

Macedonia, Alexander the Great, and the Hellenistic World – Outline

I. Macedonia

- a. Macedonians were culturally and ethnically related to the Greeks
 - i. Actually looked upon as sort of “barbarian cousins” by the Greeks of Athens, Sparta, etc.
- b. King Philip II of Macedonia
 - i. Expanded his territory north to the Danube River and south into the Greek peninsula
 - ii. Conquered all city-states except Sparta by 338 BCE
 - iii. Killed while planning to attack Persia (336 BCE)

II. Alexander the Great

- a. Tutored by the philosopher Aristotle
- b. Precarious position because his mother was not Macedonian (making Alexander half Macedonian), and his father took a Macedonian as a new wife
- c. Wanted to conquer Persia like his father
- d. Wanted to spread Greek culture throughout the world
- e. Philip was killed by companions of Alexander
- f. Alexander came to the throne at age 20 (336 BCE)

III. Conquests of Alexander the Great

- a. First put down local revolts, including destroying Thebes
- b. Invasion of Persia and beyond
 - i. 35,000 troops
 - ii. Granicus (334 BCE)
 - iii. Issus (333 BCE)
 - iv. Arbela (331 BCE)
 - v. City-states along the Mediterranean Sea
 - 1. Phoenician Tyre
 - vi. Egypt
 - 1. Founded Alexandria
 - vii. India
 - 1. Reached Indus River
 - viii. Set up capital in Babylon (located in modern-day Iraq) in 324 BCE
- c. Died of a fever in 323 BCE at age 33

IV. Alexander's empire

- a. Fell apart after Alexander's death
- b. Generals fought for control of empire
- c. Empire divided
 - i. Egypt – Ptolemy
 - ii. Most of Asian empire – Seleucus
 - iii. Macedonia and Greece – Antigonos
- d. New dynasties ruled for hundreds of years until conquered by Rome

V. Alexander's impact on world history

- a. Spread Greek culture beyond the Greeks
 - i. “Pan-Hellenism”

- ii. Founded numerous cities
- iii. Married a daughter of Persia's King Darius
 - 1. Encouraged his soldiers to take Persian wives
- iv. Worshiped foreign gods and goddesses
 - 1. Recognized as foreign incarnations of Greek gods
- v. Encouraged trade throughout his empire
- vi. Settled Greeks throughout his empire
 - 1. Greek culture became "Hellenistic" as it spread and mingled with other cultures

VI. Alexandria, Egypt

- a. City in Egypt founded by, and named after, Alexander the Great
- b. Ptolemy came to rule Egypt after Alexander's death
- c. Ptolemies built a university in Alexandria – "Library of Alexandria"
 - i. Included 700,000 volumes written on papyrus
 - ii. Center of research and scholarship

VII. Hellenistic science

- a. Many practical, useful inventions
- b. Euclid (lived circa 300 BCE)
 - i. Greek who lived and worked in Alexandria, Egypt
 - ii. "Father of geometry"
 - 1. Theorems in plane geometry ("Euclidean geometry")
- c. Archimedes (circa 287-212 BCE)
 - i. Greek who lived and worked in Sicily
 - ii. Principle of specific gravity
 - iii. Law of floating bodies
 - iv. Used levers, pulleys, and screws to build things such as catapults
- d. Eratosthenes (circa 276-195 BCE)
 - i. Greek born in modern-day Libya
 - ii. Geographer and librarian of Alexandria, Egypt
 - iii. Closely determined the earth's diameter
 - iv. Measured earth's distance from the sun with 99% accuracy
 - v. Used lines of longitude and latitude on a map
 - vi. Believed earth is round
 - 1. One could sail to India by sailing west
- e. Aristarchus of Samos (circa 310-230 BCE)
 - i. Heliocentric model – first to advocate that the earth revolves around the sun
- f. Hipparchus (circa 190-120 BCE)
 - i. Invented plane and spherical trigonometry
 - ii. Predicted eclipses of the moon and sun

VIII. Hellenistic art and architecture

- a. Architecture
 - i. Built many impressive public buildings
 - ii. Baths, libraries, palaces, theaters
 - iii. Pharos – lighthouse of Alexandria – 400 feet high
- b. Art
 - i. More lifelike – showed more expression
 - ii. Action, grief, motion, pain
 - iii. *The Death of Laocoon, Winged Victory of Samothrace, Venus de Milo*

IX. Hellenistic philosophy

- a. Cynics (Cynicism)
 - i. Diogenes (412-323 BCE)
 - ii. Hatred of power and worldly possessions
- b. Stoics (Stoicism)
 - i. Zeno of Citium (334-262 BCE)
 - ii. Acceptance, courage, patience
 - iii. Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius (121-180 CE) was a Stoic philosopher (wrote *Confessions*)
 - iv. Stoic belief in human brotherhood influenced Christianity
- c. Epicureans (Epicureanism)
 - i. Epicurus (341-270 BCE)
 - ii. No life after death
 - iii. Pleasure and pain measure what is good and bad
 - iv. Life is to be enjoyed, particularly by searching for knowledge

X. Hellenistic literature

- a. Few Hellenistic works had enduring value
- b. Preserved classical Greek heritage
 - i. Spread throughout Alexander's former empire
 - ii. Particularly at Alexandria, Egypt
 - iii. Middle East kept and preserved Greek heritage during the fall of Rome and Europe's Dark Ages
 - 1. Europeans rediscovered this Greek heritage during the Crusades

XI. Hellenistic culture in the Roman world

- a. Greek cities of southern Italy piqued Roman interest in Greek culture
 - i. Many southern Italian, Sicilian, and other Mediterranean cities which came under Roman control had been founded by Greeks
- b. Romans spread Greek culture throughout their own empire
 - i. Much Roman art generally copied Greek art

XII. Hellenistic civilization declines

- a. Endured for approximately 300 years
- b. Wealth and power in the hands of a few
- c. Reliance on slavery
 - i. Free persons could not find work
 - ii. Slave labor cheaper (in the short-term) than investments in new inventions and technologies
 - iii. Slave revolts
- d. Continuous warfare among city-states
- e. Easy target for Roman conquest

XIII. Review questions

- a. Under what circumstances did Alexander the Great come to the Macedonian throne?
- b. Name at least three modern-day countries which were conquered by Alexander the Great.
- c. What does the term *Hellenistic* mean?
- d. Describe the work of a Hellenistic scientist or mathematician.
- e. Describe a Hellenistic philosophy.
- f. What caused the fall of Hellenistic society?
- g. Imagine that you are a Babylonian living during the time of Alexander. How might you view Alexander's conquests? Would you consider him "great"?