

# Alexander the

In the fourth century B.C., this 20-something military genius conquered half the known world

## ➔ Words to Know

- **barbarian** (*adj*): relating to a land, culture, or people that are alien and usually believed to be inferior; lacking refinement
- **siege** (*n*): a military blockade of a city or fortified place to compel it to surrender

Colin Farrell  
portrays the title  
character in the  
2004 movie  
*Alexander*.





# Great

**F**ew conquerors have changed the course of history more than Alexander III of Macedonia (*ma-suh-DOH-nee-uh*). The

ancient Romans admired his martial mastery so much that they called him Alexander the Great.

Born in 356 B.C., Alexander was the son of King Philip II. A fierce warrior, Philip had united ancient Macedonia, a region north of what would become Greece (*see map, p. 22*). With force and cunning, Philip had won control of Athens and most of the other rival city-states of Greece by 339 B.C.

Alexander seemed destined

for greatness early on. Strikingly handsome, the prince was a superb athlete, hunter, and horseman. He was tutored by the famous Greek philosopher Aristotle, and revered Greek culture.

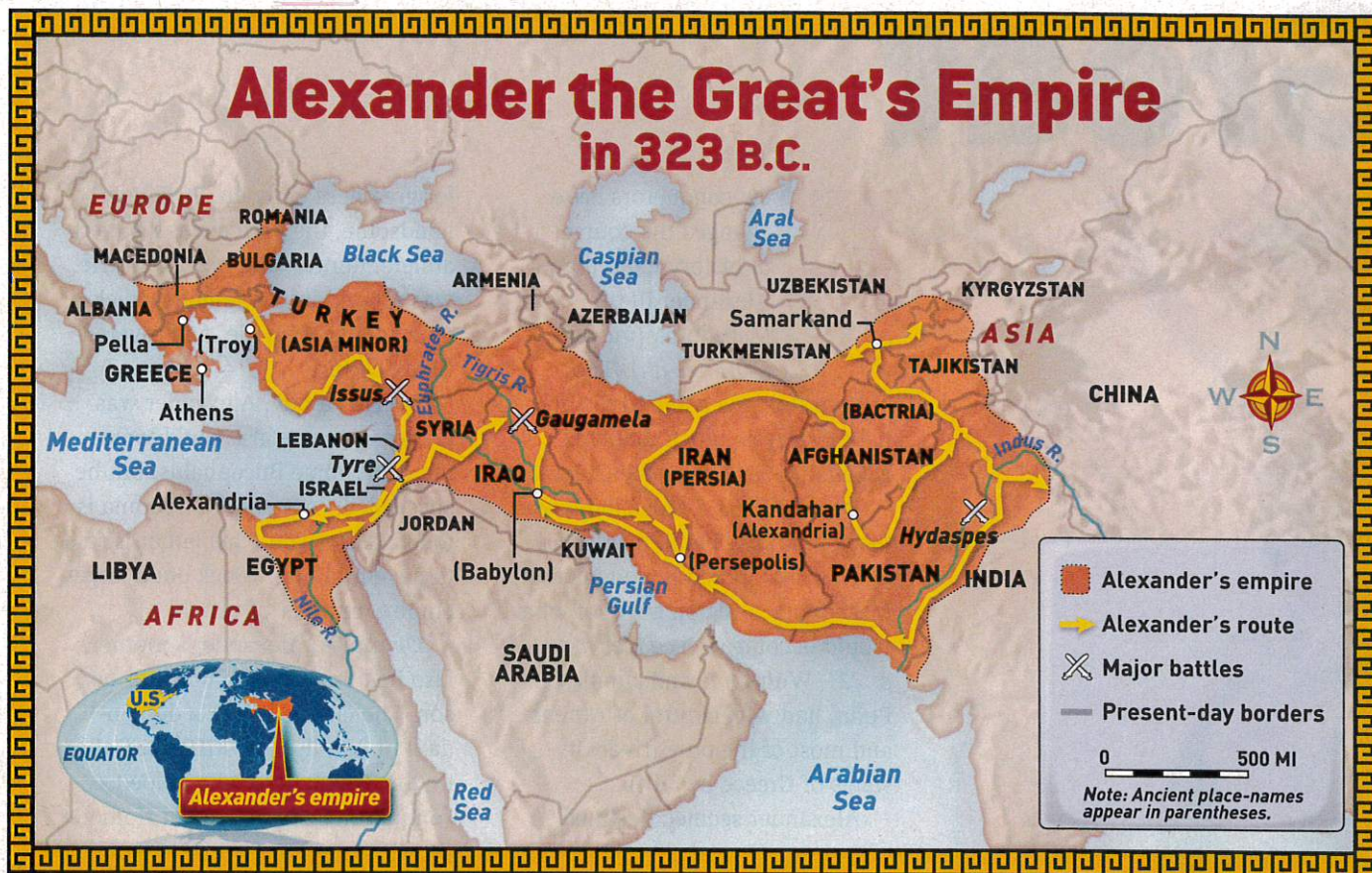
Even as a boy, Alexander was fearless. No one else could tame the giant horse Bucephalus, but he succeeded. "My son, Macedonia is too small for you," his father is said to have told him. "Seek out a larger empire worthier of you."

Olympias, Alexander's mother, also had outsize ambitions for her son. She claimed to be a descendant of Achilles (*uh-KIHL-eez*), the mythic Greek hero who helped conquer the city of Troy in Homer's





## Alexander the Great's Empire in 323 B.C.



SOURCE: *Atlas of Classical History*, by Michael Grant

epic poem the *Iliad*. Alexander believed that the spirit of Achilles guided his destiny.

Then, in 336 B.C., Philip was assassinated. At age 20, Alexander took up his father's conquests.

Philip had planned to take on the mighty Persian empire (centered in present-day Iran), which the Greeks and Macedonians considered to be **barbarian**. So, in the spring of 334 B.C., Alexander set off with an army of 35,000. Stopping at Troy for inspiration from his hero, Achilles, he began his life's great crusade. He would never see home again.

### Lord of Asia

Alexander began to seize Persian territory in Asia Minor (today's Turkey). At Issus, he faced 100,000 men commanded by Persia's King

Darius III. Alexander's tactical genius won the day. Darius fled, stranding his wife, mother, and daughters. Alexander treated the women kindly. In so doing, he showed respect for Darius as a fellow warrior—and symbolically laid claim to Darius's throne.

The young commander pushed on. In places that welcomed him, Alexander proclaimed himself a liberator, not a conqueror. But cities that resisted him, including Tyre (in modern Lebanon), were shown no mercy. Upon winning Tyre in 332 B.C. after a seven-month **siege**, Alexander sold the women and children into slavery.

In Egypt, he was crowned Pharaoh. There he founded Alexandria—the first of many cities to which he gave his name.

In 331 B.C., Alexander defeated Darius at the battle of Gaugamela. The following year, he seized the Persian capital, Persepolis. When Darius was assassinated by the governor of Bactria, Alexander proclaimed himself Lord of Asia.

Still, he kept moving east. His armies battled in the mountains of Central Asia—harsh terrain that poses a challenge to American forces in today's Afghanistan.

Inspired by his bravery, Alexander's soldiers worshipped him. Yet as the years passed and deaths mounted, they grumbled. How long would this campaign go on? Macedonians, in particular, were offended when Alexander adopted foreign ways, wearing "barbarian" clothes and even marrying an Asian princess.



## "To the Strongest"

When he was at the height of his power, Alexander's triumph began to sour. The conqueror imagined that people were plotting against him. More and more, he gave in to a cruel streak. In a drunken rage, he murdered one of his best generals.

In 327 B.C., Alexander began an invasion of India. A year later, after a costly victory at Hydaspes (*hye-DAS-pee-z*), his soldiers refused to go any farther. Alexander's long campaign was finally over. According to legend, he wept because there were no more worlds for him to conquer.

Alexander eventually returned to Babylon (in modern-day Iraq), which he had seized in 331 B.C. After many battles and wounds, his body was worn out. In 323 B.C., at the age of 32, he was overcome by a fever and died.

He reportedly said on his deathbed that he wanted to leave his empire "to the strongest." But Alexander's feuding generals soon split it into several independent states. Alexander's only son and heir, who was born after his father's death, was murdered at age 14 by one of those generals.

Yet Alexander's conquests laid the foundation for the next great Western empire—Rome. Seven centuries after his death, Christianity spread as the Roman Empire did, and changed the world once again.

—Bryan Brown

## Think About It

1. Why were Alexander's soldiers loyal to him at first?
2. Which of Alexander's traits do you admire? Which don't you admire? Explain.

## GEOSKILLS CONTEST

# She Found Mapman!

### Thousands of you figured out my final destination

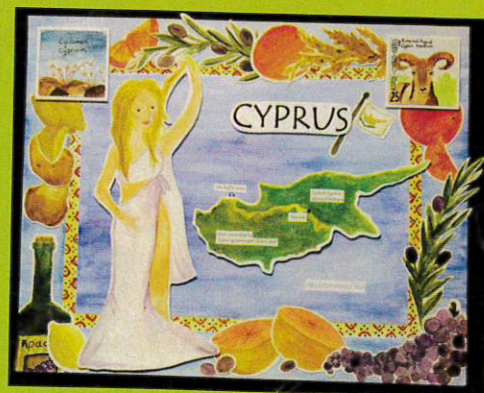


This year's Find Mapman contest (*see JS 2/28*) challenged you to correctly answer eight questions,

figure out my final destination (Cyprus), and create your own map of Cyprus—an island nation in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea.

This year's grand-prize winner is Olivia Wischmeyer (*above*), 12, of Slavens K-8 School in Denver, Colorado. Congratulations to Olivia and her teacher, Courtney Miller.

Our contest drew more than 9,000 entries from 46 states—and Heidelberg, Germany. Olivia's entry (*above right*) won the grand prize



because of its elegant portrayal of Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love and beauty, flanked by the flora and fauna of Cyprus.

For her great work, Olivia wins a \$500 U.S. savings bond and a Wii. She and 25 runners-up will each get a Mapman T-shirt. —Jim McMahon

## The Runners-up

**ARIZONA** Lesslie Rodriguez, Acclaim Academy, Phoenix

**CALIFORNIA** Alexa Oliveira, Sacred Heart School, Turlock

**COLORADO** Delaney Letts, Alicia Pankratz, Bethlehem Lutheran School, Lakewood; Jenna Winocur, Slavens K-8 School, Denver

**FLORIDA** Isabel Hautmann, Gulfview Middle School, Naples

**ILLINOIS** Flynn Sheehan, Gwendolyn Brooks M.S., Oak Park

**MASSACHUSETTS** Sarah McLellan, Inn Street Montessori, Newburyport; Bogdan Znakharchuk, South M.S., Westfield

**MICHIGAN** Sarah Schmitt, West M.S., Grand Blanc

**MISSOURI** Sarah Lueder, Wendy Uelk, Visitation Academy, St. Louis

**NEW JERSEY** Theo Everett, Rachel Li, Sammie McKechnie, Randolph M.S., Randolph

**NEW MEXICO** Drake Bjorkman, Taos Charter School, Taos

**NEW YORK** Alex Uys, Berkeley Carroll School, Brooklyn

**PENNSYLVANIA** Nicole Hege, Gabriel Matos, Manor M.S., Lancaster; Christina Mitchell, Holy Guardian Angels School, Reading

**TEXAS** Vicente Elizalde, Hughes M.S., Burleson

**UTAH** Maddy Chin, Madeline Tolley, Albion M.S., Sandy

**VIRGINIA** Farhaj Murshed, Hayfield Secondary School, Alexandria

**WISCONSIN** Kristin Schmitt, Saylesville School, Rubicon