

Section
5

The Spread of Greek Culture

Prepare to Read

Objectives

In this section you will

1. Learn how Alexander the Great built his empire.
2. Find out about the age of Hellenism, when Greek culture spread to many other parts of the world.

Taking Notes

As you read, look for important details about the spread of Greek culture. Copy the table below, and use it to record your findings.

The Spread of Greek Culture	
Alexander's Empire	The Hellenistic Age
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•	•

Target Reading Skill

Use Word Parts When you come across an unfamiliar word, break the word into parts to help you recognize and pronounce it. On page 197 of this section, you will come across the word *extensive*. Break it into a prefix, root, and suffix to learn its meaning. The prefix *ex-* means "out." The Latin root *-ten-* means "stretch." The suffix *-ive* means "relating to" and makes the word an adjective.

Key Terms

- **barbarian** (bar BEHR ee un) *n.* a wild and uncivilized person
- **assassinate** (uh SAS uh nayt) *v.* to murder for political reasons
- **Alexander the Great** (al ig ZAN dur thuh grayt) *n.* king of Macedonia from 336 to 323 B.C.; conquerer of Persia and Egypt and invader of India
- **Hellenistic** (hel uh NIS tik) *adj.* describing Greek history or culture after the death of Alexander the Great, including the three main kingdoms formed by the breakup of Alexander's empire



A sculpture of King Philip of Macedonia

King Philip of Macedonia (mas uh DOH nee uh) had not wasted the money he spent on Greek tutors for his son, Alexander. The boy wanted to learn as much as he could, especially about the ideas and deeds of the Greeks.

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

Alexander's tutor was the Greek philosopher Aristotle. Alexander loved his tutor, but his role model was Achilles, the mythical warrior hero of the *Iliad*. One day, Alexander vowed, he would visit the site of Troy to honor his hero.



Alexander's 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.

Death of a King Philip then planned to attack Persia. But in 336 B.C., before he could carry out his plan, he was assassinated, or murdered for political reasons, by a rival. At the age of 20, Alexander became king. History would know him as Alexander the Great, king of Macedonia from 336 to 323 B.C.

Alexander's Conquests One of Alexander's first actions was to invade the Persian Empire. Within 11 years, the Macedonian king had conquered an extensive area, including Persia, Egypt, and lands beyond the Indus River to the east.

Alexander's energy and military genius helped him succeed. He drove himself and his army hard, advancing across vast lands at remarkable speed. His soldiers wanted to return home, but they obeyed him. Wherever 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 the cities he conquered. He quickly pushed on, never losing a battle.

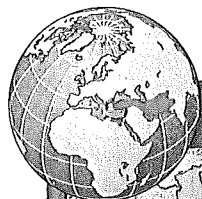
Fighting the Persian Empire

The mosaic above shows the Battle of Issus, in which Alexander the Great, at the top, defeated an army of Persians in 333 B.C. **Infer** Why do you think Alexander became known as Alexander the Great?



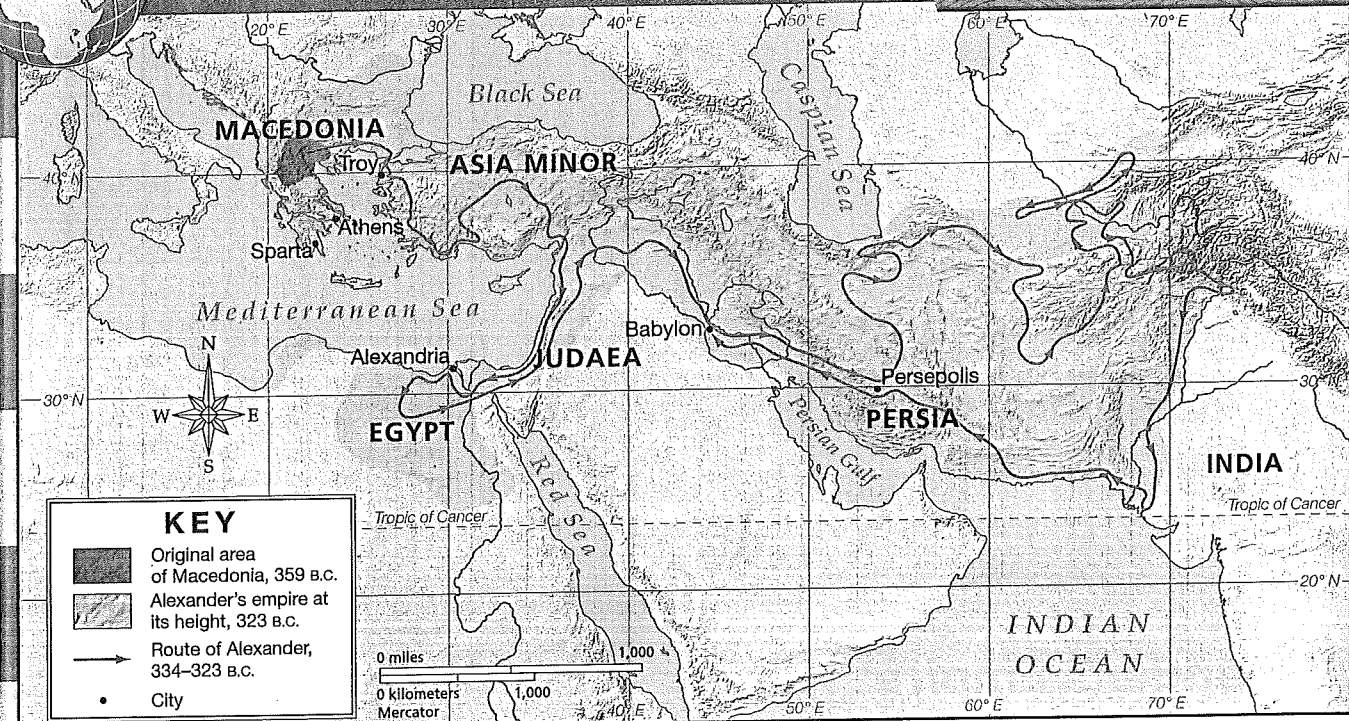
Use Word Parts

What does *extensive* mean? Does your definition make sense in the paragraph at the left?



The Empire of Alexander the Great

MAP MASTER Skills Activity



Movement By 323 B.C., Alexander controlled Greece as well as the territory once ruled by the Persians. **Identify** Use your finger to trace the route of Alexander from 334 to 323 B.C. Where did his journey begin and end? **Cause and Effect** How do you think geography affected the journey taken by Alexander and his troops?

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map skills practice.



A silver coin stamped with a portrait of Alexander the Great

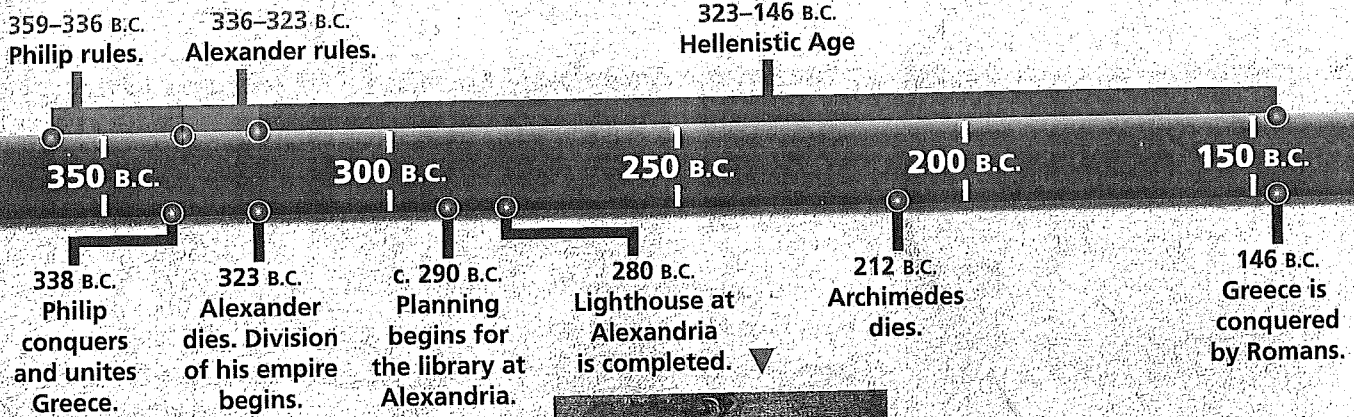
After many years of travel and fighting, Alexander's army was exhausted. Not far beyond the Indus River, his troops became so weary that they refused to continue east. Alexander was angry, but he turned back. Alexander got as far as Babylon, where he caught a fever. In 323 B.C., only 13 years after he 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. His conquests spread Greek culture throughout a vast area.

✓ Reading Check What events caused Alexander to become king?

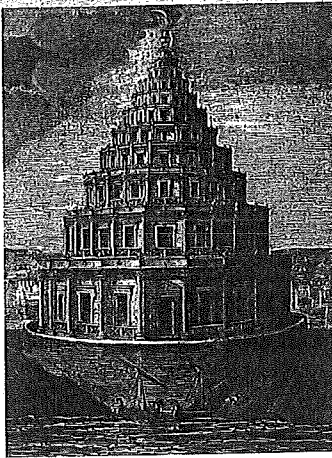
The Hellenistic Age

With Alexander's death, his empire began to decline. Within 50 years, the empire had broken into three main kingdoms. Each kingdom was ruled by a family that had descended from one of Alexander's commanders.

Ancient Greece, 359–146 B.C.



Although Alexander's empire broke apart, Greek culture remained alive and well in the three Hellenistic kingdoms. **Hellenistic** describes Greek history and culture after the death of Alexander the Great. *Hellenistic* comes from the word *Hellas*—the name the Greeks gave their land.



■ Timeline Skills

The Hellenistic Age began with the death of Alexander. **Identify** How long did the Hellenistic Age last? **Predict** Why do you think historians mark the end of the Hellenistic Age as 146 B.C.?

The Hellenistic Kingdoms When Alexander took control of lands, he tried not to destroy the cultures of the defeated people. He hoped that in his new cities, the local cultures would mix with Greek culture. Instead, however, Greek culture became the strongest culture in the three Hellenistic kingdoms.

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, although people in the countryside spoke the local languages.

Greek Culture 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 meters) in the air. The tower was topped by a flame that guided ships safely into port.

Links to Science

Levers Probably the greatest scholar of the Hellenistic Age was Archimedes (ahr kuh MEE deez) Archimedes studied in Alexandria. He discovered that people can use pulleys and levers to lift very heavy objects. One story claims that he hoisted up a loaded ship with these devices. As shown below, he once boasted, "Give me the place to stand, and a lever long enough, and I will move the Earth."



Although all the important Hellenistic cities were centers of learning, Alexandria was the learning capital of the Greek world. Alexandria's library was the largest in the world. Scholars and writers from many lands came to use its massive collection.

Math and Science Mathematics and science also flourished at Alexandria. Around 300 B.C., a mathematician named Euclid (YOO klid) helped extend the branch of mathematics called geometry. His work helped explain the qualities of such figures as squares, angles, triangles, cubes, and cones. Mathematicians today still use Euclid's system.

Greek scientists made important contributions to astronomy. In about 250 B.C., the Greek scientist Aristarchus (ar is TAHR kus) of Samos concluded that Earth revolved around the Sun. At the time, however, most scientists believed Earth to be the center of the universe. Much later, the idea of a sun-centered universe began to gain acceptance.

In Hellenistic times, many scholars knew that Earth was round. A scholar named Eratosthenes (ehr uh TAHS tuh neez) calculated the distance around Earth. Eratosthenes used mathematics that were advanced for his time. His result was very close to the correct distance as it is known today.

✓ **Reading Check** Why did many scholars go to Alexandria?



Section 5 Assessment

Key Terms

Review the key terms at the beginning of this section. Use each term in a sentence that explains its meaning.



Target Reading Skill

Apply your knowledge of the prefix *ex-* and the root *-ten-*. What does *extension* mean?

Comprehension and Critical Thinking

- (a) Recall** Who was Alexander's tutor when he was young?
- (b) Identify Effects** How did Alexander's upbringing affect his attitudes about Greek culture?

(c) Analyze Alexander the Great wanted the cultures of the cities that he conquered to survive and mix with Greek culture. What happened instead?

2. (a) Describe What features of Greek culture could be seen in the Hellenistic kingdoms?

(b) Make Generalizations What was the importance of Alexandria, Egypt?

(c) Evaluate Describe the importance of scientific contributions made by Euclid, Eratosthenes, and Aristarchus.

Writing Activity

What do you think of Alexander's life and conquests? Write a short paragraph that supports your opinion.

Writing Tip Your opinion should be the main idea of your paragraph. When writing to persuade, support your main idea with specific evidence arranged in a logical order.