the world that it was possible to unify great regions. We can all learn something from Alexander. If we are bold and try very hard, we can reach our goals.

🔊 These ruins are in Alexandria, Egypt, which Alexander founded.

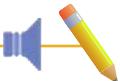
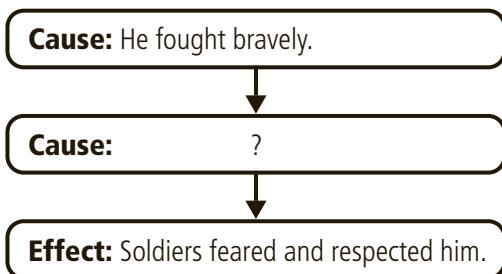


# Responding



## TARGET SKILL Cause and Effect

How did Alexander's soldiers feel about their leader? What caused them to feel this way? Copy and complete the diagram below.



## Write About It

**Text to Self** Does Alexander deserve to be called "Alexander the Great"? Write a paragraph explaining your answer. Remember to organize your details in the same order the author presented them.



### TARGET VOCABULARY

ceremonial

depicted

divine

emerge

erected

fragments

mission

pondered

prosperity

supportive



### TARGET SKILL

**Cause and Effect** Tell how events are related and how one event causes another.



### TARGET STRATEGY

**Monitor/Clarify** As you read, notice what isn't making sense. Find ways to figure out the parts that are confusing.



**GENRE** **Informational Text** gives facts and examples about a topic.

**Level:** V

**DRA:** 50

**Genre:**

Informational Text

**Strategy:**

Monitor/Clarify

**Skill:**

Cause and Effect

**Word Count:** 1,355

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ISBN-13: 978-0-547-29908-2

ISBN-10: 0-547-29908-7

A standard linear barcode representing the ISBN number 9780547299082.

A standard linear barcode representing the ISBN number 90000.

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