

Chapter 6 Section 5 --- The Spread of Greek Culture

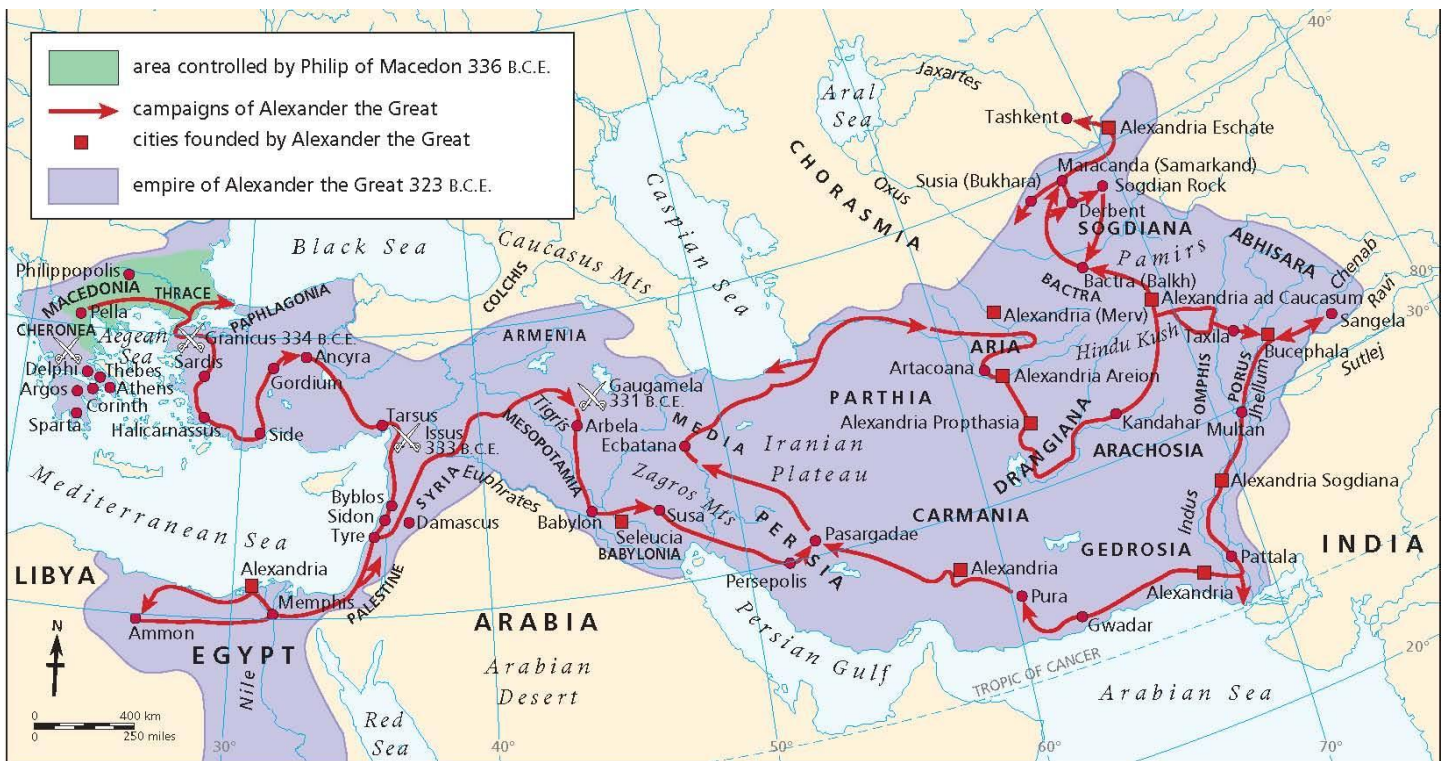
Key Terms:

Barbarian – a wild and uncivilized person

Assassinate – to murder for political reasons

Alexander the Great – king of Macedonia from 336 to 323 B.C.; conqueror of Persia and Egypt and invader of India

Hellenistic – describing Greek history or culture after the death of Alexander the Great, including the three main kingdoms formed by the breakup of Alexander’s empire



King Philip of Macedonia had not wasted the money he spent on Greek tutors for his son, Alexander. The boy wanted to learn as much as he could, especially about the ideas and deeds of the Greeks.

Macedonia lay just north of Greece. Alexander thought of himself as Greek and spoke the Greek language. But people who lived to the south in such cities as Athens and Sparta did not accept the Macedonians as Greeks. They thought the Macedonians were barbarians, or wild, uncivilized people.

Alexander’s tutor was the Greek philosopher Aristotle. Alexander loved his tutor, but his role model was Achilles, the mythical warrior hero of the Iliad. One day, Alexander vowed, he would visit the site of Troy to honor his hero.

Alexander's Empire

Before King Philip seized power in 359 B.C., Macedonia was poor and divided. Philip united Macedonia and built an army even stronger than Sparta's. With such an army and with his talent for waging war, Philip captured one Greek city-state after another.

Death of a King: Philip then planned to attack Persia. But in 336 B.C., before he could carry out his plan, he was assassinated, or murdered for political reasons, by a rival. At the age of 20, Alexander became king. History would know him as Alexander the Great, king of Macedonia from 336 to 323 B.C.

Alexander's Conquests: One of Alexander's first actions was to invade the Persian Empire. Within 11 years, the Macedonian king had conquered an extensive area, including Persia, Egypt, and lands beyond the Indus River to the east.

Alexander's energy and military genius helped him succeed. He drove himself and his army hard, advancing across vast lands at remarkable speed. His soldiers wanted to return home, but they obeyed him. Wherever Alexander went, he established cities. Many of them he named after himself. Even today, there are numerous cities named Alexandria or Alexandropolis throughout western Asia. Alexander never stayed very long in the cities he conquered. He quickly pushed on, never losing a battle.

After many years of travel and fighting, Alexander's army was exhausted. Not far beyond the Indus River, his troops became so weary that they refused to continue east. Alexander was angry, but he turned back. Alexander got as far as Babylon, where he caught a fever. In 323 B.C, only 13 years after he came to the throne, Alexander died. Like the legendary warrior Achilles, he had died young. But he had gone far beyond the deeds of his hero. His conquests spread Greek culture throughout a vast area.

The Hellenistic Age:

With Alexander's death, his empire began to decline. Within 50 years, the empire had broken into three main kingdoms. Each kingdom was ruled by a family that had descended from one of Alexander's commanders.

Although Alexander's empire broke apart, Greek culture remained alive and well in the three Hellenistic kingdoms. **Hellenistic** describes Greek history and culture after the death of Alexander the Great. Hellenistic comes from the word Hellas --- the name the Greeks gave their land.

The Hellenistic Kingdoms: When Alexander took control of lands, he tried not to destroy the cultures of the defeated people. He hoped that in his new cities, the local cultures would mix

with Greek culture. Instead, however, Greek culture became the strongest culture in the three Hellenistic kingdoms.

The cities of the Hellenistic world were modeled after Greek cities. Greek kings ruled, and Greeks held the most important jobs. There were Greek temples and agoras. Citizens gathered at large theaters for performances of old Greek tragedies. The Greek language was spoken in the cities, although people in the countryside spoke the local languages.

Greek Culture in Egypt: The greatest of all Hellenistic cities was Alexandria in Egypt. Alexander had founded this city in 332 B.C. at the edge of the Nile Delta. Alexandria became the capital of Egypt. Over the years, it grew famous as a center for business and trade. Its double harbor was dominated by a huge lighthouse that rose about 350 feet in the air. The tower was topped by a flame that guided ships safely into port.

Although all the important Hellenistic cities were centers of learning, Alexandria was the learning capital of the Greek world. Alexandria's library was the largest in the world. Scholars and writers from many lands came to use its massive collection.

Math and Science: Mathematics and science also flourished at Alexandria. Around 300 B.C., a mathematician named Euclid helped extend the branch of mathematics called geometry. His work helped explain the qualities of such figures as squares, angles, triangles, cubes, and cones. Mathematicians today still use Euclid's system.

Greek scientists made important contributions to astronomy. In about 250 B.C., the Greek scientist Aristarchus (ar is Tahr kus) concluded that Earth revolved around the sun. At the time, however, most scientists believed Earth to be the center of the universe. Much later, the idea of a sun-centered universe began to gain acceptance.

In Hellenistic times, many scholars knew that Earth was round. A scholar named Eratosthenes (her uh TAHS tuh neez) calculated the distance around Earth. His answer, 24,662 miles was very close to modern measurements.

Probably the greatest scholar of the Hellenistic Age was Archimedes. Archimedes studied in Alexandria. He discovered that people could use pulleys and levers to lift very heavy objects. One story claims that he hoisted up a loaded ship with these devices. He once boasted, "Give me the place to stand, and a lever long enough, and I will move the Earth."

Questions:

1. What events caused Alexander to become king?
2. Why did many scholars go to Alexandria?

Guided Reading:

1. Wild, uncivilized people are called?
2. Who united Macedonia and built an army even stronger than Sparta's?

3. Murdered for political reasons is called?
4. Alexander became king after his father Philip was assassinated at age what?
5. What are three areas that Alexander conquered?
6. Did Alexander ever lose a battle?
7. What caused Alexander to stop fighting and return home?
8. 13 years after Alexander became King what happened to him?
9. Alexander's conquests spread what throughout a vast area?
10. After Alexander's death, his empire broke into how many Kingdoms?
11. Greek history and culture after the death of Alexander the Great was called?
12. When Alexander took control of lands, he did not destroy the cultures of the defeated people, instead he wanted it to what with Greek culture?
13. What culture became the strongest culture in the three Hellenistic Kingdoms?
14. Describe three ways that cities were modeled after Greek cities.
15. What was the greatest of all Hellenistic cities?
16. What city was known as the learning capital of the Greek world?
17. What city had the largest library in the world?
18. What Greek helped to extend the branch of mathematics of geometry?
19. The Greek scientist Aristarchus concluded that the Earth revolved around what?
20. Who calculated the distance around the Earth?