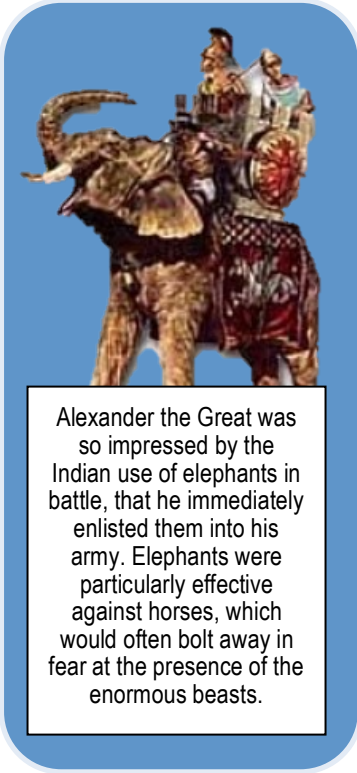


ALEXANDER THE GREAT

Was Alexander the Great really great?



Alexander the Great was so impressed by the Indian use of elephants in battle, that he immediately enlisted them into his army. Elephants were particularly effective against horses, which would often bolt away in fear at the presence of the enormous beasts.

A Great Conqueror

In 13 short years Alexander amassed the largest empire in the entire ancient world- an empire that covered 3,000 miles. And he did this without the benefit of modern technology and weaponry. In his day, troop movements were primarily on foot, and communications were face to face. Not bad for a kid who became the King of Macedon at the age of 20.

A little known fact about Alexander was that his father commissioned the Greek Philosopher Aristotle to be his tutor.

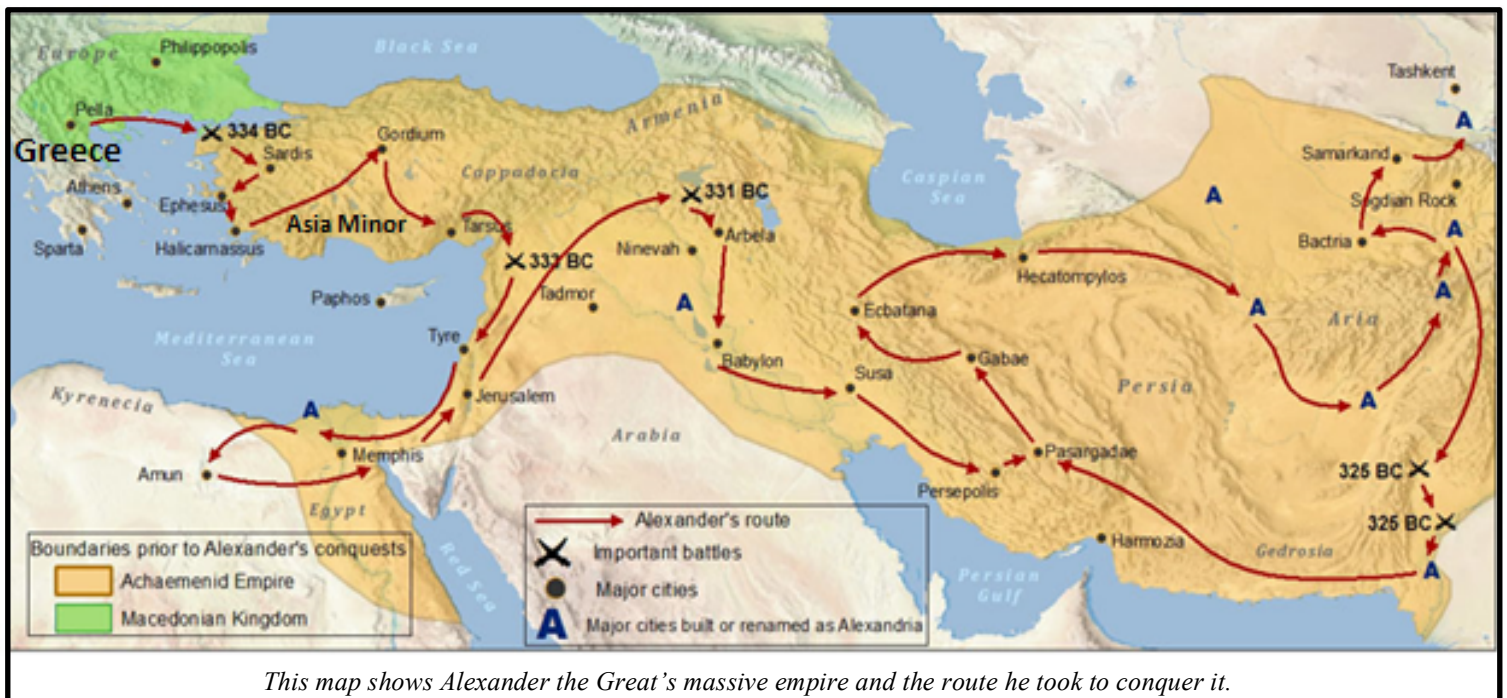
Many of Alexander's accomplishments were made possible by his father, Philip of Macedon. King Philip of Macedon invaded and conquered the Greek city-states. Philip took advantage of the fact that the Greek city-states were divided by years of squabbling and in-fighting. Phillip succeeded in doing what years of war could not- he united the country of Greece for the first time.

Conquering the World

Philip's next goal was to defeat Greece's age-old enemy to the east: Persia. For years, the massive Persian Empire threatened the very existence of the Greek way of life. But before he was able to pursue his second goal, Philip was assassinated.

Alexander the Great

When Phillip's son, Alexander took the throne in 336 B.C.E. he vowed to complete the plans of his father. In 334 B.C.E., Alexander invaded Persia, which lay across the Aegean Sea in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey).



This map shows Alexander the Great's massive empire and the route he took to conquer it.



After three grueling years of warfare and three decisive battles, Alexander smashed the Persian armies at the Tigris River and conquered the mighty Persian Empire, including the legendary city of Babylon. For many Greeks, this victory marked a moment of sweet revenge against a bitter foe.

At this point, at the age of 25, Alexander ruled an expansive empire. He established schools of military and intellectual training. He also

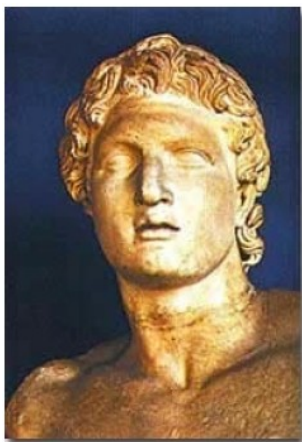
announced that people who were exiled were to be restored as citizens. Nevertheless, his ambitions were not satisfied. While fighting the Persians, Alexander conquered Egypt and founded a city at the mouth of the Nile River. This city, which he named Alexandria after himself, became a diverse, bustling center of trade, the arts, and ideas. It was here that Alexander built the great library of Alexandria. Alexander the Great used religion to inspire loyalty in his followers and the people conquered. To do this, he honored Egyptian and Persian gods as well as Greek gods. He gained the loyalty of Egyptians by visiting oracle sites, making sacrifices, and building temples in their honor.



The library of Alexandria comprised of gardens, a room for shared dining, a reading room, lecture halls and meeting rooms. A hall contained shelves for the collections of scrolls (as the books were at this time on papyrus scrolls), known as bibliothekai.

But Alexander was not done. He continued his campaign, driving farther east, facing hardships such as starvation and dehydration, until he reached India and the Indus River. At this point, his exhausted troops refused to fight further. They told Alexander that a truly great leader knows when it is time to stop fighting.

Without the support of his army, Alexander had no choice, but to turn back and begin consolidating and organizing his far-flung empire. On his way home, Alexander died from disease in 323 B.C.E.



Alexander In Hindsight

Alexander the Great's legacy is both far reaching and profound. First, his father was able to unite the Greek city states. Then, Alexander destroyed the Persian Empire forever. More importantly, Alexander's conquests spread Greek culture, also known as Hellenism, across his empire.

In fact, Alexander's reign marked the beginning of a new era known as the Hellenistic Age because of the powerful influence that Greek culture had on other people. Without Alexander's ambition, Greek ideas and culture might well have remained confined to Greece.

Though he was an unquestionably skilled and highly respected military leader, many historians see Alexander the Great in a different light. He had a darker side. Alexander the Great was feared by those around him for his ferocious and dangerous temper. From time to time would arbitrarily murder close advisors and even friends. Also, toward the end of his many campaigns, he senselessly slaughtered thousands whose only harm was being in his way.