

SCROLL DOWN

4 Alexander's Empire

KEY IDEA *Alexander the Great conquered Persia and Egypt. Then he moved as far east as the Indus River in northwest India.*

North of Greece was the kingdom of Macedonia. The Greeks looked down on the people there because they lacked the great culture of Greece. The Macedonians were tough fighters, though, and had a strong leader in King Philip II. He decided to use his army to invade Greece. The Greek city-states united too late to save themselves. The Macedonians won, and Greek independence was now over. Philip did not enjoy his victory for long, though. He died just two years later, and his son Alexander became king at age 20.

Alexander was a brilliant general, just like his father. He had been taught well, and he prepared to carry out his father's dream of conquering the Persian Empire. In 334 B.C., Alexander invaded Persia. He won two stunning victories and then moved south to enter Egypt. He was crowned pharaoh and founded a city that he named for himself—Alexandria. He then turned back to Persia and won another great battle, which ended all Persian resistance. The empire was now his.

The young king pushed east, taking his army as far as India. He won another battle and moved

deeper into India. However, after many years of marching and fighting, the soldiers wanted to return home. Alexander agreed, and turned back. On the way back, he began to make plans for how to govern his new empire. Then he suddenly fell ill and died. He was just 32 years old.

Three of Alexander's generals divided his empire. One ruled Macedonia and Greece. Another took control of Egypt. The third became ruler of the lands that used to be in the Persian Empire. Alexander's empire was not long-lasting, but it had important effects. After Alexander, the people of Greece and Persia and all the lands between mixed together and shared ideas and culture.

🕒 The Spread of Hellenistic Culture

KEY IDEA *Hellenistic culture was formed of ideas from Greece and other lands. It flourished throughout Greece, Egypt, and Asia.*

A new culture arose—the Hellenistic culture. It blended Greek with Egyptian, Persian, and Indian influences. The center of this culture was Alexandria, Egypt. Located in the delta of the Nile River on the Mediterranean Sea, it had a ship harbor. Trade was lively and Alexandria had a large population from many different countries.

Alexandria was also a beautiful city. Its huge lighthouse towered over the harbor to show a light to incoming ships. Its famous museum had rooms with works of art, a zoo, and a garden. Its magnificent library held half a million scrolls of papyrus that contained everything known in the Hellenistic world. It was the first true research library, and scholars read through the scrolls.

These scholars kept alive what was known about science. Some used an observatory to look at the stars and the planets. One of these astronomers developed two important ideas. He argued that the sun was actually larger than the earth, which no one had thought to be the case before. He also suggested that the earth and other planets revolved around the sun. Other astronomers rejected these ideas, though, and their views remained common for many centuries. Another scientist tried to estimate the size of the earth. He came extremely close, figuring the earth to be about 16 percent larger than its actual size.

The thinkers in Alexandria also made advances in mathematics. Euclid wrote a book with the basic ideas of geometry; his approach is still used today. Archimedes was another important scientist and mathematician. He invented many clever machines, including the Archimedes screw, which could be used to bring water from a low level to a higher one. It was used to bring water to fields being farmed.

Two new schools of philosophy arose in these times. The Stoics argued that people should live a moral life to keep them in harmony with natural laws. Desire, power, and wealth, they thought, could hurt a person's moral well-being. The Epicureans said that people could rely only on what they learned from their five senses. They urged everyone to live moral lives. People should try to do things in moderate ways, rather than taking anything to an extreme.

The arts flourished in the Hellenistic age as well. Sculpture, in particular, had several notable achievements. The sculpture of this time differed from that of the earlier Greek style. In the past, figures had been idealized, as sculptors tried to show a perfect form. In the Hellenistic age, figures were more realistic and emotional.