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Alexander— Empire Builder

TERMS & NAMES

- Philip II
- Macedonia
- Demosthenes
- Alexander the Great
- Darius III

MAIN IDEA

Alexander the Great conquered Persia and Egypt and extended his empire to the Indus River in northwest India.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

Alexander's empire extended across three continents that today consist of many nations and diverse cultures.

SETTING THE STAGE The Peloponnesian War severely weakened several Greek city-states. This caused a rapid decline in their military and economic power. To make matters worse, in the 50 years after Sparta defeated Athens in 404 B.C., the two city-states had continued to fight each other. In the nearby kingdom of Macedonia, King **Philip II** took note. Philip dreamed of first taking control of Greece. Then Philip planned to move against Persia and seize its vast wealth. Philip also hoped to avenge the Persian invasion of Greece in 480 B.C.

Philip Builds Macedonia's Power



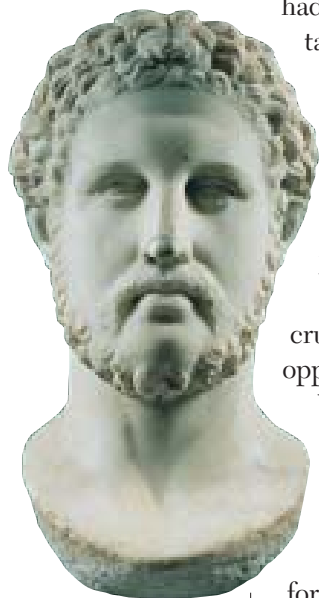
Just north of Greece, the kingdom of **Macedonia** had rough mountains and a cold climate. The Macedonians were a tough people who lived in mountain villages rather than city-states. The Macedonian language was related to Greek. Most Macedonian nobles thought of themselves as Greeks. The Greeks, however, looked down on the Macedonians as uncivilized foreigners who had no great philosophers, sculptors, or writers. They did, however, have an important resource in their shrewd and fearless kings.

Philip's Army In 359 B.C., Philip II became king of Macedonia. Though only 23 years old, he quickly proved to be a brilliant general and a ruthless politician. Philip transformed the rugged peasants under his command into a well-trained professional army. He organized his troops into phalanxes that were 16 men across and 16 deep. Philip used this heavy phalanx formation armed with 18-foot pikes to pave the way for cavalry strikes through enemy lines.

Once his phalanx had broken through, Philip used the fast-moving cavalry to crush his disorganized opponents. When he first used these tactics against northern opponents who had invaded Macedonia, Philip's powerful army proved unbeatable. Within a short time, he was preparing to invade Greece.

Conquest of Greece The Athenian orator **Demosthenes** (dee-MAHS-thuh-NEEZ) tried to warn the Greeks of the threat Philip and his army posed. He urged them to unite against him. However, the Greek cities could not agree on any single policy. Finally, in 338 B.C., Athens and Thebes—two Greek city-states—joined forces against Philip. By then it was too late. The Macedonians soundly defeated the Greeks at the battle of Chaeronea (KAIR-uh-NEE-uh). Philip's 18-year-old son Alexander led a successful cavalry charge that helped win the battle. The defeat at Chaeronea ended Greek freedom and independence. The city-states retained self-government in local affairs. However, Greece itself remained firmly under the control of a succession of foreign powers—the first of which was Philip's Macedonia.

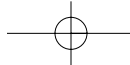
Although Philip planned to invade Persia next, he never got the chance. At his daughter's wedding in 336 B.C., a former guardsman stabbed him to death. With the support of the army, Philip's son Alexander immediately proclaimed himself king of Macedonia.



This bust of King Philip II dates from the 4th century B.C. Under Philip's leadership, Macedonia became a major power in the Greek-speaking world.

THINK THROUGH HISTORY

A. Analyzing Causes How did the Peloponnesian War pave the way for Philip's conquest of Greece?



Because of his accomplishments over the next 13 years, he became known in history as **Alexander the Great**.

Alexander Defeats Persia

Although Alexander was only 20 years old when he became king in 336 B.C., he was well prepared to lead. Under Aristotle's teaching, Alexander had learned science, geography, and literature. Alexander especially enjoyed Homer's description of the heroic deeds performed by Achilles during the Trojan War. To inspire himself, he kept a copy of the *Iliad* under his pillow.

As a young boy, Alexander learned to ride a horse, use weapons, and command troops. Once he became king, Alexander promptly demonstrated that his military training had not been wasted. When Thebes, a city in central Greece, rebelled, he destroyed the city. About 6,000 people were killed. The survivors were sold into slavery. Frightened by his cruelty, the other Greek cities quickly gave up any idea of rebellion.

Invasion of Persia With Greece now secure, Alexander felt free to carry out Philip's plan to invade Persia. In 334 B.C., he led 35,000 soldiers across the Hellespont into Anatolia. Persian messengers raced along the Royal Road to spread the alarm about the invasion. Within a short time, a Persian army of about 40,000 men rushed to defend Persia. The two forces met at the Granicus River. Instead of waiting for the Persians to make the first move, Alexander ordered an elite cavalry unit to attack. Leading his troops into battle, Alexander smashed the Persian defenses.

Alexander's victory at Granicus alarmed the Persian king, **Darius III**. Vowing to crush the Macedonians, he raised a huge army of between 50,000–75,000 men to face the Macedonians near Issus. Realizing that he was outnumbered, Alexander surprised his enemies. He ordered his finest troops to break through a weak point in the Persian lines. The army then charged straight at Darius. To avoid capture, the frightened king fled, followed by his panicked army. This victory gave Alexander control over Anatolia.

Alexander's Ambitions Grow Shaken by his defeat, Darius tried to negotiate a peace settlement. He offered Alexander the western third of his empire. Alexander's advisers urged him to accept.

However, the rapid collapse of Persian resistance fired Alexander's ambition. He rejected Darius's offer and confidently announced his plan to conquer the entire Persian Empire.

Then Alexander marched into Egypt, a Persian territory, in 332 B.C. The Egyptians welcomed Alexander as a liberator. During his stay, he visited the temple of the god Zeus-Ammon. Alexander was crowned pharaoh—a title that Ptolemy used later to begin the Ptolemaic pharaoh line. Alexander also founded the city of Alexandria at the mouth of the Nile.

Conquering the Persian Empire After leaving Egypt, Alexander moved east into Mesopotamia to confront Darius. The desperate Persian king assembled an army of 250,000 men. The Persian chariots were armed with deadly scythes protruding from the wheel hubs. The two armies collided at Gaugamela (GAW-guh-MEE-luh), a small village near the ruins of ancient Nineveh. Alexander launched a massive phalanx attack followed by a cavalry charge. As the Persian lines crumbled, Darius again panicked and fled. Alexander's victory at Gaugamela ended Persia's power. The Macedonian army now marched unopposed into Persia's wealthiest provinces.

HISTORY MAKERS



Alexander
356–323 B.C.

When Alexander was only eight or nine years old, he tamed a horse that none of his father's grooms could manage. Alexander had noticed that the horse, Bucephalus, acted wild because he was afraid of his shadow. By speaking to the horse gently and turning him to face the sun, Alexander was able to ride him. Seeing this, Philip told his son, "You'll have to find another kingdom; Macedonia isn't going to be big enough for you."

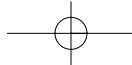
Alexander took his father's advice. Riding Bucephalus at the head of an army, he conquered a region from Greece to the Indus Valley. When the horse died in what is now Pakistan, Alexander named the city of Bucephala after it. Maybe he was tired of the name *Alexandria*. He'd already named at least a dozen cities after himself!

Background

The Hellespont is the ancient name for the Dardanelles, the narrow straits that separate Europe from Asia Minor.

Vocabulary

scythes: razor-sharp knives or blades.



Alexander and Darius (riding horses, near bottom) fight face to face in this Persian painting. The two rulers never battled this closely in real life.

Within a short time, Alexander's army occupied the capitals of Babylon, Susa, and Persepolis. These cities yielded a huge treasure, which Alexander distributed among his army. After a stay of several months, a fire broke out in Persepolis, Persia's royal capital. Some historians say Alexander left the city in ashes to signal the total destruction of the Persian Empire. The Greek historian Arrian wrote about Alexander's expeditions about 500 years later. Arrian explains that the fire was set in revenge for the Persian burning of Athens 150 years before. But others doubt that the fire was planned.

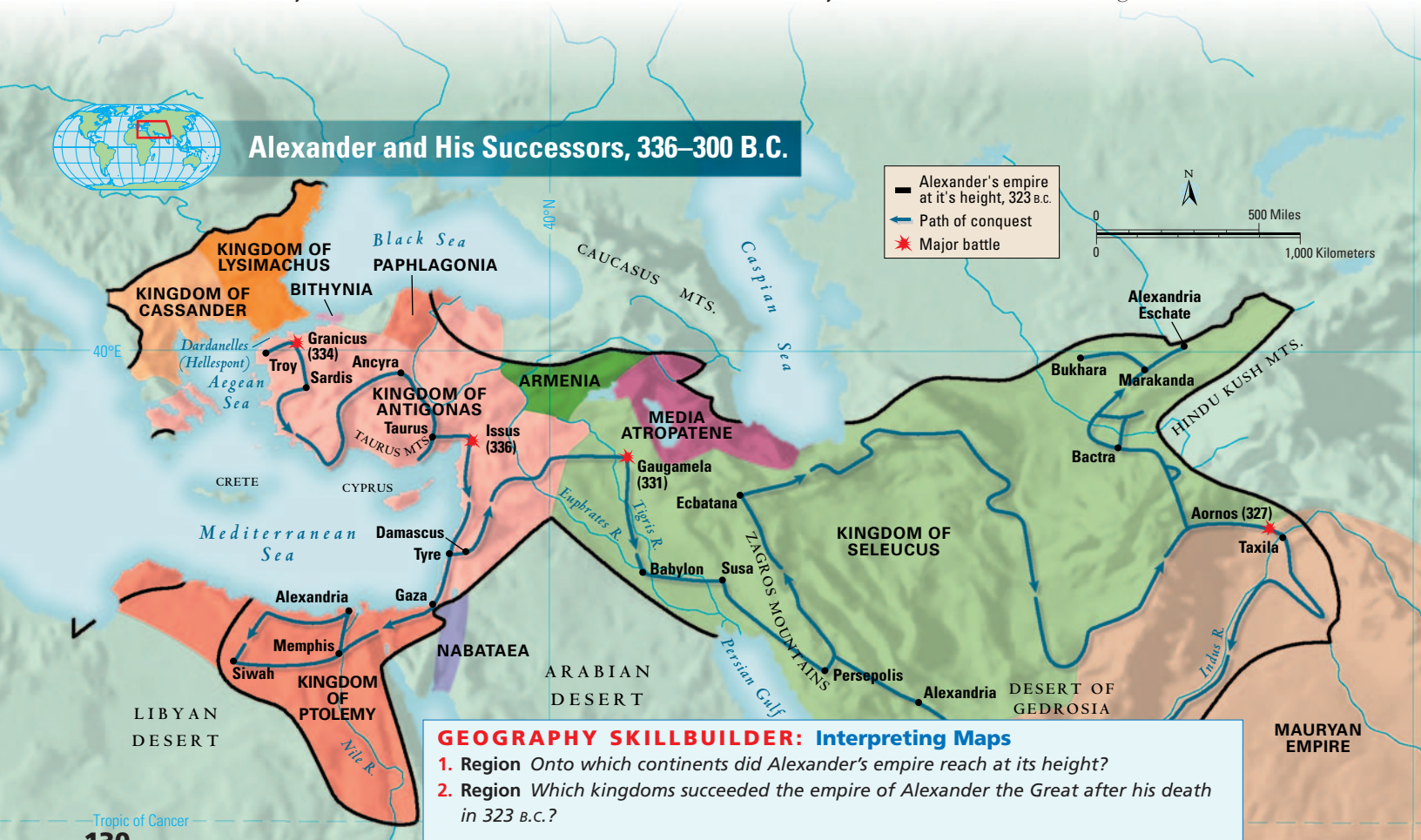
Alexander's Other Conquests

Alexander now reigned as the unchallenged ruler of southwest Asia. He was more interested in expanding his empire

than in governing it. He left the ruined Persepolis to pursue Darius and conquer Persia's remote Asian provinces. Darius's trail led Alexander to a deserted spot south of the Caspian Sea. There he found Darius already dead, murdered by one of his provincial governors. Rather than return to Babylon, Alexander continued east. During the next three years, his army fought its way across the desert wastes and mountains of Central Asia. He pushed on, hoping to reach the farthest edge of the continent.

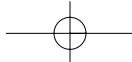
THINK THROUGH HISTORY
B. Analyzing Motives Why did Alexander continue his conquests after Darius was dead?

Alexander in India In 327 B.C., Alexander and his army reached and crossed into the Indus Valley. At the Hydaspes River, a powerful Indian army that included 200 elephants blocked their path. After winning a fierce battle, Alexander's soldiers marched some 200 miles farther, but their morale was low. They had been fighting for 11 years and had marched more than 11,000 miles. They had endured both scorching

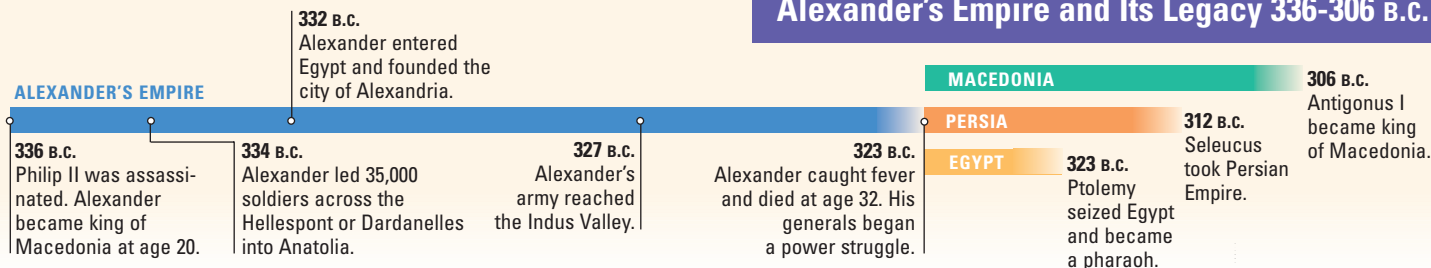


GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Maps

- 1. Region** Onto which continents did Alexander's empire reach at its height?
- 2. Region** Which kingdoms succeeded the empire of Alexander the Great after his death in 323 B.C.?



Alexander's Empire and Its Legacy 336-306 B.C.



deserts and drenching monsoon rains. The exhausted soldiers yearned to go home. Bitterly disappointed, Alexander agreed to turn back.

On their homeward journey, Alexander and his troops crossed a brutally hot desert. Everyone was desperately thirsty. Some of the men collected water in a helmet—which they offered to their general. According to Arrian, Alexander saw an opportunity to inspire his discouraged men by sharing their hardship:

A VOICE FROM THE PAST

He received it [the water], and thanked those who had brought it; and . . . poured it out in the sight of all the troops; and at this . . . the whole army was so much heartened that you would have said that each and every man had drunk that water which Alexander thus poured out.

ARRIAN, *Anabasis*

By the spring of 323 B.C., Alexander and his army had returned west to Babylon. Restless as always, Alexander announced plans to organize and unify his empire. He would construct new cities, roads, and harbors and conquer Arabia. However, Alexander never carried out his plans. One year after his return, he became seriously ill with a fever. Eleven days later, Alexander died—a month short of his 33rd birthday.

Alexander's Legacy As he lay dying, Alexander correctly predicted that his empire would go to the strongest general. His Macedonian generals fought among themselves until three ambitious generals won out. Antigonus (an-TIG-uh-nus) became king of Macedonia and took control of the Greek city-states. Ptolemy (TAHL-uh-mee) seized Egypt, took the title of pharaoh, and established a dynasty. Seleucus (sih-LOO-kuhs) took most of the old Persian Empire, which became known as the Seleucid empire. Ignoring the democratic traditions of the Greek polis, these rulers and their descendants governed with complete power over their subjects.

Alexander's conquests ended the era of independent Greek city-states. As he and his army marched through the Persian Empire, thousands of Greek artists, merchants, and officials followed. Alexander himself adopted Persian dress and customs and married a Persian woman. He included Persians and people from other lands in his army. As time passed, Greek settlers throughout the empire also adopted new ways. A vibrant new culture emerged from the blend of Greek, Egyptian, and Eastern customs.

THINK THROUGH HISTORY

C. Hypothesizing

Was the power struggle that followed Alexander's death inevitable?

Section 4 Assessment

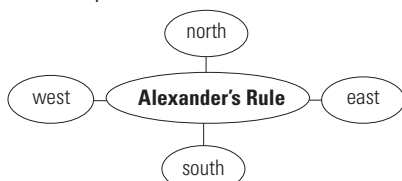
1. TERMS & NAMES

Identify

- Philip II
- Macedonia
- Demosthenes
- Alexander the Great
- Darius III

2. TAKING NOTES

Using a diagram like the one below, label how far north, south, east, and west Alexander ruled.



Which conquests do you think was the most significant? Why?

3. HYPOTHESIZING

If Alexander had lived, do you think he would have been as successful in ruling his empire as he was in building it?

THINK ABOUT

- skills needed for military leadership
- skills needed to govern an empire
- Alexander's demonstrated abilities

4. THEME ACTIVITY

Empire Building In small groups, create an illustrated time line of Alexander's conquests. Include at least five main events.