

Alexander The Great Summary

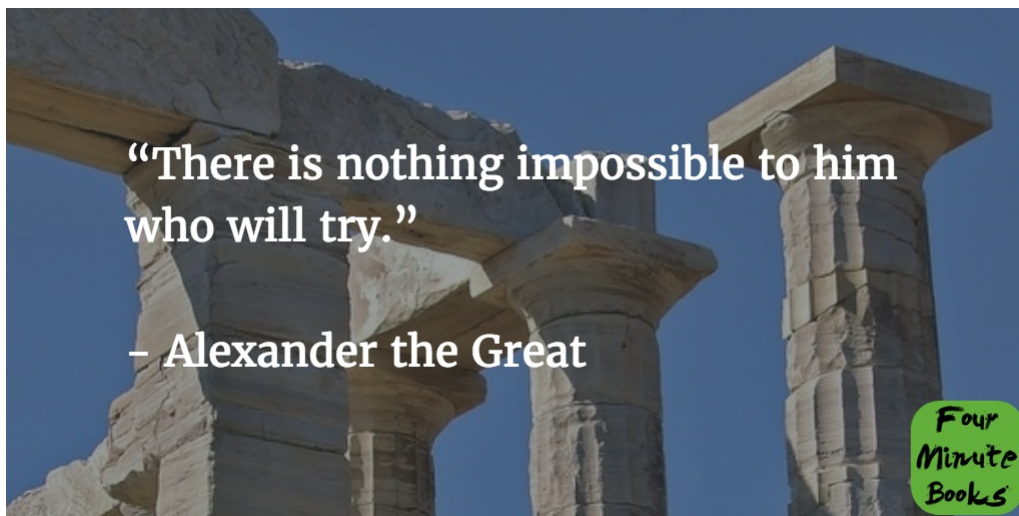


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1-Sentence-Summary: *Alexander The Great* is one of the latest, most updated, and contemporary books on the life of the ancient, Macedonian king, who would extend his empire from a little slide of land in Greece through Persia, Egypt, all the way to India, forming the greatest empire the ancient world had ever seen.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



This is a book about a great man, so let's start with some big words:

“Through every generation of the human race there has been a constant war, a war with fear. Those who have the courage to conquer it are made free and those who are conquered by it are made to suffer until they have the courage to defeat it, or death takes them.”

I can't think of an example of someone who put a harness on their fears and rode them right into victory more often than Alexander the Great. Especially if we're talking about existential fears, like those about dying.

Back in the 4th century BC, Alexander built the biggest empire in the world at the time. The Macedonian empire was larger than the Roman empire at the height of its history and the only empire that had been bigger before was the Persian one (which he conquered).

From Philip Freeman's biography, I think there are a few things to learn about this man:

1. Bundle your energy.
2. Always do the unexpected.
3. Without Alexander the Great, Christianity wouldn't exist.

Ready to learn from the life of an emperor? Let's dig into history!

Lesson 1: Always bundle your energy and resources to direct them towards one specific thing.

When Alexander the Great conquered Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey), he strategically bundled all of his resources and armed forces to achieve specific milestones.

If you've been reading Four Minute Books for a while, you'll probably remember that I just love the Steve Jobs quote that says "focus is about saying no." I've mentioned it in at least five summaries, because I feel I can't be reminded of it often enough. In this case, it was a literal "no."

A crucial city to take over was Miletus, which was a big base of the Persian navy at the time (334 BC). The city initially surrendered right away, but soon the word spread that the Persian navy was about to strike. While planning their battle, one of Alexander's generals and advisors, Parmenion, spotted an eagle on one of the Greek ships, taking it as a sign to take the battle to sea (yup, that's how war strategizing worked back in the day).

But seeing that the eagle looked towards the land, Alexander told him "no," having had an insight: **by bundling his forces to take the city, he could seize the docks and keep the Persian navy from ever reaching the shore.**

After the decisive victory, he decided to bundle his resources again by disbanding the Greek navy. He knew they'd never stand a chance against the Persian fleet anyway, and replicating this strategy of not allowing them to dock along the entire Mediterranean coastline was the more focused option.

Lesson 2: Do what people wouldn't expect you to do.

Concentrating his resources and efforts in small, but tactically important places would often lead Alexander the Great to go against what conventional wisdom of war would have him do, like leading his troops across high mountains in harsh winters or sneaking a few dancers into a city, who would then proceed to kill the soldiers they danced for at night.

One of Alexander's greatest and most worthy adversaries was King Darius III, but after his victory over Persia by taking Persepolis, the capital, a traitor named Bessus killed the former king of Persia, which spurred Alexander into a mad chase.

Expecting to go home after their biggest feat, the Greek army wasn't thrilled at the idea of chasing one guy all the way to India, but **since continuing their quest was such an unexpected turn of events, Alexander managed to rally his troops with an inspiring speech.**

Bessus hid behind the Hindu Kush mountains in modern-day Afghanistan, which are part of the Himalaya and average 15,000 feet in height. **He surely didn't expect Alexander to be crazy enough to try and cross them in the midst of winter**, so he didn't leave behind any troops to guard the pass. But after five long days, they started their descent and by the summer, they had caught up with a very (unhappily) surprised Bessus.

Often getting what you want is simply a matter of doing the opposite of what people expect.

Lesson 3: Had it not been for Alexander's empire, Christianity wouldn't have had an audience to start with.

At 32 years old, Alexander the Great died very young. Imagine what he might've built had he lived to be 50! Nevertheless, his legacy would extend far beyond himself. Having touched three continents with his empire, Alexander changed the history of Greece, Persia (Iran), Egypt, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India as well as of all world religions, such as Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism and Islam.

For example, human Buddha statues take the Greek god of the sun, Apollo, as a role model and Alexander is mentioned in the Koran, because his Greek philosophy influenced the Islamic age.

But the biggest impact was left on a place he never set foot in: Rome. Greek was the language of intellectuals in the Roman empire, and their architecture and art heavily influenced what the Romans built.

Even more importantly though, when Christians and Jews first started to break away from the Roman empire, they used Greek to replicate their texts – and **it was only because Greek was the predominant language in all of the Mediterranean countries that Christianity had a ready, receptive audience to talk to!**

It's funny how often one thing causes the other in ways we'd never have expected – but then again, doing the unexpected is what it's all about.

My personal take-aways

Why didn't we cover *that* extensively in history class? Seriously, I feel like they left out the best stuff. Definitely a part of history that belongs into every educated person's brain, no debate here.

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What else can you learn from the blinks?

- How Alexander impressed his father at just 13 years old
- What he did to make sure Greece wouldn't revolt during his absence
- Why Alexander almost died from a cold bath
- All about his first, epic encounter with Darius on the battlefield
- How a dangerous trip to an oracle in Egypt changed his entire life
- Why Darius slipped through his fingers a second time
- What stupid, but typical mistake Alexander made
- How long it took until Alexander decided to go home
- What his last words were

Who would I recommend the Alexander The Great summary to?

The 13 year old 7th-grader, who just started history in school with ancient Greece, the 22 year old soldier, who tries to learn everything he can about military strategy, and anyone who loves Stoicism.