

# The Spread of Greek Culture



**BEFORE  
YOU  
READ**

## Reach Into Your Background

Who are your heroes? Are there people living today or in the past whom you admire? Why are they your heroes?

What can you do to become more like them?

## Questions to Explore

1. What role did the conquests of Alexander the Great play in spreading Greek culture?
2. What advances in science did the Greeks make after Alexander's death?

## Key Terms

barbarian  
assassinate  
Hellenistic

## Key People and Places

King Philip  
Macedonia  
Alexander the Great  
Alexandria  
Euclid  
Archimedes

**K**ing Philip of Macedonia (mas uh DOH nee uh) had not wasted the money he spent on Greek tutors for his son. Young Alexander was a fine student—and an eager one. The boy wanted to learn as much as he could, especially about the ideas and deeds of the Greeks.

The kingdom of 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 really accept the Macedonians as Greeks. They thought the Macedonians were **barbarians**, or wild, uncivilized people.

Alexander's tutor was the Greek philosopher Aristotle (AIR uh staht ul). Aristotle taught the boy Greek literature, philosophy, and science. Aristotle also passed on his strong feelings that the Greeks were far better than other people and, therefore, deserved to rule.

Alexander loved his tutor, but his role model was Achilles, the warrior hero of the *Iliad*. One day, Alexander vowed, he would visit the site of Troy and lay a wreath on the tomb of his hero.



◀ This carving of King Philip of Macedonia (left), illustrates his strength and energy. The silver coin (below) is stamped with a portrait of his son, Alexander.



# Alexander Builds an 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. By 338 B.C., Philip controlled all of Greece. No one had ever done this.



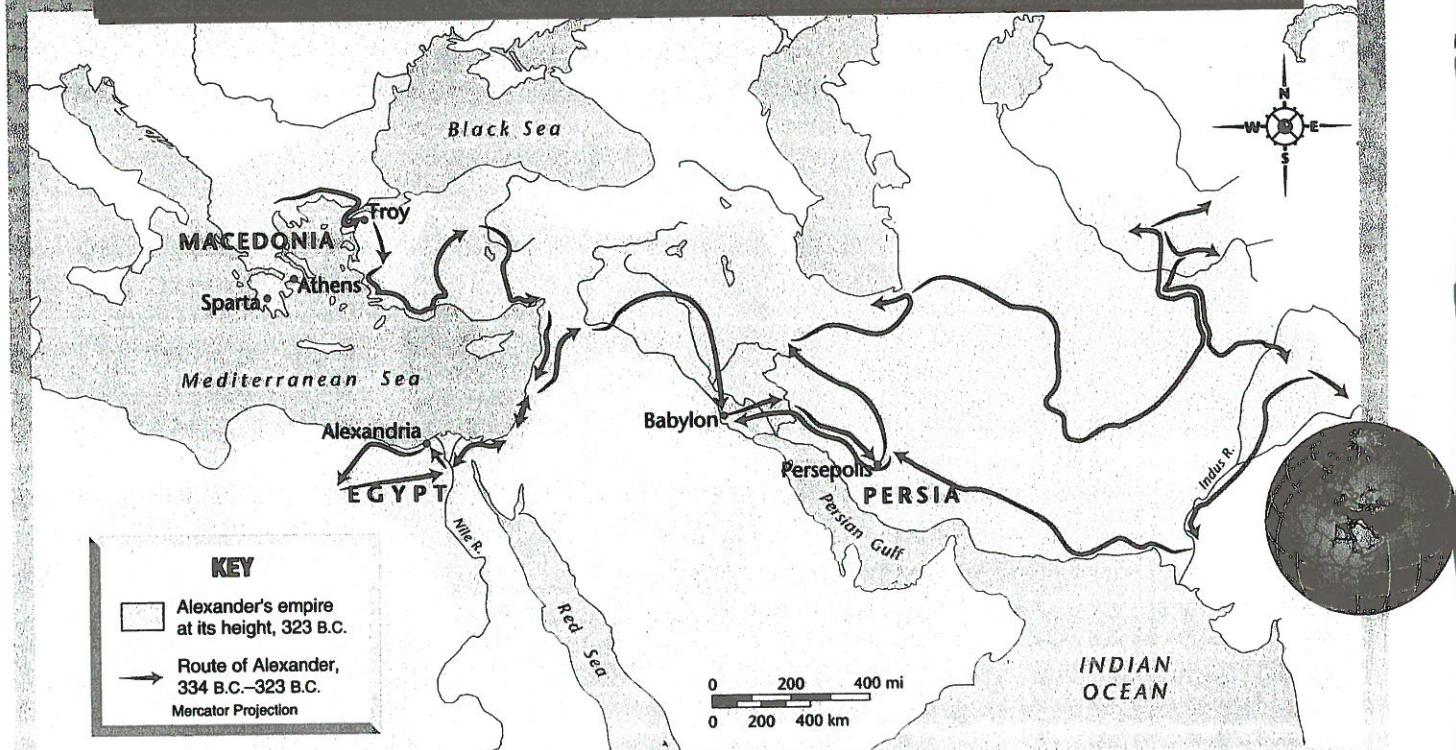
Ask Questions Think of some things you would like to know about Alexander the Great and his deeds.

**Alexander Comes to the Throne** Philip then planned to attack Persia. But in 336 B.C., before he could carry out his plan, he was assassinated, or murdered, by a rival. At just 20 years old, Alexander became king. This was his chance to be as great as his hero Achilles.

**Alexander the Great** One of Alexander's first actions was to invade the Persian Empire. Within 11 years, he had conquered Persia, Egypt, and lands extending beyond the Indus River in the east. He earned the right to be called "Alexander the Great."

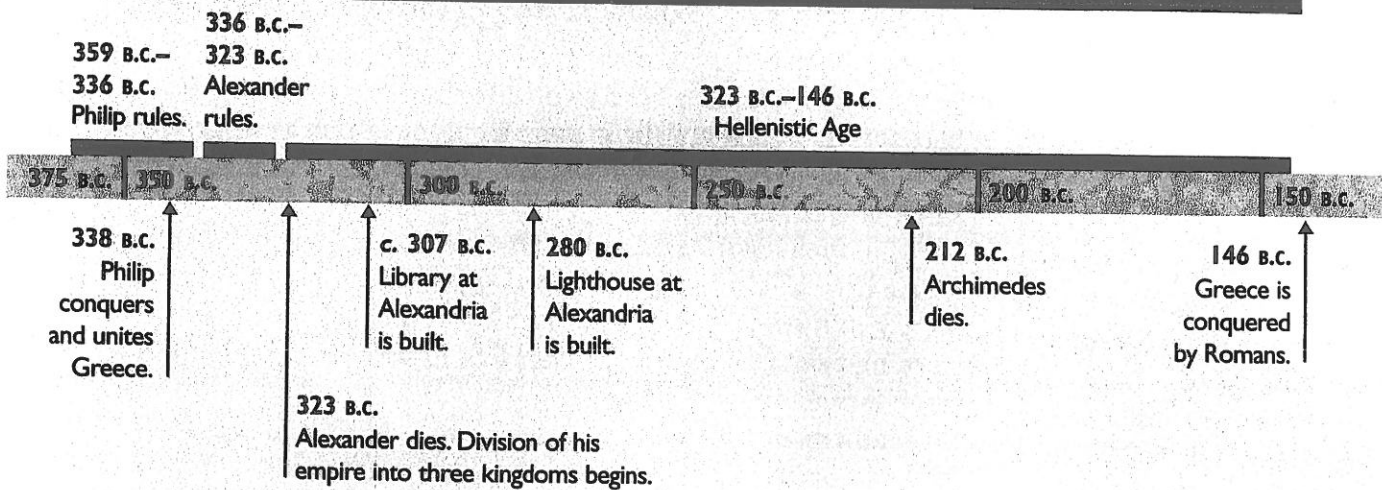
Alexander's energy and military genius helped him succeed. He drove himself and his army hard, advancing across vast lands at lightning speed. His soldiers grumbled, but they obeyed him. Wherever

## The Empire of Alexander the Great



**Map Study** By 323 B.C., Alexander not only controlled the territory once ruled by the Persians, but also Greece. **Movement** About how far did Alexander travel when he traveled back to Babylon from the Indus River?

## Ancient Greece, 375 B.C. to 146 B.C.



▲ The Hellenistic Age began with the death of Alexander. How long did it last?

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 his cities. He quickly pushed on. He never lost a battle.

At last, not far beyond the Indus River, his weary troops refused to go another step east. Alexander was angry, but he turned back. Alexander got as far as Babylon, where he came down with 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. He had conquered practically all of the known world.

### Greek Culture Spreads

Alexander's death spelled death for his empire. Within 50 years, the empire had broken into three main kingdoms. Each one was ruled by a family descended from one of his commanders. Although the empire broke apart, Greek culture remained alive and well in these new kingdoms.

**The Hellenistic Kingdoms** When Alexander took control of lands, he tried not to destroy the cultures of the defeated people. Instead, he hoped that in his new cities the local cultures would mix with Greek culture. Unfortunately, this did not happen in the three Hellenistic kingdoms, as they came to be called. Hellenistic comes from the word *Hellas*—the name Greeks gave their land.

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, though people in the countryside spoke local languages.

## READ ACTIVELY



Visualize Try to visualize the huge, scroll-filled library at Alexandria.

**Hellenism 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 (106 m) in the air. The tower was topped by a flame that guided ships safely into port.

The important Hellenistic cities were centers of learning. But Alexandria was greater than any of the rest. It boasted the largest library in the world, with half a million book rolls. Alexandria was the learning capital of the Greek world. Scholars and writers from all over came to use the huge library.

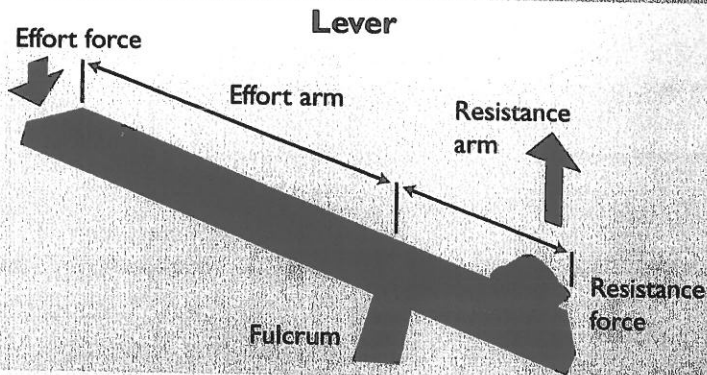
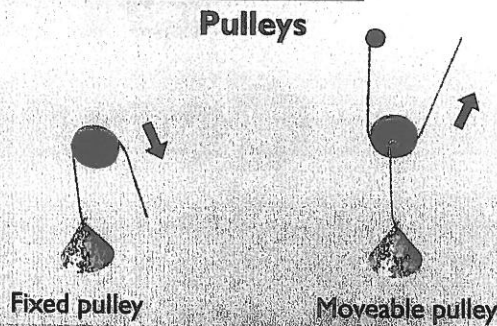
Mathematics and science also flourished at Alexandria. Around 300 B.C., a mathematician named Euclid (yoo klid) developed the branch of mathematics called geometry. He started with accepted mathematical laws. Then, he wrote carefully thought out, step-by-step proofs of mathematical principles. The proofs helped explain the qualities of such figures as squares, cubes, angles, triangles, and cones. Mathematicians today still use Euclid's system.

► The great lighthouse at Alexandria, called the Pharos, is considered one of the Seven Wonders of the World.



## Levers and Pulleys

Ancient people had used levers and pulleys for centuries. A Greek scientist named Archimedes discovered new ways to use them. He invented the compound pulley, a combination of the fixed pulley and the moveable pulley shown here.



**The Earth and the Sun**  
One scientist of the 200s B.C. rejected the idea that the Earth was the center of the universe. Aristarchus of Samos believed that the sun is at the center and that the Earth revolves around it. His idea did not catch on. Astronomers continued to base their work on an Earth-centered universe until the A.D. 1500s.

Have you ever heard that people of Christopher Columbus' time believed the Earth was flat? This is not accurate. In Hellenistic times, many scientists knew the Earth was round. A scientist named Eratosthenes (ehr uh TAHHS thuh neez) even calculated the distance around the Earth. His answer, 24,662 miles (39,679 km), was very close.

Probably the greatest scientist of the times was Archimedes (ar kuh MEE deez). Archimedes discovered that people can use pulleys and levers to lift very heavy objects. One story says that he hoisted up a loaded ship with these devices. Once he boasted: "Give me a lever long enough and a place to stand on, and I will move the Earth."

### SECTION 5 REVIEW

- Define** (a) barbarian, (b) assassinate, (c) Hellenistic.
- Identify** (a) King Philip, (b) Macedonia, (c) Alexander the Great, (d) Alexandria, (e) Euclid, (f) Archimedes.

3. What features of Greek culture could be seen in the Hellenistic kingdoms?

4. Describe the contributions of Euclid, Eratosthenes, and Archimedes.

#### Critical Thinking

5. **Identifying Central Issues** Why do you think Alexander the Great named so many cities after himself?

#### Activity

6. **Writing to Learn** Think of someone you consider a hero or a role model. Write a description of that person. Is he or she more like King Philip and Alexander or like Aristotle and Archimedes? Explain your answer.

