

# **Alexander of Macedon, 356-323 B.C.: A Historical Biography Study Guide**

**Alexander of Macedon, 356-323 B.C.: A Historical Biography by Peter Green**

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# Plot Summary

Alexander of Macedon by Peter Green is a historical biography of King Alexander. The king, who was born in 356 BC to Philip of Macedon and Olympias, became a ruthless tyrant and foreign aggressor who conquered most of the Persian Empire. Where his father Philip consolidated and unified Greece, his son had dreams of world conquest and spent ten years conquering parts of the Persian Empire.

Alexander spent three years studying with Aristotle, and from this training, he developed an analytical mind and an interest in science, Philip warned him to stay away from the teachings of the sophists and to concentrate on things that would help him in politics and war. When his father was leaving for a campaign against Greece, Alexander was recalled to Pella to rule in his father's absence. Eventually Philip rejected Alexander saying he wasn't his son and Alexander and Olympias went into exile. Philip eventually sent for Alexander and acknowledged him since his new wife had a daughter and not a son. When Philip was assassinated Alexander became king.

Alexander secured Macedonia's borders, even though he had his problems with Athens, Thebes, and Sparta. Once his borders were secured, he set as his goal the conquest of Darius and the Persian Empire, and spent the last ten years of his life in the Persian Empire. He never returned to Macedonia once he left. Antipater was left in charge of Greece and ruled according to Alexander's order.

The King was a brilliant military strategist and planner. He developed the technique of the phalanx. This was a technique where his men marched on an angled line, called an echelon, instead of a horizontal line. This meant that part of the enemy's line was engaged while the remainder of the line was still marching. Alexander's troops would wait for a break in the line, then charge through and surround the enemy. This is why he won almost every battle he was in. He spent a lot of time and money training his troops. No matter what kind of situation he was presented with, he was able to devise a strategy that was successful. Alexander was difficult to predict and rarely did what his enemies predicted he would do. This was another reason for his successes.

Alexander died on June 10, 323 BC. He had attended a banquet and drank the wine he was given. He developed a high fever and was sick for about a week before he died. Suspicions are that he was poisoned, possibly by strychnine. There is also some suspicion that Aristotle and Antipater were involved. Alexander had become a paranoid megalomaniac and Antipater's position in Greece was threatened. Antipater's son eventually became king after Alexander's death. The massive empire that Alexander had put together began to disintegrate soon after his death.

The book is an interesting biography. There are a variety of characters that come and go which makes the book a little confusing at times. In spite of this the reader will enjoy the book. It is relatively fast reading.



# Chapter 1

## Chapter 1 Summary and Analysis

In September, 356, a courier left Pella with a message for King Philip who was on the battlefield. The messages told him that his general, Parmenio, won a very important and decisive victory. He also learned that his wife gave birth to a son, Alexander in July.

Macedonia was divided into two regions, Upper Macedonia and Lower Macedonia. It was basically isolated from the rest of the Baltic peninsula by geography. The climate of Upper Macedonia was continental while that of Lower Macedonia was Mediterranean. Before the rule of Philip, Macedonia had been weak and used as a buffer by other city states. All of the fighting by the various city states allowed Macedonia to become very strong.

The King ruled in Macedonia but he was subject to certain rules. He could be deposed by a vote of the Macedonian assembly. The King had to obey the traditional laws.

Philip saw the true potential of the infantry, known as the Foot Companions and formed them into a strong fighting force. Their main weapon was the sarissa, or spear. Philip studied military tactics and trained the infantry in complex drills and maneuvers. He insisted on strict discipline.

Philip eventually began a policy of aggression particularly against Athens. He exhibited his toughness at the beginning of his rule by defeating the plans of the Illyrians to attack him. When their armies met, Philip exhibited superior military tactics and planning. Philip himself led his infantry which killed more than seven thousand Illyrians. He established the strategy for creating a gap in the enemy line by having his own line slanted so they could pivot and create the gap.

After many of his victories, Philip would take a new wife. He had five which angered Olympias because it threatened the position of her son, Alexander. Olympias was his third and most famous wife.

Philip needed a source of income and sought to mine gold and silver in the area around Mt. Pangaeus. He had ruled for four years making Macedonia one of the most powerful states. He played his allies off against one another by turning them into rivals.

# Chapter 2

## Chapter 2 Summary and Analysis

Alexander grew up in the household of Philip. It was a male world with drunken feasts and full of professional soldiers. Olympias turned the boy against his father and he was always close to her. Alexander had a love-hate relationship with his father and was more or less jealous of his military conquests.

Alexander was a person who carried a grudge, sometimes for years, waiting to strike back at whoever did him a disservice. Philip was often away on campaigns and busy with diplomatic duties when he was home in Pella. Philip made conquests throughout the region until he became the most powerful ruler in Greece.

Philip wasn't interested in Panhellenism unless he could use it to his own advantage. The Persians began to be a threat to Greece when they captured Sidon in 345. Philip supported the Egyptians in this effort. The other Greek city states feared Persia more than Macedonia. He wouldn't support Athens.

Philip moved his son from Pella to a rural area to study with Aristotle at Mieza. This was a wine producing area to which Alexander and several of his friends were sent. Encouraged by his father to work and study hard, Alexander strove to be the best in everything he did. He was a glory seeker and sought victory over the Barbarians.

In 341, Philip's dealing with the Persians became known. The Greeks arrested and tortured one of his men but could learn nothing from him.

From Aristotle, Alexander learned to place little value on the hedonistic lifestyle. He emphasized self-control and self-denial and the teachings of Aristotle left their imprint on him. He developed an empirical and analytic mind and a sense of scientific curiosity as in medicine and biology. His father warned him against the thinking of the sophists and to concentrated on things that would help him with command and politics.

During Alexander's three years of study with Aristotle, Macedonia's relations with the Greek states worsened. Philip was trying to strengthen Macedonia's borders. He was working on his long range plan to conquer Athens. As tensions increased, Philip brought Alexander back to Pella when he was sixteen and appointed him Regent of Macedonia and Master of the Royal Seal.



# Chapter 3

## Chapter 3 Summary and Analysis

While Philip was gone on the Byzantine campaign, Alexander led the troops that quelled a rebellion. Philip recognized his son's ambition for power. His ambitions were fostered by Olympias and meant there would be trouble in the future. His father advised him to become friends with the Macedonian nobility.

In summer of 339, Philip was facing the possibility of the city states joining forces against him and invading. Philip would not be able to win a war on the sea and had to force a land war, which he did. He duped them with a message of disinformation, attack, and beat them. The Greeks gave up the pass and moved to a strong position at Chaeronea. This would force a direct frontal attack by Philip. When Athens and Thebes refused to negotiate a peace, their armies met in August 338. Both Philip and Alexander led the troops in battle. Alexander led the wing that would deliver the knockout blow. The slant of the line, known technically as the oblique, meant the first Athenian troops were engaged while the rest of the army was still advancing. As the engaged Macedonian troops slowly back tracked, the center circled around and created the gap and it was through this gap that the Macedonian cavalry went. They surrounded the Thebans. Philip and Alexander won a decisive victory, but the Athenian navy was untouched.

Philip then turned his attention to a Panhellenic invasion of Asia. Because of this he offered very generous peace settlement to the Athenians. The Athenians accepted the peace terms and made Philip and Alexander honorary citizens. Philip built a monument known as the Philipian to commemorate his victory.

Alexander's last important function for Philip was to travel to Athens in a delegation to present Philip's plans for Panhellenism. He needed the support of Athens and the rest of Greece for a campaign against Persia. They basically had no choice after Philip's victory at Chaeronea.

Trouble between Philip and Alexander begins when Philip questioned his son's legitimacy and married his fifth wife to produce a new male heir. The fifth wife was Cleopatra and after the wedding both Alexander and Olympias went into exile. Philip, as head of the Hellenic League, proposed war against Persia. Since Cleopatra had borne a daughter, Philip now had no male heir and could not leave Macedonia. Alexander returned to Pella as successor but remained mistrustful of Philip.

At the time of Alexander's sister's marriage to her maternal uncle, Cleopatra gave birth to a son. Philip was killed during the wedding ceremonies. The assassin was a former jealous male lover. The murder was supposedly masterminded by Olympias. Alexander became king.



# Chapter 4

## Chapter 4 Summary and Analysis

Alexander was accepted as the Macedonian king. Many of his enemies were purged as he eliminated his opposition, but not the two main contenders, Amyntas and Cananis, Cleopatra's baby. He consolidated his position with the people by maintaining the principles of his father's administration and gave key positions to friends who returned from exile. Some areas of his empire rebelled and declared independence, then panicked. They basically received the message that they should cooperate.

Thebes refused to accept Alexander and expelled Philip's troops. Alexander had the city surrounded. The Thebeans acknowledged Alexander. Athens quickly acknowledged Alexander. Alexander accomplished what he set out to do except for Sparta.

Alexander trained his army in mountain warfare in 336/5 in preparation for his campaign. He planned to push through to the Danube in Europe. This meant he had to fight the Thracians. He sent his warships to an area near Bucharest to wait for the army. He made it through the mountain passes and crossed the Danube during the night. His armies took Pelium and destroyed it.

After this there was a Thebean uprising which was financed by Demosthenes. Athens also voted support. Darius of Persia supported the Greeks, knowing that Alexander planned to invade, and provided gold. Darius chose Memnon of Rhodes to lead his forces. He couldn't save Cyzious from Alexander but did capture Lampsacus.

Alexander planned to return to Pella. Before doing so, he sent a message to Olympias to eliminate Amyntus and Caranus. Olympia killed the children and forced Cleopatra to hang herself. Alexander moved his camp. He was marching toward Thebes. If the Thebeans surrounded, then Alexander could focus on Persia, but the Thebeans did not surrender. They attacked Alexander's outposts. Alexander offered Thebes amnesty if the leaders of the revolt surrendered. The Thebeans countered demanding that Alexander surrender two of his leaders, Antipater and Philotas. The Thebeans lost the battle and were massacred. The city was destroyed and this proved to be one of the biggest errors Alexander ever made.



# Chapter 5

## Chapter 5 Summary and Analysis

Alexander now returned to Pella. It cost money to have and run an army. Philip had died in debt and the money from the gold and silver mining did not cover expenses. Alexander had done away with taxation as a way of winning the support of the Maedonian population, so the country was on the brink of bankruptcy. He had no alternative but to wage war to capture lands that would provide a source of income.

Alexander borrowed as heavily as he could to raise money for the campaign against Darius. He trained his army for the campaign against Darius. His troops contained a large variety to specialists and technicians. There were also scholars and scientists.

Alexander began his war against Persia in spring of 334. He built altars and involved the gods before and after crossing the Dardanelles. Lampsacus was the first town they came to that was not under Macedonian control. Since it was known that he was short of money, Alexander was bribed to bypass the city. If he was not accepted by a city, he went around it. He needed a quick decisive battle and the Persians knew it. It was in their interests to force an attack at a strongly held position.

Alexander's staff advised against an attack but Alexander wouldn't listen. A surprise attack was easily repelled by the Macedonians. When Alexander was attacked again, he used his usually method of creating a gap. Alexander fought side by side with his men. Alexander's horse was killed during the attack. Memnon's troops finally surrendered. Alexander eventually won the battle of Granicus.

The Macedonians captured over two thousand prisoners and sent them back to Macedonia to work as forced laborers. Darius now had to take Alexander's threat seriously





# Chapter 6

## Chapter 6 Summary and Analysis

It is not known exactly what Alexander's plans were when he attacked Persia. Alexander appointed his own officials after winning the battle of Granicus. He gained control over the revenues from the province. He also acquired Ionia, Lydia and the Aeolid that way. All of these cities were made to join the Hellenic League.

Alexander established his base in Ephesus. He had the city of New Smyrna built. Alexander then approached Miletus. He refused their offer of the use of the city and laid siege to it, and eventually entered the city. The Macedonians did not repeat the massacre at Thebes.

In Allinda, Alexander made a deal with the exiled queen Ada where he was named her successor in exchange for his support in helping her regain her position. This was a strategy he followed in other places, and as a result, many cities welcomed him. The Macedonians were forced to retreat from Halicarnassus. He eventually entered the city. This time the Persians were forced to retreat. After another battle, the Persians pulled out of the city in the middle of the night, destroying it as they evacuated.

As Alexander advanced across the plains, he was attacked from the rear. He forced a retreat and went on to secure the coast to Pamphylia. Many cities surrendered as he marched across the Persian Empire.

Darius then funded Memnon with funds to raise an army. He began capturing islands in the Aegean in preparation for an assault on the Greek mainland.

In Gordium, Alexander was lured by the myth of the Gordian Knot. The myth was that anyone that could untie it would rule Asia. Alexander cut it with a sword. He took as a sign from Zeus, the thunder and lightning storm that occurred that night and decided to continue his campaign. He knew that Darius was in Sousa assembling an army. Darius then moved on to Babylon. Alexander didn't plan on engaging Darius until he controlled the Eastern Mediterranean ports and Phoenician.

The death of Memnon meant there were no good generals to lead the invasion of Greece so it was called off. The armies of Darius and Alexander finally met at Issus. During the battle Alexander pursued Darius. Darius eventually fled safely and Alexander won the booty and the captives in addition to the good propaganda.



# Chapter 7

## Chapter 7 Summary and Analysis

Darius returned to Babylon. He proposed a settlement to Alexander. Alexander wasn't ready for a settlement. He wanted to crush Darius. Alexander received Darius's. Alexander received Darius's proposed settlement at Marathos. He wanted his family returned and was willing to cede lands west of the Halys River. Darius said he acted in defense since it was Alexander who invaded. He was willing to enter into a treaty with Alexander. Alexander basically refused the offer and demanded to be addressed as the King of all Asia.

Darius began amassing a new army and renewed his plans to invade Europe. He supplied the king of Sparta with Persian ships. They began to capture cities in Asia Minor. They didn't know that Alexander was willing to sacrifice Greece and Macedonia to win the Persian Empire.

Alexander sent Parmenio to capture Damascus and secure Darius's baggage-train. They secured the Persian royal treasure, household staff, relatives of commanders in addition to ambassadors from Thebes, Sparta, and Athens.

The Macedonian march continued in January 332. They traveled south to Sidon and Tyre. Tyre sided with Darius and tried to stall Alexander. Tyre was strategically located across a strait. Alexander built a mole across the strait. Alexander's men worked on the mole while being attacked by the Tyrians. In spite of the attacks, the Macedonians kept building the mole. Alexander went to Sidon for reinforcements and his warships. They returned to Tyre and sunk the Tyrian warship. The ship protected the workers who were building the mole.

While Alexander was attacking the city, Carthage sent word that they wouldn't help Tyre. The Macedonians finally forced the Tyrian ships to the north part of the harbor and held them there. This allowed Alexander to attack from the south. At the end of July, the Macedonians entered the city which resulted in a bloody massacre. The city was destroyed and those captured became slaves.

After the destruction of Tyre, Darius tried to negotiate a settlement which Alexander rejected.



## Chapter 7, pg. 265-296

### Chapter 7, pg. 265-296 Summary and Analysis

After Alexander's victory at Tyre all coastal cities with the exception of Gaza submitted to him. Gaza controlled the access to Egypt and was situated on an important trade route. Gaza, and its leader Batis, held Alexander for two months as he tried to penetrate the city. From Gaza it took a week to march to Pelusium in the Nile delta and then to Memphis. He spent a total of three months in Egypt. In Memphis, he was named Pharaoh of Egypt.

Alexander then sailed to Naucratis to direct the flow of maritime traffic through Egypt. He sailed around the island of Pharos and decided to build the city Alexandria there. He visited the oracles to ascertain his divine parentage. At the temple, he was greeted as the son of Ammon or Zeus. He returned to Pharos to build Alexandria.

At this time, Alexander was careful to accommodate the Greeks. He didn't want a revolt. Alexander led his army to Syria in the summer of 331. Darius had his army at Cunaxa, sixty miles northwest of Babylon, but Alexander's army went in the opposite direction. Darius then decided to engage Alexander where he planned to cross the Tigris which they assumed would be around Mosul. Alexander learned of Darius's plan from captured scouts.

Alexander reached and crossed the Tigris on September 18 before Darius arrived. Darius was at Gaugamela and attempted another settlement with Alexander. It was rejected because Alexander said Asia could not have two monarchs. At Gaugamela, the Macedonians were outnumbered five to one by the forces of Darius. Alexander used his famous echeloned line at a forty five degree angle. He planned the strategy that would be repeated in many other famous battles, to draw the opposition away from the center. The battle took place on September 30, 331 BC. Darius fled escaping capture. Alexander had split the Achaemenid empire in two and named himself the Great King in Darius's place.



## Chapter 8, pg. 270-298

### Chapter 8, pg. 270-298 Summary and Analysis

After the victory at Gaugamela, the army declared Alexander lord of Asia. After this, his relations with the army deteriorated. Most wanted to return to Macedonia.

After leaving Gaugamela, Alexander sent Philoxenus and a force to Sousa while he headed for Babylon. He was accepted in Babylon because he promised to restore their god. They didn't want to become another Tyre. Susa was a second capital that Alexander went to in November. In route, he learns that the city surrendered to Philoxenus. They also had the contents of the treasury. Alexander took his seat on Darius's throne.

Alexander decided to wage a winter campaign and began to move to Persepolis in January. He traveled separately from his baggage train and arrived on January 31, 330 BC. This was the burial place of Achaemenid kings. In spite of the surrender of the city, Alexander allowed his troops to sack the city. They were allowed to kill any male they met. While the troops plundered the city, Alexander examined the contents of the royal treasury. He would use the contents to finance his campaign in the East. Alexander remained in Persepolis until June. The city was burned as Alexander departed.

Alexander headed for Ecbatana. He now wanted to be surrounded by a strong professional army and he paid his men well. He diminished the power and authority of Parmenio and sent him to Ecbatana with the treasure. Parmenio understood Alexander's reasons and drive for power.



## Chapter 8, pg. 299-349

### Chapter 8, pg. 299-349 Summary and Analysis

Alexander did not spend much time in Ecbatana. He was in pursuit of Darius. On the way he was informed that Darius had been deposed as the result of a coup by Bessus and Nabarzanes. The loyalty of the army was split between Bessus and Darius and Bessus declared himself Great King. Darius was taken with as prisoner as Bessus fled in advance of Alexander. Not wanting Darius taken alive by Alexander, Bessus and Nabarzanes killed him. Alexander had the body taken to Persepolis for burial.

Darius's death did not help Alexander. He was still a foreigner claiming the throne. Darius could not abdicate for Alexander to assume the throne. The only chance he had was to present himself as Darius's choice and to hunt Bessus. On the way, Alexander encouraged his men to marry. This was they had their families with them and weren't in such a hurry to return home.

Alexander learned that Bessus was being accepted as king and marched after him. He appointed Satibarzanes as satrap and Satibarzanes led a revolt against him that Alexander had to subdue. Satibarzanes fled. Tensions were also increasing between Alexander and Parmenio. There was an alleged plot against Alexander. The conspirators were executed. Parmenio was stabbed to death on the orders of Alexander. Parmenio had been popular with the troops and now Alexander didn't trust his troops and the troops didn't trust him.



## Chapter 9, pg. 350-379

### Chapter 9, pg. 350-379 Summary and Analysis

Alexander resumed his march in winter but went to subdue the states of the southern satrapies before pursuing Bessus. He subdued the revolts and reached Kandahar in February 329. He began crossing the Hindu Kush in April, which took seventeen days. Bessus assumed he would use a lower pass but he didn't. The speed with which Alexander's troops moved through the pass forced Bessus to flee.

By the time Alexander reached Oxus, many of his troops mutinied. Alexander was forced to release many of his troops and to recruit locals. Bessus was arrested by the Spitamenas and Soghdian barons. Bessus was eventually publicly tried and executed.

Alexander continued his march. Alexander was wounded but he would stop to recuperate. He kept his troops on the move and mentioned his plans to move into the Black Sea area. Before leaving Bactria he eliminated the resistance. At this time there was tension between the Macedonians and the local troops.

Alexander still planned to move into India and was upset that he had spent so much time in the Bactria area. There were still areas of resistance in south-east mountainous districts. After the surrender of the Soghdian Rock, Alexander married Roxanne, the daughter of Oxyartes, a local baron. This was a politically advantageous move since he secured local support. He had established a network of military garrisons many of which would become cities.

Alexander also recruited thirty thousand young local boys to be given a Macedonian education and military training. Alexander referred to them as the Successors because they would replace officers eventually. Persians were assuming a more important role in Alexander's administration. The Macedonians were gradually being replaced by Persians.



## Chapter 9, pgs. 379-412

### Chapter 9, pgs. 379-412 Summary and Analysis

Alexander was not knowledgeable about India geography. At Massago, he massacred seven thousand people. Alexander divided his army, sending one part through the Khyber Pass with orders to take control of everything they encountered. The other part with Alexander would eliminate opposition in Bajour and Swat. Alexander's claim of being a godhead was being discussed.

Alexander was generous to Ambphi. He needed their help. All of the local kings would have been too strong for him to oppose at once. Alexander made his way through India. He had to ford the Jhelum River during the monsoon. Any bridges were already guarded by the enemy, led by Posus. Alexander tried to make them think that he was waiting until the end of the monsoon while other parts of this troops tried to make them think an attack was imminent. Eventually Porus began to ignore the activity.

Alexander was forced to move when an army from the rajah of Kashmir was two days away. Alexander made his plans by dividing his forces into two so that Porus was opened to attack from the rear, no matter which way he went. The only chance he had was to destroy the group before they could cross the bridge. On the night of the troop movements, there was a thunderstorm that covered the activity of Alexander's troops. The next day Porus didn't know if the troop movement was the beginning of an attack or not. The Indians fled after a brief engagement and Porus was killed.

Alexander's famous phalanx ran into problems in India because of the elephants but he devised a plan to deal with them. Jhelum is said to be the battle with the greatest strategy devised by Alexander.

As Alexander moved through India, he was never quite sure where the ocean was. After India he planned to explore Arabia. He began marching eastward in July. Since there was no ocean, only land, he kept on marching and pushing his troops. They force him to retreat even though he didn't want to.



## Chapter 10, pgs. 412-437

### Chapter 10, pgs. 412-437 Summary and Analysis

Alexander began his retreat. They built and commandeered vessels. Alexander had imagined that India was full of riches but he did not acquire much booty there. The potential return of Alexander to Greece was a threat to the people who were not loyal. His treasurer, Harpalus, had all of the treasures and was threatened by Alexander's return. News of this reached Alexander.

Alexander amassed a flotilla which sailed down the Jhelum. His troops and the elephants marched on the banks. When he entered the Chenab, there were two hostile tribes waiting for him. His troops had been fighting for eight years and were tired of it. They refused orders and his soothsayer warned him about danger to his life.

During the battle at the citadel Alexander was seriously wounded. Rumors spread of his death prematurely and thousands of soldiers revolted and headed for Greece. When the king regained consciousness, they refused to believe it. He traveled down the Ravi River in full view of everyone, lying on his bed. As he recovered he again became preoccupied with his godhead status. A banquet was held to celebrate his recovery.

He reached the head of the Indus delta in five months fighting battles along the way. By July 325 he reached Pattala, which was evacuated before his arrival. He appointed another governor and much of the population returned to their homes. Alexander never went further than West Pakistan. Alexander never really was strong in India for long but he finally reached the ocean. Alexander sailed ahead of his troops before the end of the monsoon. He kept as close to the shore as possible. The troops who marched on land suffered. They had a problem finding food and water. Alexander was with them on land at this time in the Makran. When he returned to the coast, the fleet failed to appear. Harpalus was not sending the bullion he wanted. Was there a conspiracy against him?





## Chapter 10, pg. 437-461

### Chapter 10, pg. 437-461 Summary and Analysis

As they waited for the fleet, reports of widespread treachery reached him. Alexander began a purge of the satraps. Harpalus escaped and stayed away from Alexander. Neorchus, who had been with the fleet, appeared in December with news that the fleet was at Hormoz.

In January 324, Alexander left for Persepolis. He traveled across land while his baggage train went by the coastal route. They would meet at Susa. Alexander was becoming increasingly paranoid at this time. He reached Susa in February 324 and still had plans for conquests in the western Mediterranean.

There was a mass marriage ceremony at Susa and Alexander himself took two wives, one the daughter of Darius. However, the marriage didn't have the desired effects with either the Macedonians or the Persians.

At this time there were a lot of Greek exiles that could potentially form an army against Alexander. Alexander finally addressed a letter to them saying that he was not the cause of their problems and that he had instructed Antipater to allow them to return. He brought up the issue of this divinity again.

Alexander departed from Susa in spring 324 and headed for Opis. Here he demobilized various troops with good bonuses so service would be attractive for new recruits. The troops reacted angrily to the news. They worried he would establish his seat of government in Persia and not return to Macedonia. Alexander had thirteen of the trouble makers executed. They eventually worked out their differences with Alexander and held a banquet to celebrate. Alexander promised good severance pay and benefits for soldiers and their survivors.

Antipater was consolidating his position in Greece. He reigned supreme in Greece despite the smear campaign orchestrated by Olympias. He thought that Alexander's claim to divinity was nonsense and that he would be blamed for Greece's repressive government, even though he had followed Alexander's orders. He began to look for support in Macedonia.



## Chapter 10, pgs. 461 - 488

### Chapter 10, pgs. 461 - 488 Summary and Analysis

In July 324, Harpalus tried to negotiate deals with various people and was eventually arrested. He managed to escape but was eventually assassinated in Crete.

Alexander moved onto Ecbatana. Here his commander of the Companion Cavalry, Hephaestron, died. Alexander gave him a grand funeral. A month after this, his wife Roxanne became pregnant and eventually gave birth to a son. This child was Alexander's sole legitimate heir.

In winter of 324-3, he began a campaign against the Cassaens. This took five weeks. He also ordered a fleet of Greek warships to be built and the army headed for Babylon. The seers predicted a disaster if he entered the city so he stayed outside of the city for a while. He received delegations from many different countries.

Alexander drank some wine he was given at a banquet and came down with a high fever. He died on the morning of June 10, 323 BC. Hephaestion also died under similar circumstances. There is a great deal of debate over the poisoning and who did it with Antipater and Aristotle expected to be involved. There is also speculation that it may have been pleurisy or malaria.

Since he was a foreign aggressor and tyrant, few people mourned him. In the next forty years, there were continual revolts and fighting in his empire and Roxanne and her son were killed.

Alexander's legend grew after his death and truth became mixed with legend. Where Philip united Greece, Alexander spread the culture through a large part of the world.



# Characters

## Alexander of Macedon

Alexander was born in July 356 BC in Pella. His father was King Philip and his mother was Olympias. His mother turned his mind against his father from an early age. He idolized his mother and had a love-hate relationship with his father. Alexander was insecure about his succession because of his father's many wives.

He was tutored by Aristotle at the age of thirteen at Mieza. Alexander spent three years studying with Aristotle. Because of this he developed an analytical and empirical mind and an interest in science. He studied with Aristotle until he was sixteen, then returned to Pella and became Regent of Macedonia and Master of the Royal Seal. Because he showed little interest in women, they brought women to him and tried to persuade him to have sex.

Alexander's succession was secured after the Macedonian victory over the Athenians. A month later he accused Olympias of being an adulteress and questioned Alexander's legitimacy. He married a fifth wife with the idea of having a new male heir. This caused Alexander and Olympias to go into exile where they remained until Cleopatra had a daughter. She gave birth to a son in 336 BC and soon after, Philip was assassinated and Alexander became king.

Alexander left to fight the Persian and spent ten years trying to conquer the Persian Empire. He died on June 10, 323. The empire he left behind him began to disintegrate immediately after his death.

## Philip of Macedon

Philip of Macedonia was King Philip II. He was the father of Alexander the Great. He led his armies in battle wearing the same dress as the others did. He liked alcohol, women and boys. He is married to Myrtale, better known as Olympias, who had presented him with a son named Alexander in July. Philip is twenty-seven at the time.

When Philip was born to Amyntas, rumors spread that he and his brothers were illegitimate in order to keep them from claiming the throne. As a youngster, he studied military strategy and developed the Macedonian infantry into one of the best fighting forces the world had seen. When Philip first came to power, nobody thought he would last six months. He eliminated the three illegitimate half brothers who sought to depose him.

Philip had a total of five wives during his lifetime. He took the wives so they would breed sons guaranteeing the succession, which infuriated Olympias. When he married Cleopatra and questioned the legitimacy of Alexander, both Olympias and Alexander went into exile. Alexander was brought back to Pella after the birth of Cleopatra's



daughter. She did produce a male heir in June 336 BC but Philip was assassinated soon after the birth.

## Myrtale

Myrtale is the third wife of Philip of Macedon and the mother of Alexander the Great. She is also known as Olympias. She was angered at her husband taking other wives to breed sons for him because it threatened her own position and that of her son, Alexander. Olympias was a foreigner from Illyria whom Philip married after the war with the Illyrians. She was an Epirot princess and under eighteen years of age at the time of her marriage. She split from Philip in 338 when Alexander was eighteen. By this time she had turned the boy against his father.

## Parmenio

Parmenio was a top general and aide of Alexander's. After the victory at Issus, Parmenio was sent to Damascus to obtain the king's baggage train and the city's surrender. In his seventies, the King transferred the troop's allegiance to himself and used Parmenio for other things. He was killed on the orders of Alexander.

## Darius

Darius was king of Persia and the head of a mighty army. He first engaged Alexander at Issus and only survived because he fled. This pattern was repeated in other engagements. Darius was eventually killed by Bessus who claimed his throne.

## Bessus

Bessus was the satrap of Bactria. He organized a conspiracy against Darius and eventually killed Darius and proclaimed himself as the Great King.

## Agis

Agis was king of Sparta. Sparta did not support Alexander in his Persian campaign. Agis was defeated and killed in a battle with one of Alexander's governors.

## Antipater

Antipater was a chief adviser to Alexander and ruled in Greece in Alexander's absence. He is rumored to have played a part in poisoning Alexander.

## **Aristotle**

Aristotle was the tutor of Alexander and friend of Antipater. He is rumored to have played a part in poisoning Alexander.

## **Amyntas**

Amyntas was one of Alexander's chief's aides.



# Objects/Places

## Macedonia

Macedonia was a large territorial state in Europe that included modern day Greece.

## Pella

Pella was the capital of Macedonia.

## Mieza

Mieza is a village north of Beroea and is located in the eastern foothills of the Bermios range.

## Chaeronea

Chaeronea is the site of the decisive battle where Macedonia defeated the armies of Athens and Thebes.

## Athens

Athens was one of the strongest city states in ancient Greece.

## Thebes

Thebes was a strong city state located forty miles from Athens.

## Persian Empire

The Persian Empire, which Alexander attacked, ranged from the Red Sea to the Caspian Sea and from Hellespont to past Kindu Kush. It was ruled over by Darius.

## Ephesus

Ephesus is a part of the Persian Empire where Alexander first established his base after the battle of Granicus.



## **Issus**

Issus was a place in Persia where the armies of Alexander and Darius first clashed.

## **Babylon**

Babylon was a city in Mesopotamia where Alexander went after his victory at Gaugamela. It was the site of the Hanging Gardens.

## **Susa**

Susa was a second capital of the Persian Empire laying three hundred seventy five miles south-east of Babylon.

## **Jhelum**

The Jhelum River was a battle in India in which Alexander is said to have devised the greatest battle strategy of his career.



# Themes

## Value of Strategy

One of the most important themes of the book is the value of strategy and planning. Alexander's three years of studying with Aristotle gave him a keen and analytical mind. Alexander was a brilliant strategist. His success in battle was due to his superior planning. Because of this, he very rarely lost a battle. He always did the unexpected, even if it was harder on his men. His enemies could rarely predict his actions. If they expected him to take the troops through the low pass, he would go through the high pass. When they expected him to travel along the sea coast, he would go through the mountains. His superior planning allowed him to develop the phalanx. Instead of leading his troops into battle in a horizontal line, he angled the line. This tactic forced the enemies line to break in the middle and Alexander's troops would then go through the gap and surround the enemy. His tactic was basically unbeatable in any traditional military battle of the time. Whatever the situation, he was able to develop the superior strategy. This allowed him to conquer most of the Persian Empire in his ten year campaign. Many opponents would surrender to Alexander rather than face him on the battle field and many opponents were given this opportunity and would accept his terms. He was known to destroy cities and massacre their populations. His superior planning and intensive training of his troops were the keys to his success.

## Ambition and Power

A second theme of the book is Alexander's unrelenting ambition and drive for power. He was not content to just rule Macedonia after his father's death. Alexander had his sites set on the conquest of Darius and the Persian Empire. He worked himself into a position as head of the Hellenic League either by negotiation or conquest and once he felt secure in his power, he went to Persia. His ambition was fed by his successes and the more power he obtained, the more power he wanted. He wanted to be declared the Great King of the Persian Empire and successor of Darius, but Darius was killed before he could maneuver himself into this position; but Alexander wouldn't stop. He became a paranoid and megalomaniac and began to declare that he was descended from divine lineage, mainly the god Zeus. Many of his aides were suspicious of his thirst for power and need for conquest, especially when their own position was threatened. Alexander died on June 10, 323 BC, possibly of poisoning. One theory is that Antipater, who ran the administration in Greece in Alexander's absence, knew his position was tenuous. The theory is that Aristotle prepared the poison that was put in the King's drink, via Antipater's son, who eventually became king. Since Alexander was such a tyrant, his death was not greatly mourned. Neither Aristotle nor Antipater believed in Alexander's divinity.





## Treachery

Treachery and conspiracy are another theme of the book. All of the conspiracies, plots and murders were a part of the lives of royalty at the time, and it was no different with Alexander. This began early in Alexander's life. As was the custom, his father, Philip, took more than one wife to produce male heirs to guarantee the succession. Olympias, Alexander's mother, felt that this threatened her position and the succession of her son. Several times Alexander confronted Philip about this issue. When Philip questioned the legitimacy of Alexander, he and Olympias went into exile. Philip requested Alexander's return and Alexander became king after Philip was assassinated.

There were many plots against Alexander and he was able to overcome all but the last one, which killed him. Alexander's way of dealing with treachery was to kill the perpetrators. Due to his paranoia some of these plots may have been imagined, but his wealth and power made him a target for plots. When it looked like Alexander might return to Greece, the position of Antipater was threatened. He grew powerful by ruling Greece for Alexander in the king's absence. He was siphoning funds and comfortable in his power and didn't want to be challenged by Alexander, who would remove his officials when they became too powerful. Antipater, along with Aristotle, may have played a role in the death of Alexander, since Antipater's son became king and killed Alexander's wife and son. To be a royal at that time meant being involved in many treacheries and the target of many conspiracies.

# Style

## Perspective

Alexander of Macedon is written in the third person point of view with the narrator being the author, Peter Green. The use of the third person allows the author to provide the necessary background information and to tell the story of Alexander. Since the history of the period is important, the author is able to provide the names, dates, places and events that are so important to the understanding of the reader.

The author is well qualified to write the kind of book. He is a noted scholar and professor of classics at the University of Texas. He has written many books on ancient Greece and is an expert in the field. His book shows the depth of his research and knowledge in the field and the reader will appreciate this, even if the reader has little interest in ancient Greece. Even the reader with little knowledge of ancient Greece will find the book informative and interesting. The book focuses on the battles that Alexander engage on and the strategies he developed. Green provides just enough details about Alexander's strategies that it is easy for the reader to understand the tactic. The book may be of interest to those interested in military strategy, but this kind of knowledge is not necessary for the uninformed reader to understand and enjoy the book. The perspective of the book is appropriate to the nature of the book.

## Tone

The book is written by an academic in the style of academic writing, which means it is objective. The author tells the story according to the facts uncovered in his extensive research. Whenever there are any places for subjective opinions, the author is careful to present the different points of view and to let the reader draw his/her own conclusions. An example of this concerns the death of Alexander. Was it poisoning or illness? Green presents the facts on each side without forcing any kind of opinion on the reader and the reader has to appreciate this approach. There is no slant to the book or author trying to force his opinion on the reader. The depth of the author's research is well documented with a copious Notes and Reference section that allows the reader to check whatever facts he/she wants to. The tone of the book makes the book very readable so that it almost reads like a novel. It is not dry reading which most people associate with history. The objectivity of the tone and the style of writing make the book interesting and easy to read. The information would not be as easily accepted by the reader if the author was forcing his opinions on the reader. This isn't the case since the author presents the different points of view in an objective manner. This way he respects the reader's intelligence which allows the reader to have a more enjoyable reading experience.

## Structure

The structure is well structured and put together in a way to provide the maximum amount amount information for the reader. The body of the book is divided into nine chapters. For the most part, the information is presented in chronological order, but there is a lot of jumping around in the chapters. There are many places where the author jumps from character to character or event to event that the reader may find a little confusing and irritating.

There is a preface for the reprint edition and a preface for acknowledgments. There are also comprehensive lists providing information for the reader. Located at the front of the book is a List of Maps and Battle Plans, a Key to Abbreviations and a Table of Dates. These tables provide a wealth of information for the reader and are conveniently positioned where they can be easily referred to.

At the end of the book, there is an Appendix about the propaganda at Granicus. There is also a very comprehensive Notes and Reference section and another on Sources of Information plus a Genealogical Table which are good reference sections for the reader who wants to check sources and look for more information. Finally, there is a good comprehensive Index.

The structure of the book is designed to provide information for the reader, which the reader will appreciate. The structure of the book works well for the book and is very appropriate to the nature of the book.

## Quotes

Forty years later they - along with every other city-state, not least Athens and Thebes - realized the truth: that they had fatally weakened the one power-group which might conceivably have checkmated Macedonia's meteoric rise to power before it was well begun. Knowledge, as so often, came too late (Chapter 1, pg. 13)

Alexander's favorite line in the Iliad shows his declared ambition, to be 'at the same time a good king and a strong speak-fighter.' Yet he must surely have remembered Achilles' other, perhaps most characteristic aim - 'ever to strive to be best, and outstanding above all others.' (Chapter 2, pg. 41)

But even so his act was a danger-signal which Philip surely recognized. Alexander's appetite for royal power, long fostered by Olympias, would not long content itself with a temporary regency; and Philip himself was still a vigorous man in the prime of life. Sooner or later there was bound to be trouble between them (Chapter 3, pg. 67)

One of the qualities which most clearly distinguishes Alexander from the common run of competent field-commanders is his almost uncanny ability to divine enemy tactics in advance. Some of this may have been due to his first-class intelligence service; but at times it looks more like sheer brilliant psychological intuition (Chapter 4, pg. 125)

In other words, to cover his economic crisis, Alexander must either sink back into obscurity, or wage a successful way of aggression. There was never much doubt which course he would choose (Chapter, pg. 155)

At the outset of his campaign, how far ahead had Alexander planned, and how clear-cut were the policies which he envisaged? This is a perennially debated point, to which there can be no final answer (Chapter 6, pg. 182)

The offer he made was, as we shall see extremely generous: it can never have occurred to him that his adversary might reject it out of hand. He had yet to learn the scope and intensity of Alexander's ambitions (Chapter 7, pg. 237)

In the event, he got rather more than he bargained for. What had been conceived as a piece of political diplomacy turned into a profoundly felt emotional and spiritual experience. It is no exaggeration to say that the months Alexander spent in Egypt, from late October 332 till April 331, marked a psychological turning-point in his life (Chapter 7, pg. 269)

The king himself understood his dilemma all too well. He would not, could not, abandon the vision of glory and empire that drove him on; but he went out of his way to conciliate those who opposed him most vehemently (Chapter 8, pg. 297 - 298)

Alexander's only possible line was to behave, from the moment of Darius' death, as though he were in fact the Great King's chosen and legitimate successor. He must hunt



down Bessus, not as a rival for the throne, but as a rebel and a regicide (Chapter 8, pg. 329)

When he returned to Greece, however, he planned, he said, to make a full-scale naval and military expedition into the Black Sea; and for this Pharasmenes' offer would be most useful. Her is the first hint in our sources of Alexander's plans for ultimate world-conquest, of the further expeditions that would follow when the East had been fully subdued (Chapter 9, pg. 359)

That fallacy, at least, Alexander had no disproved by personal observation; but in general his ignorance of Indian geography remained profound, and his whole eastern strategy rested on a false assumption. When enlightenment came, it was too late. The great Ganges plain, by its mere existence, shattered his dream more effectively than any army could have done (Chapter 9, pg. 379)

Twice they refused to mount the scaling-ladders during a siege, until the king himself led the way, and shamed them into following him. On the second occasion a soothsayer (doubtless sensing the troops' reluctance) warned Alexander against pressing this attack: the omens indicated danger to his life (Chapter 10, pg. 419)

The executions of Callisthenes, Philotas, Parmenio, and his own son-in-law, Alexander of Lyncestis, had shown only too clearly which way the wind was blowing. The king's increasingly unpredictable temper, the disturbing signs of paranoia and megalomania which now characterized his actions, the ruthless purges he had so lately carried out - such things made it abundantly clear that Antipater must, at all costs, stay out of his clutches (Chapter 10, pg. 459)

His greatness defies a final judgment. He personifies an archetypal element, restless and perennial, in human nature: the myth of the eternal quest for the world's end, memorably summed up by Tennyson in the last line of Ulysses: ' To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.' (Chapter 10, pg. 488)



## Topics for Discussion

What advice regarding the sophists did Philip give to Alexander? Why? What was his purpose?

What was the famous Macedonian phalanx? Who did it function?

Why was Alexander so intent on capturing the Persian Empire? What was he willing to sacrifice to attain this goal?

Why was Alexander unwilling to negotiate a settlement with Darius? Why did he keep refusing?

What did the death of Darius mean for Alexander? Why wasn't he king as he proclaimed?

What were the circumstances surrounding the death of Alexander? What are some of the theories?

How has Alexander been viewed by history?