

Alexander the Great

c. 356–323 BC



HOW HE AFFECTED THE WORLD

Alexander the Great was a respected and successful emperor, commander, explorer, scholar, and politician. He founded more than 70 cities and expanded his empire to stretch across three continents—about two million square miles! He was the first person in history to unite all of Greece.



As you read the biography below, think about how Alexander the Great's strong will and intelligence helped him lead successful conquests and grow his empire.

Though he lived to be just 33 years old, Alexander the Great accomplished much in his short lifetime.

Alexander was born in the northern Greek kingdom of Macedonia. He studied **rhetoric**—literature, science, medicine, and philosophy—with the famed Greek philosopher Aristotle.

When his father, King Philip II of Macedon, went to battle in 340 BC, Alexander was left in command of Macedonia at age 16. In 336 BC, King Philip II was **assassinated** at his daughter Cleopatra's wedding. The Greek army proclaimed Alexander the new king. He was 20 years old.

Some parts of Greece, such as Athens, were not willing to pledge their **allegiance** to the new king. So Alexander set out to destroy his known and potential enemies. He led his army south to gain control of Greece.

After claiming victory over Greece, Alexander led his loyal, well-trained army to battle and conquer other parts of the world, including Central Asia and Egypt. His army faced overwhelming odds when it

VOCABULARY

rhetoric the art or science of using words effectively

assassinated murdered

allegiance loyalty

conquest the act of getting possession or control

champion to advocate or to push for

fought the Persian Empire. But his army was never defeated.

Alexander's many **conquests** spread Greek culture throughout his empire. To **champion** Greek culture, Alexander encouraged Greeks to move to the new lands. He also founded about 70 new cities, using Greek cities as models. Many of these new cities were named Alexandria in his honor. One of them, Alexandria in Egypt, became a leading center of learning in the ancient world.

In 323 BC, Alexander the Great was planning to expand his empire even more. He had pushed his troops into India, but they revolted. Returning to Babylon, Alexander became ill and died. He was only 33, but he had ruled over one of the greatest empires in history.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

- 1. Recall** How did Alexander the Great become king at age 20?

- 2. Evaluate** What qualities do you think Alexander the Great possessed to be such a successful leader?

ACTIVITY

Do more research on the conquests of Alexander the Great. Create a time line or chart showing four of the conquests that were essential to the expansion of Alexander's empire.