

# Biography – 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 over 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:

Think about how Alexander the Great's strong will and intelligence helped him lead successful conquests and grow his empire.

Alexander the Great lived to be only 33 years old, but he 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 Alexander's 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 was **assassinated** at his daughter Cleopatra's wedding. The Greek army proclaimed Alexander the new king. He was just 20.

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 he 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 built 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.

## 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 push for



## What did you learn?

1. How did Alexander the Great become king at age 20?
2. What qualities do you think Alexander possessed to be such a successful leader?
3. After research, create a time line or chart showing four of the conquests that were essential to expanding Alexander's empire.

Map of Alexander the Great's Empire

