

Birth of the Hellenistic World



World History Workbook Series

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Ancient Macedonia

The Macedonians were culturally and ethnically related to the Greeks. In fact, the Macedonians were looked upon as the "barbarian cousins" by the Greeks of Athens, Sparta, etc.

King Philip II of Macedon expanded his territory north to the Danube River and south into the Greek peninsula (the Peloponnesus). By 338 B.C.E., Philip II had conquered all of the Greek city-states except for Sparta. He was killed while planning to attack Persia in 336 B.C.E.

Alexander the Great

The young Alexander, son of Philip II, was tutored by the famous philosopher Aristotle. Although the son of the king, Alexander's position was precarious because his mother was not Macedonian, making Alexander only half Macedonian. When Philip II took a Macedonian as his new wife, and this new wife gave birth to a son, Alexander feared being bypassed as heir.

Alexander was ambitious. Like his father, he wanted to conquer Persia. Alexander also longed to spread Greek culture throughout the world.

The evidence regarding Philip II's murder is inconclusive. Philip was said to have been killed by companions of Alexander. Certainly, Alexander had a motive. But whether or not Alexander personally orchestrated his father's murder is a matter of historical debate.

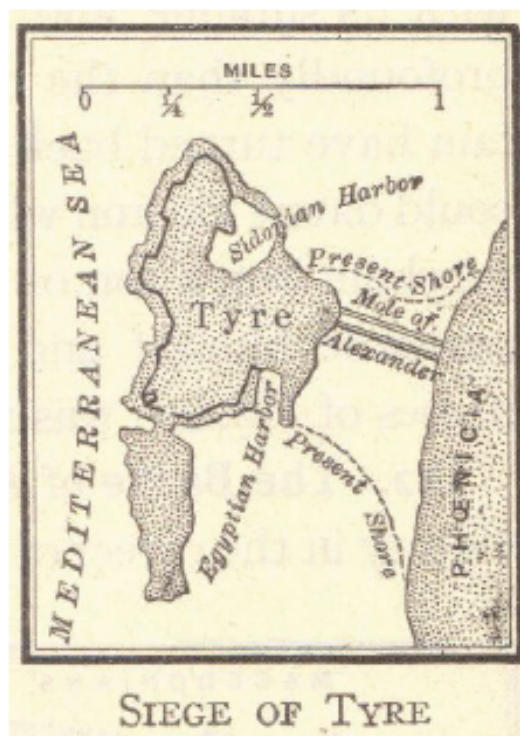
Regardless of the circumstances of his rise to power, Alexander came to the Macedonian throne in 336 B.C.E. at the age of twenty.

Conquests of Alexander the Great

Alexander's first actions as king of Macedon involved putting down local revolts within Greece, including the destruction of Thebes.



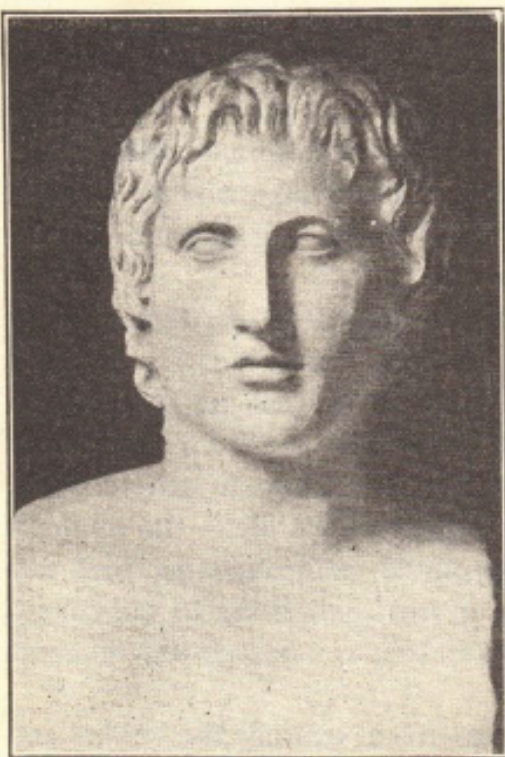
After earning decisive control over the Greek city-states, Alexander turned his attentions to the Persian empire. With 35,000 troops, Alexander won victories at Granicus (334 B.C.E.), Issus (333 B.C.E.), and Arbela (331 B.C.E.).



Alexander captured and founded city-states along the Mediterranean Sea. These included the Phoenician city of Tyre and Alexandria in Egypt (named after himself). Traveling through Persia into India, Alexander reached the Indus River.

Alexander set up his capital in Babylon (located in modern-day Iraq not far from Baghdad) in 324 B.C.E. It was in Babylon, in 323 B.C.E. at the age of 33, that Alexander the Great died of a fever.

Under what circumstances did Alexander the Great come to the Macedonian throne? _____



ALEXANDER THE GREAT

From a bust in the Louvre.

Alexander's Empire

The vast empire that Alexander built fell apart after his death. His generals fought for control, with the result that the empire was divided amongst them.

Egypt went to Ptolemy, whose descendants, including the famous Cleopatra, would rule the country until it was conquered by the Romans. Most of Alexander's Asian empire went to Seleucus. Macedonia and Greece went to Antigonus.



DEATH OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT

From a modern painting. Around his bed were gathered his generals. They asked whom he wished to succeed him. Drawing his signet ring from his finger, he said, "To the strongest."

Name at least three modern-day countries which were conquered by Alexander the Great. _____

Imagine that you are a Babylonian or an Egyptian living during the time of Alexander. How might you view Alexander's conquests? Would you give him the moniker the "Great"? Explain.

Alexander's Impact on World History

Alexander's most lasting achievement was the spread of Greek culture beyond the Greeks themselves. This spread of Greek culture has been termed "pan-Hellenism."

Alexander married a daughter of Persia's King Darius. He encouraged his soldiers to take Persian wives. Foreign gods and goddesses were worshipped by Alexander and his men, who recognized these deities as foreign incarnations of Greek gods and goddesses.

Trade was encouraged throughout Alexander's empire. To facilitate trade and strengthen his empire, Alexander settled Greeks throughout the lands he conquered.

The culture that emerged, mingling Greek traditions with local customs and beliefs, is called "Hellenistic."

What does the term *Hellenistic* mean?

Alexandria, Egypt

Alexandria is a city in Egypt founded by, and named after, Alexander the Great of Macedon. Ptolemy came to rule Egypt following the death of Alexander.

The Ptolemies (or Ptolemaic dynasty) built a university in the city, known as the Library of Alexandria. This university contained 700,000 volumes (books) written on papyrus. It was ancient Western civilization's premier center of research and scholarship.

Hellenistic Science

Scientists of the Hellenistic period invented many practical, useful inventions. Spread throughout Alexander's former empire, they continued the Greek tradition of creating new theories to explain the workings of the universe.

Euclid lived circa 300 B.C.E. He lived and worked in Alexandria, Egypt. Euclid is known as the "father of geometry." His theorems in plane geometry form the basis of the discipline, which is often called "Euclidean geometry" in his honor.

Archimedes lived circa 287-212 B.C.E. in Sicily, now part of Italy. He developed the principle of specific gravity and the law of floating bodies. Archimedes famously used levers, pulleys, and screws to build such things as catapults.

Eratosthenes (circa 276-195 B.C.E.) was a Greek born in what is today Libya. He worked as the geographer and librarian at Alexandria. Eratosthenes closely determined the earth's diameter, and measured earth's distance from the sun with 99% accuracy. He was the first to use lines of longitude and latitude on a map. Additionally, Eratosthenes believed that the earth is round, and postulated that one could reach India by sailing west. It would be nearly 2000 years before this fact would be proven by the crew of Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan.

Aristarchus of Samos (circa 310-230 B.C.E.) developed the heliocentric model of the universe, becoming the first to advocate that the earth revolves around the sun.

Hipparchus (circa 190-120 B.C.E.) invented plane and spherical trigonometry. He also predicted eclipses of the moon and sun.

Describe the work of a Hellenistic scientist or mathematician. _____

Hellenistic Art and Architecture

Many impressive public buildings were built during this period, including baths, libraries, palaces, and theaters. One of the most impressive structures

was Pharos, the lighthouse of Alexandria, which stood over 400 feet high.

Hellenistic art became more lifelike, showing greater expression. Sculpture illustrated action, grief, motion, and pain. Famous sculptures from this period include *The Death of Laocoon*, *Winged Victory of Samothrace*, and *Venus de Milo*.



Hellenistic Philosophy

The philosophy of Cynicism became popular under Diogenes (412-323 B.C.E.). The Cynics expressed a hatred of power and of worldly possessions.

Stoicism was popularized by Zeno of Citium (334-262 B.C.E.). The

Stoics urged acceptance, courage, and patience. The Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius (121-180 C.E.) was himself a Stoic philosopher, and wrote one of the philosophy's most famous works, *Confessions*. The Stoic belief in human brotherhood influenced the development of Christianity.

Epicureanism was developed under Epicurus (341-270 B.C.E.). The Epicureans believed that there is no life after death, and that pleasure and pain measure what is good and bad. Epicureans believed that life is to be enjoyed, particularly by searching for knowledge.

Describe a Hellenistic philosophy. ____

Which Hellenistic philosophy do you find most appealing, and why? _____

Hellenistic Literature

Few Hellenistic literary works had enduring value. For the most part, literature during this period preserved the classical Greek heritage.

Hellenistic culture spread classical Greek writings throughout Alexander's former empire, particularly in Alexandria, Egypt. Peoples of the Middle East kept and preserved this Greek heritage during the fall of ancient Rome and Europe's Dark Ages. It was not until the Crusades, which brought Europeans into the Middle East, that this Greek heritage was rediscovered.

Hellenistic Culture in the Roman World

The Greek cities of southern Italy piqued Roman interest in Greek culture. Many of the southern Italian, Sicilian, and other Mediterranean cities which eventually came under Roman control had been founded by Greeks.

The Romans spread Greek culture throughout their own empire, which spread beyond the Mediterranean into places like Gaul (modern France) and Britannia (modern Great Britain). Much of Rome's art and architecture generally copied Greek art and architecture.

The Decline of Hellenistic Civilization

Hellenistic civilization endured for approximately 300 years. Wealth and power were in the hands of a few.

The economy relied on slavery. Free persons could not find work.

Macedonia, Alexander the Great, and the Hellenistic World

Slave labor was cheaper (in the short-term) than investments in new inventions and technologies. Slave revolts also took place.

Continuous warfare took place among the city-states following the death of Alexander the Great. This made Alexander's former empire an easy target for Roman conquest.

What caused the fall of Hellenistic society? _____



Based on the map, name six major bodies of water that bordered Alexander's empire.

Word Search Puzzle

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TERMS

Alexander
 Alexandria
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 Antigonus
 Arbela
 Archimedes
 Aristarchus
 Aristotle
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 Darius
 Diogenes
 Egypt
 empire
 Epicurus
 Eratosthenes
 Euclid
 Granicus
 Greece
 Indus River
 Issus
 Macedon
 Mediterranean
 Persia
 Pharos lighthouse
 Philip
 Ptolemy
 Seleucus
 Tyre
 warfare
 Zeno