



# Alexander's Empire

## MAIN IDEA

**EMPIRE BUILDING** Alexander the Great conquered Persia and Egypt and extended his empire to the Indus River in northwest India.

## WHY IT MATTERS NOW

Alexander's empire extended across an area that today consists of many nations and diverse cultures.

## TERMS & NAMES

- Philip II
- Macedonia
- Alexander the Great
- Darius III

**SETTING THE STAGE** The Peloponnesian War severely weakened several Greek city-states. This caused a rapid decline in their military and economic power. In the nearby kingdom of Macedonia, King **Philip II** took note. Philip dreamed of taking control of Greece and then moving against Persia to seize its vast wealth. Philip also hoped to avenge the Persian invasion of Greece in 480 B.C.

### TAKING NOTES

**Outlining** Use an outline to organize main ideas about the growth of Alexander's empire.

#### Alexander's Empire

##### I. Philip Builds Macedonian Power

- A.
- B.

##### II. Alexander Conquers Persia

## Philip Builds Macedonian Power

The kingdom of **Macedonia**, located just north of Greece, had rough terrain and a cold climate. The Macedonians were a hardy people who lived in mountain villages rather than city-states. Most Macedonian nobles thought of themselves as Greeks. The Greeks, however, looked down on the Macedonians as uncivilized foreigners who had no great philosophers, sculptors, or writers. The Macedonians did have one very important resource—their shrewd and fearless kings.



**Philip's Army** In 359 B.C., Philip II became king of Macedonia. Though only 23 years old, he quickly proved to be a brilliant general and a ruthless politician. Philip transformed the rugged peasants under his command into a well-trained professional army. He organized his troops into phalanxes of 16 men across and 16 deep, each one armed with an 18-foot pike. Philip used this heavy phalanx formation to break through enemy lines. Then he used fast-moving cavalry to crush his disorganized opponents. After he employed these tactics successfully against northern opponents, Philip began to prepare an invasion of Greece.

**Conquest of Greece** Demosthenes (dee•MAHS•tuh•NEEZ), the Athenian orator, tried to warn the Greeks of the threat Philip and his army posed. He urged them to unite against Philip. However, the Greek city-states could not agree on any single policy. Finally, in 338 B.C., Athens and Thebes—a city-state in central Greece—joined forces to fight Philip. By then, however, it was too late. The Macedonians soundly defeated the Greeks at the battle of Chaeronea (KAIR•uh•NEE•uh). This defeat ended Greek independence. The city-states retained self-government in local affairs. However, Greece itself remained firmly under the control of a succession of foreign powers—the first of which was Philip's Macedonia.

**MAIN IDEA****Analyzing Causes**

**A** How did the Peloponnesian War pave the way for Philip's conquest of Greece?

Although Philip planned to invade Persia next, he never got the chance. At his daughter's wedding in 336 B.C., he was stabbed to death by a former guardsman. Philip's son Alexander immediately proclaimed himself king of Macedonia. Because of his accomplishments over the next 13 years, he became known as **Alexander the Great**. **A**

## Alexander Defeats Persia

Although Alexander was only 20 years old when he became king, he was well prepared to lead. Under Aristotle's teaching, Alexander had learned science, geography, and literature. Alexander especially enjoyed Homer's description of the heroic deeds performed by Achilles during the Trojan War. To inspire himself, he kept a copy of the *Iliad* under his pillow.

As a young boy, Alexander learned to ride a horse, use weapons, and command troops. Once he became king, Alexander promptly demonstrated that his military training had not been wasted. When the people of Thebes rebelled, he destroyed the city. About 6,000 Thebans were killed. The survivors were sold into slavery. Frightened by his cruelty, the other Greek city-states quickly gave up any idea of rebellion.

**Invasion of Persia** With Greece now secure, Alexander felt free to carry out his father's plan to invade and conquer Persia. In 334 B.C., he led 35,000 soldiers across the Hellespont into Anatolia. (See the map on page 144.) Persian messengers raced along the Royal Road to spread news of the invasion. An army of about 40,000 men rushed to defend Persia. The two forces met at the Granicus River. Instead of waiting for the Persians to make the first move, Alexander ordered his cavalry to attack. Leading his troops into battle, Alexander smashed the Persian defenses.

Alexander's victory at Granicus alarmed the Persian king, **Darius III**. Vowing to crush the invaders, he raised a huge army of between 50,000 and 75,000 men to face the Macedonians near Issus. Realizing that he was outnumbered, Alexander surprised his enemies. He ordered his finest troops to break through a weak point in the Persian lines. The army then charged straight at Darius. To avoid capture, the frightened king fled, followed by his panicked army. This victory gave Alexander control over Anatolia.

**Conquering the Persian Empire** Shaken by his defeat, Darius tried to negotiate a peace settlement. He offered Alexander all of his lands west of the Euphrates River. Alexander's advisers urged him to accept. However, the rapid collapse of Persian resistance fired Alexander's ambition. He rejected Darius's offer and confidently announced his plan to conquer the entire Persian Empire.

Alexander marched into Egypt, a Persian territory, in 332 B.C. The Egyptians welcomed Alexander as a liberator. They crowned him pharaoh—or god-king. During his time in Egypt, Alexander founded the city of Alexandria at the mouth of the Nile. After leaving Egypt, Alexander moved east into Mesopotamia to confront Darius. The desperate Persian king assembled a force of some 250,000 men. The two armies met at Gaugamela (GAW•guh•MEE•luh), a small village near the ruins of ancient Nineveh. Alexander launched a massive phalanx attack followed

## History Makers



### Alexander 356–323 B.C.

When Alexander was only eight or nine years old, he tamed a wild horse that none of his father's grooms could manage. Alexander calmed the horse, whose name was Bucephalus, by speaking gently. Seeing the control that Alexander had over the horse, Philip II said: "You'll have to find another kingdom; Macedonia isn't going to be big enough for you."

Alexander took his father's advice. Riding Bucephalus at the head of a great army, he conquered the lands from Greece to the Indus Valley. When the horse died in what is now Pakistan, Alexander named the city of Bucephala after it. Maybe he was tired of the name Alexandria. By that time, he had already named at least a dozen cities after himself!

**Vocabulary**

*The Hellespont* is the ancient name for the Dardanelles, the narrow straits that separate Europe from Asia Minor.

by a cavalry charge. As the Persian lines crumbled, Darius again panicked and fled. Alexander's victory at Gaugamela ended Persia's power.

Within a short time, Alexander's army occupied Babylon, Susa, and Persepolis. These cities yielded a huge treasure, which Alexander distributed among his army. A few months after it was occupied, Persepolis, Persia's royal capital, burned to the ground. Some people said Alexander left the city in ashes to signal the total destruction of the Persian Empire. The Greek historian Arrian, writing about 500 years after Alexander's time, suggested that the fire was set in revenge for the Persian burning of Athens. However, the cause of the fire remains a mystery.

## Alexander's Other Conquests

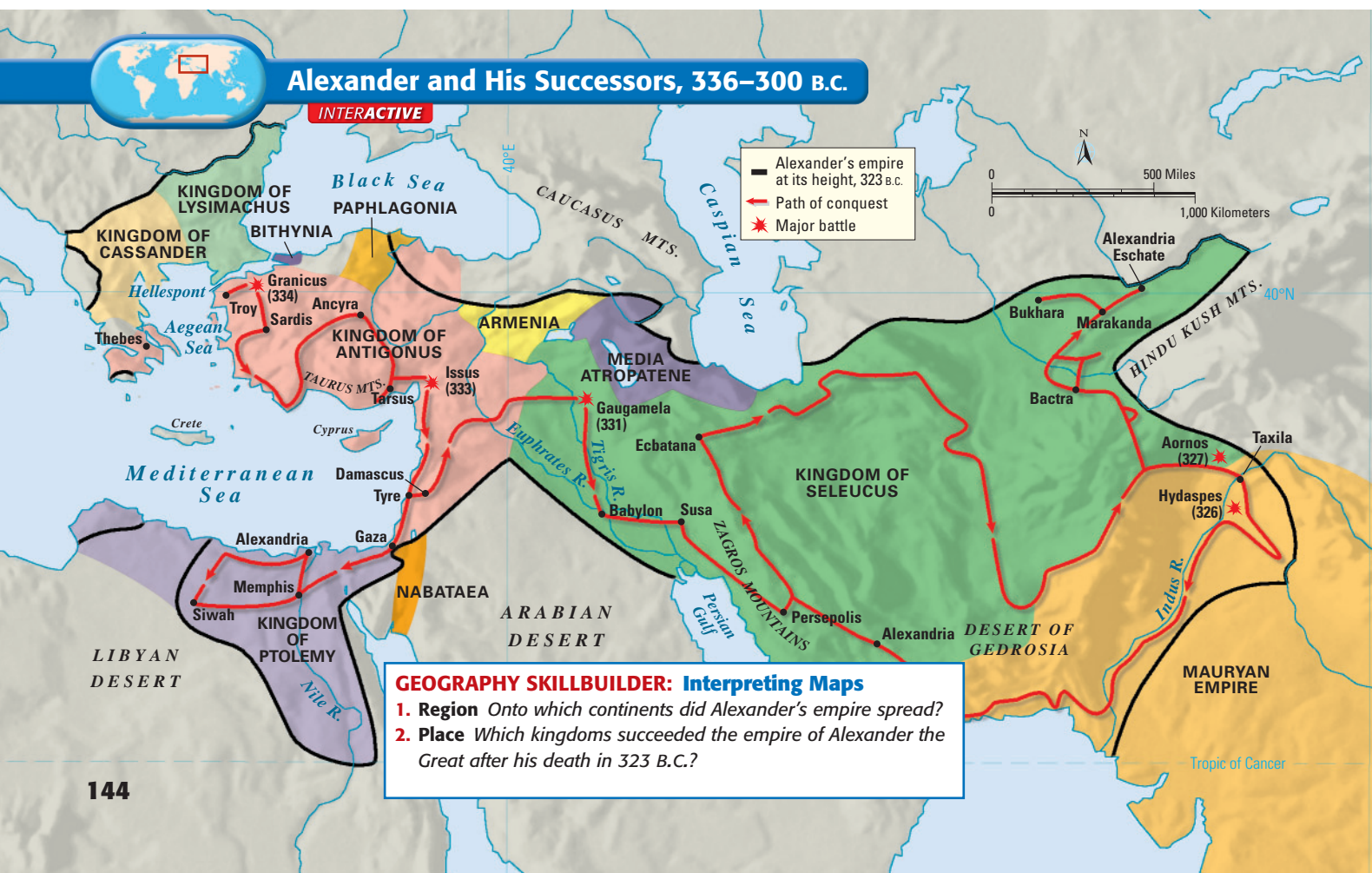
Alexander now reigned as the unchallenged ruler of southwest Asia. But he was more interested in expanding his empire than in governing it. He left the ruined Persepolis to pursue Darius and conquer Persia's remote Asian provinces. Darius's trail led Alexander to a deserted spot south of the Caspian Sea. There he found Darius already dead, murdered by one of his provincial governors. Rather than return to Babylon, Alexander continued east. During the next three years, his army fought its way across the desert wastes and mountains of Central Asia. He pushed on, hoping to reach the farthest edge of the continent. **B**

**Alexander in India** In 326 B.C., Alexander and his army reached the Indus Valley. At the Hydaspes River, a powerful Indian army blocked their path. After winning a fierce battle, Alexander's soldiers marched some 200 miles farther, but their morale was low. They had been fighting for 11 years and had marched more than 11,000 miles. They had endured both scorching deserts and drenching monsoon rains. The exhausted soldiers yearned to go home. Bitterly disappointed, Alexander agreed to turn back.

### MAIN IDEA

#### Analyzing Motives

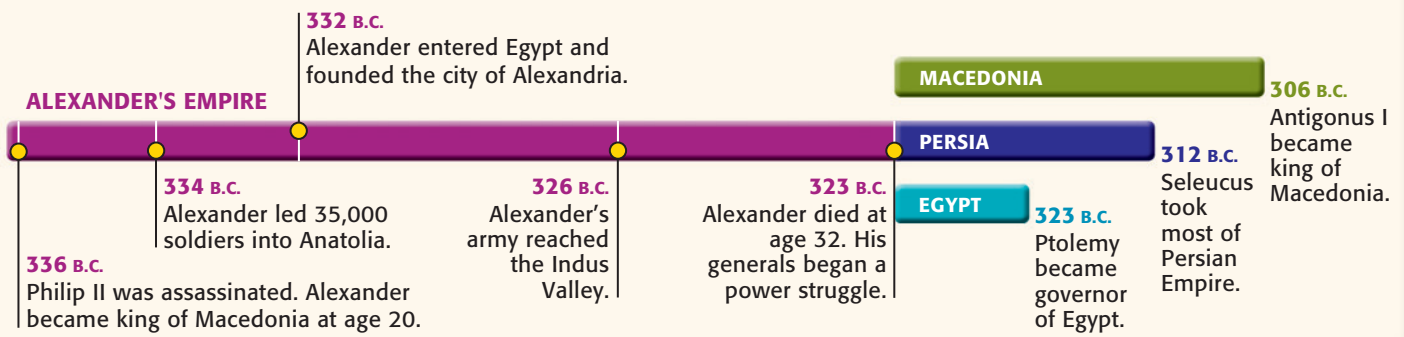
**B** Why did Alexander continue his conquests after Darius was dead?



### GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Maps

- Region** Onto which continents did Alexander's empire spread?
- Place** Which kingdoms succeeded the empire of Alexander the Great after his death in 323 B.C.?

## Alexander's Empire and Its Legacy, 336–306 B.C.



By the spring of 323 B.C., Alexander and his army had reached Babylon. Restless as always, Alexander announced plans to organize and unify his empire. He would construct new cities, roads, and harbors and conquer Arabia. However, Alexander never carried out his plans. He became seriously ill with a fever and died a few days later. He was just 32 years old.

**Alexander's Legacy** After Alexander died, his Macedonian generals fought among themselves for control of his empire. Eventually, three ambitious leaders won out. Antigonus (an•TIG•uh•nuhs) became king of Macedonia and took control of the Greek city-states. Ptolemy (TAHL•uh•mee) seized Egypt, took the title of pharaoh, and established a dynasty. Seleucus (sih•LOO•kuhs) took most of the old Persian Empire, which became known as the Seleucid kingdom. Ignoring the democratic traditions of the Greek polis, these rulers and their descendants governed with complete power over their subjects. **C**

Alexander's conquests had an interesting cultural impact. Alexander himself adopted Persian dress and customs and married a Persian woman. He included Persians and people from other lands in his army. As time passed, Greek settlers throughout the empire also adopted new ways. A vibrant new culture emerged from the blend of Greek and Eastern customs.

### MAIN IDEA

#### Hypothesizing

**C** Was the power struggle that followed Alexander's death inevitable?

## SECTION 4 ASSESSMENT

**TERMS & NAMES** 1. For each term or name, write a sentence explaining its significance.

- Philip II
- Macedonia
- Alexander the Great
- Darius III

### USING YOUR NOTES

2. Which of Alexander's conquests do you think was the most significant? Why?

*Alexander's Empire*  
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 B.  
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### MAIN IDEAS

- How was Philip II able to conquer Greece?
- Philip II's goal was to conquer Persia. Why did Alexander continue his campaign of conquest after this goal had been achieved?
- What happened to Alexander's empire after his death?

### CRITICAL THINKING & WRITING

- FORMING AND SUPPORTING OPINIONS** Do you think that Alexander was worthy of the title "Great"? Explain.
- HYPOTHESIZING** If Alexander had lived, do you think he would have been as successful in ruling his empire as he was in building it? Explain.
- MAKING INFERENCES** Why do you think Alexander adopted Persian customs and included Persians in his army?
- WRITING ACTIVITY** **EMPIRE BUILDING** In small groups, create **storyboards** for a video presentation on the growth of Alexander's empire.

### CONNECT TO TODAY CREATING A MAP

Use atlases to find the modern countries that occupy the lands included in Alexander's empire. Create a **map** that shows the boundaries and names of these countries. Compare your map to the map of Alexander's empire on page 144.