

LEVELED Book • X

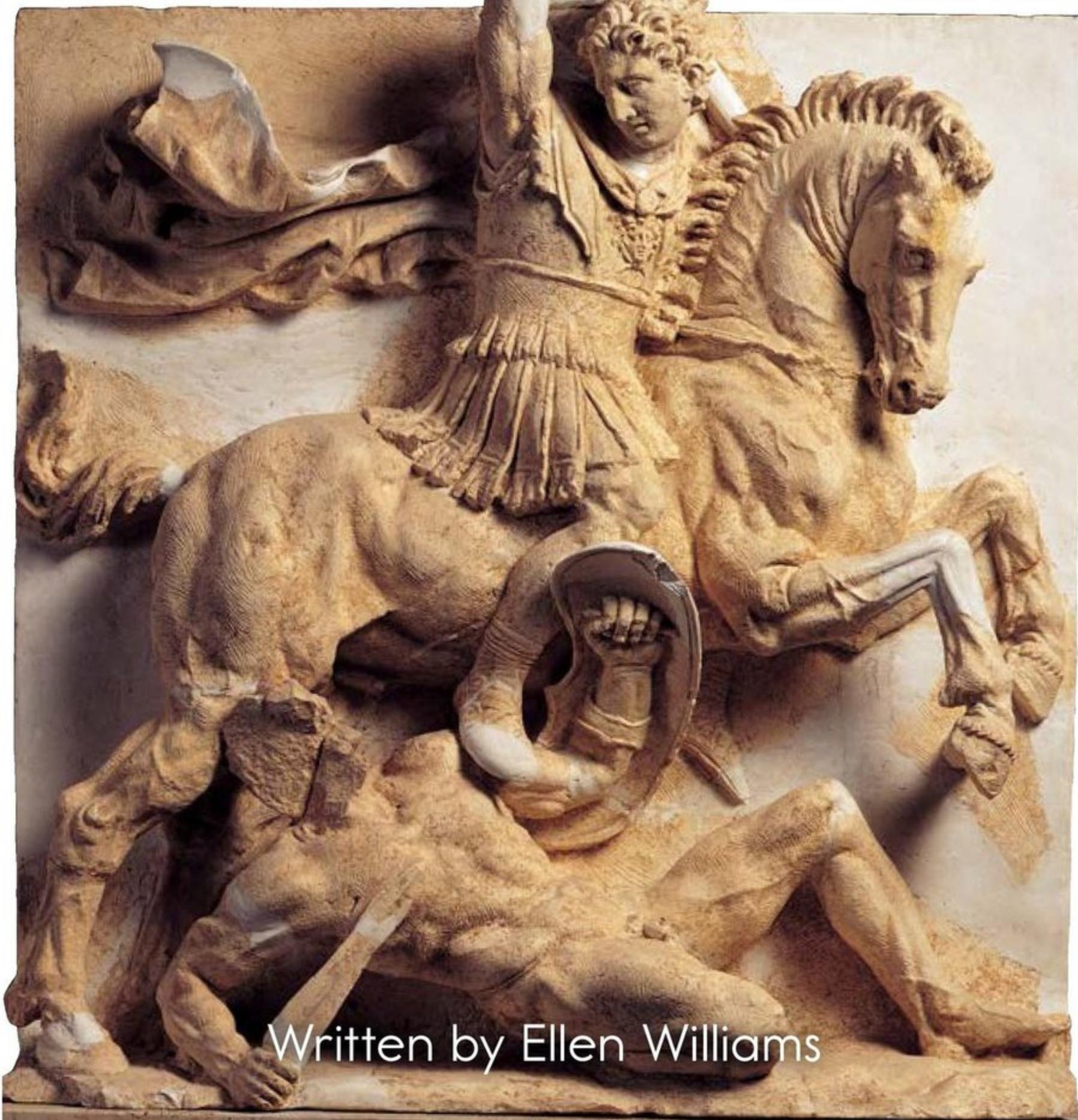
# Alexander the Great

Written by Ellen Williams

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## Focus Question

How did Alexander the Great become  
a powerful leader?

# Words to Know

assassin  
cavalry  
city-states  
destined  
ethics  
executed

inherited  
persuasion  
philosopher  
rallied  
rebel  
submission

Front cover: A tile mosaic shows Alexander the Great at the Battle of Issus.

Title page: A Greek sculpture shows Alexander at the Battle of Issus.

Page 3: Artwork shows Alexander and his army in India.

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## Correlation

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## Alexander's Empire at Its Peak, 323 BC



### A Prince Is Born in Macedonia

More than 2,300 years ago, a prince was born in the Greek state of Macedonia. The prince grew up to be a powerful king. As the greatest leader the world had ever known at that time in history, Alexander the Great conquered nations and kingdoms in lands near and far from Greece.

Alexander the Great was well educated and had developed a thirst for knowledge. Aside from wanting to grow his empire and gain power, some historians think that curiosity may have played a part in Alexander's drive to go farther than any Macedonian had gone before. His kingdom would include parts of Europe, Africa, and Asia.

## A Leader in Training

Alexander's story begins with his father, King Philip II. The title of *king* is usually handed down from father to son. Philip took the throne from his young nephew to become king of Macedonia. With a strong will and the support of a strong army, Philip ensured that Macedonia and the surrounding Greek states were under his control. Alexander's mother, Olympias, was fiercely determined that her son would be king one day and that her position would be secured.

Alexander's father, Philip II, became king of Macedonia in 359 BC.



Olympias, Philip's wife, doted on her son Alexander, telling him he would one day be king.



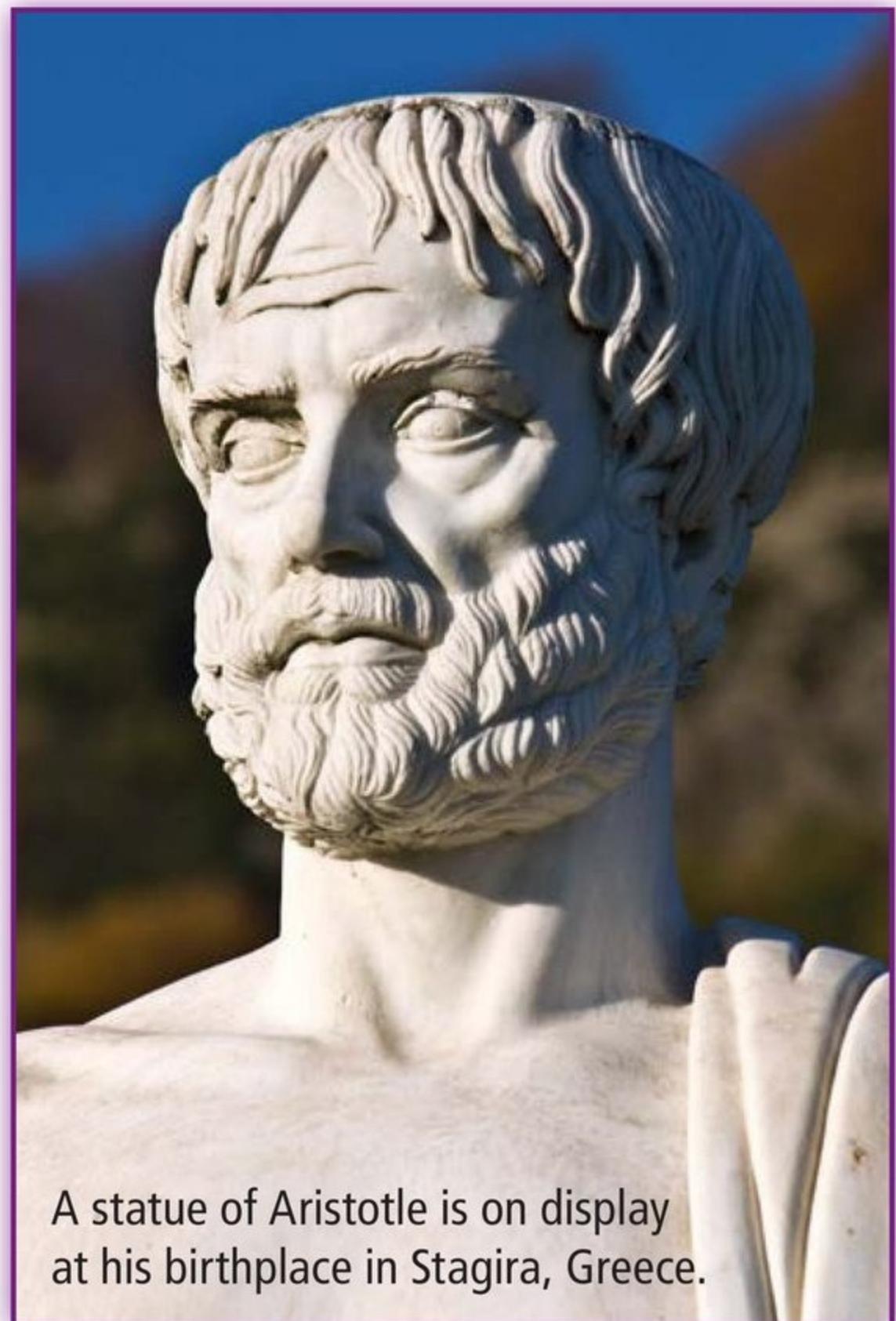


Bucephalus was Alexander's horse for eighteen years.

Alexander's greatness was in large part due to having **inherited** drive for power from both of his parents. He was also smart as a young boy. When he was twelve years old, his father refused to buy a beautiful but nervous horse. Alexander noticed that the horse was frightened by its own shadow. He calmed it down by turning its head away from the shadow. Alexander was able to control the horse and ride it easily. The horse, Bucephalus (byoo-SEF-uh-luhs), was important to Alexander for the rest of his life.

When Alexander was growing up, his father was often away, so Philip hired tutors and teachers to prepare his son to be king. Young noblemen of Greece learned to ride horses and hunt as well as to fight with swords, javelins, and bows. Alexander and his boyhood friends would need to be well prepared for the fierce battles they were **destined** to fight. As Alexander grew older, he passed the Macedonian tests of manhood by killing a wild boar and killing a man in combat.

As part of his education and training, Alexander studied with a **philosopher** named Aristotle. Respected for his knowledge, Aristotle helped Alexander understand and value culture and art. In addition to teaching him science, philosophy, history, politics, and **ethics**, Aristotle inspired Alexander's love of reading and of learning itself.



A statue of Aristotle is on display at his birthplace in Stagira, Greece.

## Becoming King

Persia was the main empire of Asia and was an enemy of Greece. Years before, Persia destroyed Greek cities in Asia Minor and took control of the area. Philip wanted to regain control and conquer Asia. He would need to fight the Persians.

Alexander was still young when he began taking on leadership duties. At sixteen, he stopped a small revolution while Philip was away. While still in his teens, Alexander commanded troops in some of his father's battles. Alexander was raised to be king, but when Philip married another woman, it was no longer certain Alexander would be. His mother was not a pure Macedonian. If Philip had a baby with his new wife—a Macedonian—Alexander would not be the chosen heir.

In fact, the new queen had a daughter in 336 BC. The baby, however, never became a threat to Alexander becoming king. A man killed Philip soon after the baby was born. Guards chased Philip's **assassin**, who was killed. The baby was too young to rule, and Alexander became king.

Alexander immediately **rallied** his father's army. Like his father, he wanted to conquer Asia, but he needed more than just a strong army—he also needed the people's support. Most Greek **city-states**

supported Macedonia, but some had not approved of Philip. Now that his son was in charge, they were wary of him, too. If they fought back, they could keep Alexander from ruling Greece and conquering Persia. Alexander managed to gain the support of the many Greek states through **persuasion**, often accompanied by force.

Some of the Greek states and territories around Macedonia still opposed Alexander and wanted to **rebel**, but his army crushed them. He made an example of the rebels by killing them and selling others into slavery. This extreme punishment guaranteed **submission** of all the Greek city-states. A year after becoming king, Alexander was ready to expand Macedonian control beyond Greece.



## The Journey Begins

Alexander strengthened his troops with equipment, including body armor, shields, helmets, daggers, and enormous spears. He increased the number of **cavalry** and sent foot soldiers in a strong formation called a *phalanx* that would follow the cavalry and crush any enemy soldiers left standing.

Alexander was a strong leader, able to share his vision and rally his troops. He led by example, always going into battle in front of his men and standing by them when things got rough. He had good instincts that allowed him to know how, when, and where to attack.

Alexander left for Asia Minor (now Turkey) in the spring of 334 BC. When he arrived, he boldly threw his spear into the ground, claiming the land for himself.

### The Mighty Phalanx

Thousands of Alexander's soldiers fought in tight groups in the phalanx formation. Each phalanx had about sixteen rows of men. Soldiers carried spears that were often 6 meters (20 ft.) long.



Soon after, Alexander had his first battle with the Persian army at the Granicus River. The Persian king, Darius III, was not there to lead. Both armies were well trained with foot soldiers and cavalry, but the Persians were less prepared. During the bloody hour-long battle, Alexander narrowly escaped death.

Alexander's army moved on along the Aegean Sea, taking back Greek city-states and fighting those who resisted. In 333 BC, in the Battle of Issus, Alexander again met a larger Persian army, this time with Darius. The Persians still lost the hard-fought battle. Darius escaped. Frustrated that he hadn't captured Darius, Alexander headed south to conquer the Persian fleet by capturing cities along the Mediterranean Sea, in what is today Syria and Lebanon. Some cities surrendered, but in 332 BC the city of Tyre resisted for seven months before it was defeated.

With Tyre captured, Alexander continued along the Mediterranean coast and arrived in Egypt later in 332 BC. The Persian ruler there stepped down. Alexander had respect for Egyptian religion and appointed Egyptian governors. Egypt welcomed him. After starting plans for the city of Alexandria, Alexander moved east toward other sections of the Persian Empire in Asia.

## Conquering Asia

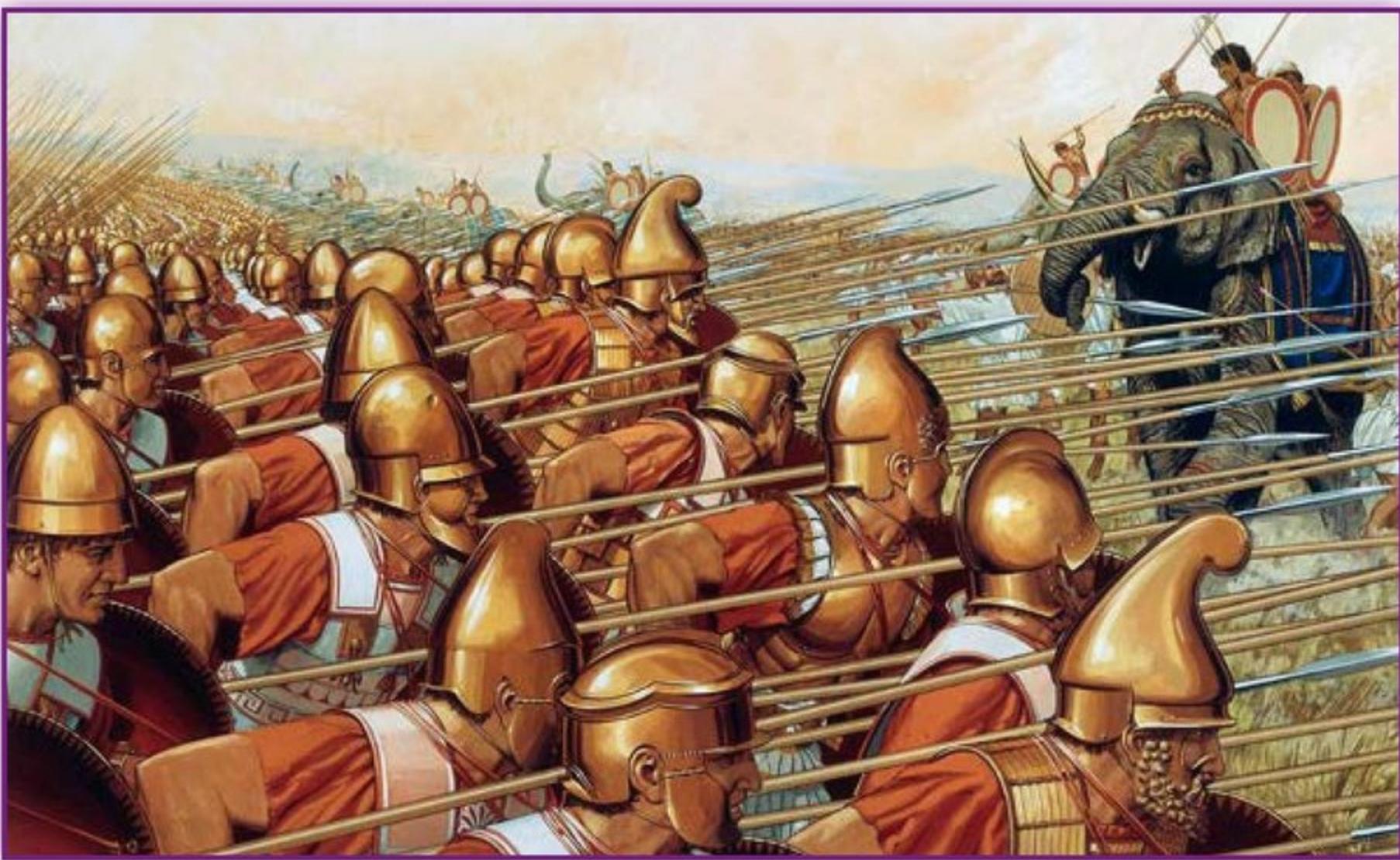
Alexander traveled east of Asia Minor (Iraq today) in 331 BC and met Darius in the Battle of Gaugamela. Darius had rebuilt his larger army, but Alexander's army overpowered them. Darius fled in defeat, along with much of his army. Alexander moved farther into the Persian Empire, conquering cities, exploring Persian ways, and trying to capture Darius. Before he could reach him, Darius was killed in 330 BC by a man who was later **executed**. Alexander was now considered king of Persia.

Far from his home in Macedonia, Alexander started transforming his lifestyle to include Persian customs. He married two local princesses

and began to expect Macedonians to honor him with low bows, as Persians did. Many Macedonians did not like Alexander's new behavior.



Alexander was kind to his soldiers as long as they followed him. Those who rebelled were sometimes executed.



This painting depicts the Battle of the Hydaspes. Alexander was in new territory in many of his travels. His military expertise is evident in his ability to make quick decisions in battles.

His army was exhausted, but Alexander managed to convince them to move farther east to what he knew as India (Pakistan and Afghanistan today). In 326 BC, Alexander fought Porus, a leader who resisted him. Alexander met Porus's troops at the Hydaspes (hy-DAS-peez) River. Soldiers of this area used elephants in battle. Porus's elephants, having done some damage to the Greeks, eventually panicked due to the intensity of the fight and retreated. Porus surrendered to Alexander. It was Alexander's last big battle.

There was great unrest among his soldiers. Unable to convince them to go any farther, he agreed to turn back. He made it to Babylon, where he came down with a fever in the spring of 323 BC. He died there in June of that year.



Many people believe Alexander the Great was one of the strongest leaders the world has ever known.

## The Legacy of Alexander

Alexander was undoubtedly a powerful man and an exceptional leader. His empire included parts of Europe, Asia, and Africa. By today's thinking, Alexander was brutal. The number of people killed under his rule was close to 750,000. However, Alexander's conquests were not just about controlling people and land. He explored the history and customs of all the places he traveled.

Alexander became a model for generations of leaders who followed. He opened doors of knowledge about the places he traveled and learned about new religions and governments. He also opened the eyes of the people he met to Greek ways and created a world that was more open to trading new materials and new ideas.



## Alexander Conquers the World



## Glossary

<b>assassin</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	someone who carries out a plan to kill an important person by surprise attack (p. 8)
<b>cavalry</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a group of soldiers who fight while mounted on horses; a troop of soldiers who fight in armored vehicles (p. 10)
<b>city-states</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	cities or urban areas that act as independent countries (p. 8)
<b>destined</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	decided, planned, or assigned ahead of time; certain to happen (p. 7)
<b>ethics</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	moral principles that guide a person's behavior (p. 7)
<b>executed</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	killed, especially as punishment for committing a crime (p. 12)
<b>inherited</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	received genetic traits or characteristics from parents or other ancestors (p. 6)
<b>persuasion</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the act of convincing another to believe or do something (p. 9)
<b>philosopher</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a person who seeks knowledge and truth about life; someone who studies philosophy (p. 7)
<b>rallied</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	brought or gathered together for a purpose (p. 8)
<b>rebel</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	to oppose actively an established government or authority (p. 9)
<b>submission</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the act or state of giving in to another's authority or power (p. 9)

# Alexander the Great

*A Reading A-Z Level X Leveled Book*

*Word Count: 1,415*

## Connections

### Writing

Pretend you are a Macedonian at the time Alexander the Great ruled. Write a journal entry about a day in your life. Research and include details about common jobs, religious practices, customs, or other parts of daily life.

### Social Studies

Research to learn more about Darius III, king of Persia. Use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast Alexander the Great and Darius III.

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