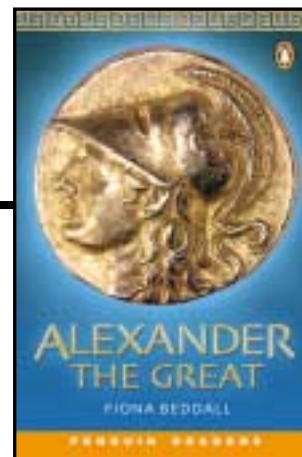


# Penguin Readers Factsheets

## Teacher's Notes

# Alexander the Great

by Fiona Beddall



Level 4 – Intermediate Alexander the Great

## Summary

Alexander the Great was one of the finest leaders in world history. He ruled for only ten years, but his empire grew quickly, soon becoming the largest empire the world had ever known. Alexander was intelligent, tough and determined. Many of the battles he fought were won with unconventional military tactics, and he regularly destroyed armies three or four times bigger than his own. Hundreds of thousands of men, women and children died for him or as a result of his policies.

When Alexander died, legends of the great man spread around the whole world. Today, historians are not always sure which of these stories are true and which are exaggerated. But it is certain that Alexander was one of the most important and interesting leaders of all time. The creation of his empire led to free exchange of ideas between different cultures, and this has shaped the world we live in today.

This book tells Alexander's amazing story and places it firmly in the context of the Ancient World before and after the Great Age of Greece. Born in 356 BC to a Macedonian king and his headstrong queen, Alexander's young life was filled with war and politics on a grand scale. When his father died, Alexander was only twenty, but he had already led his father's army in battle, and he quickly removed the threat of other potential leaders to become king. He built his army and secured support in his own country before moving his forces into Persia to revenge earlier Persian campaigns across Europe and North Africa. Many cities in the Middle East were pleased to accept Macedonian rule after years of harsh Persian rule. But Alexander's battles were rarely easy. Only after securing the Persian heartland and travelling further still into present-day India, did Alexander finally agree to his army's demands to head home.

Alexander's final journey, however, was the most difficult and dangerous of all. Tens of thousands of men, women and children died on the march through the Gedrosian Desert. Upon arrival back in Persia, Alexander celebrated by getting married (again) and spending some months relaxing and enjoying the finest of Greek and Persian culture. Ironically, it was whilst Alexander was preparing a peaceful expedition to the Caspian Sea that he finally became ill and died. He was only thirty-two, and he died far from his homeland. He had created himself the king of an empire that he would never have the chance to rule.

## Background and themes

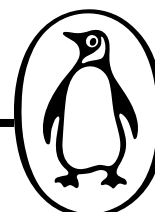
The Great Age of Greece is generally agreed to be between the years of 499BC and 300 BC, after which power shifted to the great Roman Empire. In the years before Greece's prominence, the greatest advances in Western civilization had occurred in Egypt, Crete and the Middle East (including Persia). At this stage, Greece was not a united country but a number of independent city-states with a shared culture and language. It was only when they joined forces to fight against the Persian invasions that Greece began to take shape as a nation.

Religion was an important part of Greek life. Greek people often consulted the gods before making either personal or political decisions. Alexander, too, made a lengthy detour via the holy city of Siwa in order to consult the god Ammon before he decided to spread his campaign eastwards across Persia. Unlike Persian rulers, Alexander was always careful not to impose his own religious beliefs on the cities he conquered. In fact, he often made a point of paying his respects to local deities. His sensitivity to local culture made Alexander a popular leader across most of Persia.

Much of Alexander's story has the quality of legend about it. There are the famous stories of young Alexander taming the wild horse Bucephalus and of his success in untying the Gordian Knot. Alexander, too, was influenced by existing legends of Ancient Greece, and particularly by Achilles, hero of the Trojan War. It is said that Alexander exchanged his shield for one used at Troy and that he considered himself to be the 'new Achilles', fighting with courage and honour.

Recurring themes in Alexander's battle victories are those of opportunism and invention. Where one road was inappropriate or didn't exist, Alexander often ordered his men to build a new one. When Alexander attacked the island city of Tyre, for example, his men built across the sea in order to attack the island! And when Alexander's soldiers were besieged in a narrow gorge on the way to Persepolis, he found a local guide to lead the army along animal tracks and into a position of advantage. Alexander's great ability to solve problems, and his determination to succeed against all odds surprised and baffled his enemies many times.

Alexander's route to power is a fascinating story of revolutionary military tactics, ruthless political plotting and remarkable physical and mental determination. His story is filled with fascinating people and world-shaping events. Famous leaders through the ages have been inspired and guided by this great man, and his story remains as popular today as it was after his death more than 2,000 years ago.



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## Teacher's Notes

### Communicative activities

The following teacher-led activities cover the same sections of text as the exercises at the back of the Reader, and supplement those exercises. Further supplementary exercises covering shorter sections of the book can be found on the photocopiable Student's Activities pages of this Factsheet. These are primarily for use with class readers but, with the exception of pair/group-work questions, can also be used by students working alone in a self-access centre.

#### ACTIVITIES BEFORE READING THE BOOK

In groups, students work together to write a list of things they know about Ancient Greece. These can be historical or fictional. (If your students need prompting, remind them about the Olympic Games, Hercules, the Wooden Horse of Troy, Homer, Aristotle, Plato, Socrates, Archimedes, the Minotaur, Medusa, the Sirens, Jason and the Argonauts, Pegasus, Cyclops, Atlas, the Gorgon's Head, Sparta, etc. You may find that they are familiar with Ancient Greek stories from modern films and television programmes such as Disney's Hercules, or the television programme of the same name.) Ask students from each group to share their information with the rest of the class and to explain any of the stories or famous characters that the other students are not familiar with.

#### ACTIVITIES AFTER READING A SECTION

##### Chapters 1–2

In pairs, students look at these chapters again and write a list of the advantages and disadvantages that Alexander had as a potential leader before he became king. While students are preparing their answers, write 'advantages' on one side of the board and 'disadvantages' on the other. Then, ask a pair at a time to come up and write one item on each side of the board. Finally, as a class discussion, ask the class how important they think circumstances are, and how important they think character is, in making a great leader such as Alexander.

##### Chapters 3–4

Students work in pairs. Student A is a Greek historian (such as Callisthenes). Student B is someone from Gordium, who saw Alexander break the Gordian Knot. Students prepare an interview between the two characters in which Student A asks Student B exactly what he/she saw. How did Alexander break the knot? How many people saw it? How long did it take? What happened next? What does it mean for the future of Persia? etc. Finally, ask some pairs to act out their conversations in front of the class.

##### Chapters 5–6

At the end of Chapter 6, Alexander communicates privately with the god Ammon and starts to believe he is more than human. Working individually, students write an entry in Alexander's diary at this time. What did he ask Ammon? What message did he get from the god? What events in his life so far does Alexander look back upon to justify his opinion of himself as godlike?

##### Chapters 7–8

In groups of three or four, students imagine that they have travelled back in time to record a news programme about one of these events:

*Battle of Gaugamela, Conquest of Babylon, Journey through the Hindu Kush, Battle against the Sogdians, Defeat of Porus's army near the River Hydaspes, Battle on the road to Persepolis*

In each group there should be a news reporter, Alexander himself, and one or two other suitable characters to comment on events (e.g. someone from the opposing army, a resident of the newly captured city, another of Alexander's men) The groups prepare their program in a news bulletin style. Finally, each group presents their programme to the rest of the class. (This activity can be extended over two or three lessons).

##### Chapters 9–10

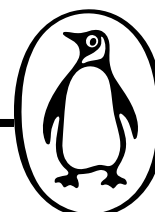
Students work individually. Ask them to write down the last thoughts of Alexander as he dies. What significant events go through his mind? Which of the people in his life does he think about? Does he have any regrets? Does he feel he has achieved everything he wanted to in his life? What worries does he have about the people he leaves behind?

#### ACTIVITIES AFTER READING A BOOK

- 1 Ask students to write an obituary for Alexander. It should highlight the greatest achievements of his life and suggest positive results that his life made on the world.
- 2 Students look at the word list on page 57. They should choose five words (or you can allocate different words to different students). For each word they write two sentences: one about Alexander's life and one about something completely different.

## Glossary

It will be useful for your students to know the new words found on page 57 of the Reader. They are practised in the 'Before you read' sections at the back of the book. (Definitions are based on those used in the Longman Active Study Dictionary).

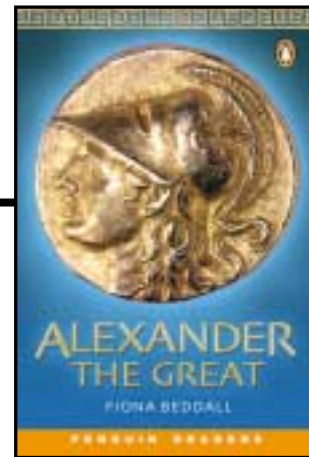


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Student's activities

## Alexander the Great

by Fiona Beddall



Level 4 – Intermediate Alexander the Great Photocopiable

Students can do these activities alone or with one or more other students. Pair/group-only activities are marked.

### ACTIVITIES BEFORE READING THE BOOK

Look at the front cover of *Alexander the Great*. On what object does Alexander's face appear here? (Think of at least three possibilities.) How long ago do you think he lived? Look at the other elements of the cover design, including the style of letters. Are they suitable for this book? Why/Why not?

### ACTIVITIES WHILE READING THE BOOK

#### Chapters 1-2

##### Chapter 1

- 1 Read these sentences about the Greek world in 500–359 BC. Are they true (T) or false (F).
  - (a) All the Greek city-states were in present-day Greece.
  - (b) Marathon runners today run further than the messenger Pheidippides ran in 490 BC.
  - (c) Greek soldiers destroyed the Acropolis, the religious part of Athens.
  - (d) Although they were independent, many of the Greek city-states fought together in the Persian Wars.
  - (e) Greek people often acted on advice from their gods.
  - (f) Greek people loved sport as well as philosophy, the arts and science.
- 2 What was Macedonia's position in Greece in 359 BC? What happened in this year that changed this position? How do you think it changed?

##### Chapter 2

- 1 Who
  - (a) conquered lands across Greece, Albania, Bulgaria and Turkey for Macedonia?
  - (b) liked drinking animals' blood and playing with snakes?
  - (c) made the young Alexander exercise before breakfast?
  - (d) was the first person to ride Bucephalus successfully?
  - (e) taught Alexander to have a questioning mind?
  - (f) was Alexander's best friend?
  - (g) fell in love with a new woman and married her?
  - (h) did Philip want to marry a Carian princess?
  - (i) married her uncle, the king of Epirus?
  - (j) was killed by one of his own bodyguards?
- 2 Philip's own bodyguards kill him. What does this mean?

#### Chapters 3-4

##### Chapter 3

- 1 How did the young king Alexander solve the problems listed below?
  - (a) There were two other men who could become the Macedonian king when Philip died.
  - (b) The road to Thessaly was guarded by the Thessalians and it was too dangerous for the Macedonian army.
  - (c) The city-state of Thebes was leading a new fight for independence.
  - (d) Macedonian forces in Asia were retreating.
  - (e) He wanted to fight in Asia, but he wanted to keep control of Macedonia too.
- 2 Write a list of similarities and a list of differences between Achilles and Alexander. Which list is longer?

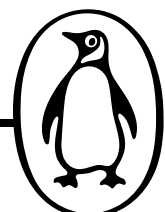
##### Chapter 4

- 1 Complete these sentences in your own words.
  - (a) There were more Greeks in the Persian army than ...
  - (b) In Greece, it was difficult to earn a living if ...
  - (c) Alexander created a new month because ...
  - (d) Alexander's army crossed the river Granicus before ...
  - (e) Alexander stopped people paying tax in the Asian Greek cities but ...
  - (f) Alexander became Queen Ada's ...
  - (g) Newly married Greek soldiers loved their leader because ...
  - (h) The Gordian Knot was broken by Alexander but we will never know ...
- 2 Alexander cleverly made people feel scared of him or grateful to him. Find two examples of each from this chapter.

#### Chapter 5-6

##### Chapter 5

- 1 Put these events in order.
  - (a) The Persians march north, inland; the Macedonians march south, on the coast, at the same time.
  - (b) Darius III takes control of the Persian army and builds its strength and numbers.
  - (c) The Persians build their power at sea and take back the Greek Islands of Chios and Lesbos.
  - (d) Alexander's army wins the Battle of Issus against Darius III and his big army.



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## Student's activities

- (e) The Macedonians realize their mistake first, and they turn round to fight the Persians.  
(f) The Persian army leader, Memnon, becomes ill and dies at Lesbos.
- 2 Use the words below to write a paragraph, in your own words, about the Persian way of life.

*army comfortable expensive food king  
powerful riches servants soft strong*

### Chapter 6

- 1 Read this paragraph about Chapter 6 and choose the correct answer in italics.  
The <sup>(a)</sup> *Battle/War* of Issus was a serious defeat for <sup>(b)</sup> *Darius/Alexander*. His army broke into small groups and he lost his <sup>(c)</sup> *life/family*, his servants and his riches. But Alexander kept the Persian royal family <sup>(d)</sup> *powerful/comfortable* and safe. Most Lebanese cities, such as Phoenicia, <sup>(e)</sup> *hated/welcomed* Alexander as king. But Tyre was different. It defended itself bravely for several <sup>(f)</sup> *days/months*. In <sup>(g)</sup> *Gaza/Tyre* Alexander killed the whole male population. Next, he moved into <sup>(h)</sup> *Egypt/Rome*. Here he became pharaoh, a living <sup>(i)</sup> *god/king*, and built the important town of <sup>(j)</sup> *Siwah/Alexandria*.
- 2 Two of Alexander's actions in this chapter changed the landscape forever. What were they?

### Chapters 7–8

#### Chapter 7

- 1 Match the first half of sentences (a)–(f) with the second half (1)–(6).
- (a) Darius makes Alexander a generous offer ...  
(b) The Persian Army is much stronger than the Macedonian army ...  
(c) Darius escaped from the battle in his chariot ...  
(d) In Babylon and Susa, Alexander was welcome ...  
(e) On the way to Persepolis, Alexander's men took ...  
(f) Alexander burnt the palace at Persepolis ...
- (1) ... the Persians by surprise, at the top of the mountains.  
(2) ... but Alexander's clever plans won the battle.  
(3) ... but Alexander chased him with 2,000 men.  
(4) ... in exchange for peace and the return of his family.  
(5) ... to punish the Persians for burning the Athenian Acropolis.  
(6) ... after years of unpopular Persian reign.
- 2 Why do you think Alexander decide to continue travelling east? And why did his army agree to follow him?

#### Chapter 8

- 1 Answer these questions.
- (a) What happened to Philotas and his father? Why?  
(b) Why did Alexander make a special group of soldiers who criticized him?  
(c) How did Alexander's soldiers survive in the Hindu Kush?  
(d) What problem did Alexander face at the River Oxus, and how did he solve it?  
(e) Why did the people of Sogdiana and Bactria want independence?

- (f) Where did the first real defeat of Alexander's army take place?  
(g) What happened when Alexander became angry with Cleitus?  
(h) What mistake did Alexander's army make when it attacked Porus's army?  
(i) Why did Alexander finally decide to turn back and take his army home?

### Chapters 9–10

#### Chapter 9

- 1 Tick the things which happen in Chapter 9.
- (a) Alexander and his army finally reach the Eastern Ocean, "the end of the world".  
(b) Alexander is shot dead with a long arrow.  
(c) Alexander's army travels across a great desert.  
(d) Alexander's army travels through dangerous, snowy mountains.  
(e) Thousands of women, children, and animals are washed away in rainstorms.  
(f) Alexander kills some of the governors and rulers of Persia.  
(g) Alexander gets married.  
(h) Alexander's wife has a baby.  
(i) Alexander dies.
- 2 What problems do you think Alexander's army and the people of Greece and Persia face after Alexander's death?

#### Chapter 10

- 1 Choose the correct person from the box to complete the sentences. Use some names twice.

*Roxane baby Alexander Arrhidaeus Olympias  
Perdiccas Ptolemy Cassander*

- (a) Alexander's friends wanted ... as the next king, and ... could rule until he grew up.  
(b) The common soldiers wanted ... as their king..  
(c) ... took Alexander's body to Egypt.  
(d) ... protected herself and ... by poisoning Alexander's other wives.  
(e) ... was murdered by his own bodyguards.  
(f) When ... took power in Macedonia, ... did not feel safe, so she killed ... But ... killed her.  
(g) ... stayed in power until 1 BC.
- 2 Close your book. Who has shown interest in Alexander since his death? Do you know any others (not in the book)?

### ACTIVITIES AFTER READING THE BOOK

- 1 Copy or trace the map on pages vi–vii. Now look at a modern map and add the modern countries and large cities to your map. What do you know about these places today?  
2 Look at the pictures in the book. Choose one of them and write about the event from Alexander's life in your own words.  
3 Do you think that Alexander was a great man or a bloodthirsty murderer? Give reasons for your opinion.

