

#11771 ALEXANDER THE GREAT

DISCOVERY SCHOOL, 1997
Grade Level: 6–10
25 Minutes



A mural in Pompeii, depicting the marriage of Alexander to Barsine (Stateira) in 324 BC. The couple is apparently dressed as Ares and Aphrodite.



Alexander the Great fighting King Darius III



Bust of Alexander the Great
Capitoline Museum, Rome

CAPTIONED MEDIA PROGRAM RELATED RESOURCES

- [#9315 MYTHOLOGY IN LITERARY CULTURE](#)
- [#9408 THE SEVEN WONDERS OF THE ANCIENT WORLD](#)
- [#10953 JOAN OF ARC](#)
- [#11328 TIMELINES OF ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS: MESOPOTAMIA 1](#)



TITLE OF LESSON PLAN:

Alexander the Great

LENGTH OF LESSON:

Two class periods

GRADE LEVEL:

6-8

SUBJECT AREA:

Ancient History

CREDIT:

Wendy S. Buchberg, instructional technology support specialist, Corning Painted Post School District, Corning, New York.

OBJECTIVES:

Students will understand the following:

1. As we learn about the people who made history, we can infer their answers and attitudes to questions.
2. Press conferences, talk shows, and interviews follow conventions of format and language.

MATERIALS:

For this lesson, you will need:

Tapes of recent television or radio news programs (press conferences, talk shows)

Recent interviews of heads of state published in newspapers and magazines

PROCEDURE:

1. Ask students to imagine Alexander the Great living in today's media age. What would we see and hear in a media event featuring Alexander?

2. Before students generate their imaginary news event, suggest that on their own they view or read one or more examples of current news conferences, talk shows, or interviews with heads of state or other high-level diplomats. Alternatively, you may want the class as a whole to watch news programs that you have videotaped and to read interviews in periodicals you bring in. Then lead a discussion that analyzes what the students have watched or read. That is, help students identify the types of questions and discussions that the news media customarily put forth in our day and age.

3. Direct students working in small groups to select one of the following scenarios to flesh out. Prompts in the form of questions accompany each scenario but should not limit students' lines of thinking.

- Scenario A: Alexander conducting an empire-wide televised news conference at a critical point in his reign

What questions might reporters ask?

How will Alexander respond?

- Scenario B: Alexander and Darius appearing together as guests on a television talk show after the battle at Gaugamela

How will the conqueror and the defeated rival treat each other?

What issues will cause fireworks between them?

What role will the show's host play?

- Scenario C: Alexander close to death, granting an interview to a writer for the *Inquiring Macedonian*

What kind of publication is the *Inquiring Macedonian*?

What accomplishments is Alexander proud of?

What regrets about his life does Alexander have?

What are Alexander's parting words to the world

4. Using the content and tone of the models they have examined, students should now flesh out their scenarios in writing. Each group should produce one of the following:

- a made-up transcript of an Alexander the Great news conference (with indications of where and when the conference occurs and who asks the questions)

- a made-up transcript of a TV talk show in which a host, who must be identified by students, engages Alexander and Darius at the same time

- a made-up interview in question-and-answer format or a report based on an interview that Alexander grants the day before he dies

5. Have each group read or perform its written product for the rest of the class.

ADAPTATIONS:

Adaptations for Older Students:

Extend the activity by asking students to contemplate one or both of the following questions and to share their thoughts with the class:

- How would Alexander stack up against today's heads of state when facing the news media?
- Would the media help or hurt Alexander?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Homer's *The Iliad* profoundly inspired Alexander. He carried a copy of *The Iliad* with him into every battle and tried to live by its theme of "might tempered by mercy."

Discuss what this theme means. Give examples of other events in history or current events when might was—or should have been—tempered by mercy.

2. Alexander was relatively young for a leader of such huge power and influence. Could a leader his age succeed today? Can you name a young leader in the military or in other areas? Would people take him seriously? Explain why or why not.

3. Once Alexander conquered Egypt, he was crowned pharaoh and regarded as a divine leader, descended from the gods. Research other leaders, past and present, who have been regarded as divine, and evaluate the impact such a belief has had on these rulers and their people.

4. The number of leaders in world history who have been called "the Great" is very small. What unique qualities in Alexander's personality and heritage contributed to his "greatness" and popularity? Discuss the status of leadership in today's world. Do we have a similar or different definition of "greatness" for today's leaders?

5. During his 20,000-mile campaign, Alexander spread Greek culture throughout his conquests. Explain the strategy and methods he used to accomplish this, and evaluate the

lasting effect of his efforts.

6. One significant by-product of Alexander's reign was the establishment of Greek as a universal language throughout the empire. Historians say that a single, universally spoken language helped to simplify commerce, education, and daily communication in the vast empire Alexander created. In the 20th century, people often disagree over whether a single national language is still a beneficial concept in modern countries. Debate the advantages and disadvantages of having a national language today.

EVALUATION:

You can evaluate each group's written product using the following three-point rubric:

- **Three points:** includes many substantive questions about real events in the life of Alexander and corresponding answers that would be characteristic of Alexander; conversational style; varied sentence structures; mature word choice
- **Two points:** includes some substantive questions about real events in the life of Alexander and answers that are not at odds with history; acceptable style, sentence structure, and word choice
- **One point:** lacks adequate questions and answers; poor style, sentence structure, and word choice

EXTENSION:

War Games

Students can work together in cooperative groups to design an Alexander the Great board game. The game should teach or review important biographical information about Alexander, dates and battles, military strategies, related historical figures, and geography.

Provide the basics—thin-tip markers or colored pencils, butcher paper or poster board, and plenty of space to spread out. Invite students to bring in small items that can function as playing pieces. Use standard dice, or have students create spinners or instruction cards that players use to move their playing pieces. Encourage both original student artwork on the game boards and reproductions of graphics from other sources.

Once each group of students figures out a goal for a game and the physical format that the game will take, the students will need to compose and print out a clear set of instructions. Then groups should exchange their games and instructions and try out each other's creations.

Portfolio of a "Great"

Give students an opportunity to supplement their knowledge about one element of Alexander the Great's life, times, or accomplishments. Help each student select an

element that is of a manageable size—a topic about which plenty of information exists but not a topic so broad that students will be overwhelmed by what they find. Then ask students to create portfolios with various materials that they have come across. They should put the following items into their portfolios: anecdotes, quotations, time lines, pictures, maps, and so on. Each item they include must carry a detailed citation about where the student found it. Then on a contents page, students must identify each item in their portfolio and give a reason they included it.

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Alexander the Great: Man of Action, Man of Spirit

Pierre Briant, translated from the French by Jeremy Leggatt. Harry N. Abrams, 1996. With lots of illustrations, this book gives the reader a sense of the grandeur of Alexander's remarkable campaigns in straightforward terms.

Alexander the Great

Robert Green. Vol. 1 in *Ancient Biographies* series. Franklin Watts, Inc., 1996. This work looks into the life of Alexander the Great and highlights the new trade and cultural routes created through his vast conquests in the East.

WEB LINKS:

Alexander the Great on the Web

Over 1000 links and 200 images relating to Alexander the Great.
<http://www.isidore-of-seville.com/Alexanderama.html>

The Rise and fall of Alexander the Great

Graphics as well as considerable information on Alexander the Great; also provides links to other Alexander pages.
<http://members.aol.com/tomstp9/alex.html>

The Perseus Project

Perseus is a non-profit project of the Classics department of Tufts University. It contains a database on Classic Greek historical and literary figures.
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/>

Alexander The Great's Web Site

Offers a searchable database on Alexander the Great.
<http://www.pothos.co.uk/start.htm>

Compton's Alexander the Great

Compton's online encyclopedia entry, full of facts and excellent graphics.
http://comptons2.aol.com/encyclopedia/ARTICLES/00128_A.html

The Reign of Alexander III, the Great: 336-323 BC

Part of the WebChronology project, this site describes the life and times of Alexander the Great, including his military accomplishments.

<http://www.npcts.edu/acad/history/WebChron/Mediterranean/AlexGreat.html>

VOCABULARY:

Achilles' heel

A vulnerable point.

Context:

Disaster finally found the indestructible Alexander's Achilles' heel when he fell victim to malaria.

barbaric

Possessing or characteristic of a cultural level more complex than primitive savagery but less sophisticated than advanced civilization.

Context:

The civilization that the Greeks scorned as barbaric was actually more advanced and sophisticated than their own.

culture

The customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group.

Context:

In his conquests, Alexander planted the seeds of a culture full of vitality and new ideas and left in his wake the roots of a new civilization.

divine

Of, relating to, or proceeding directly from God or a god.

Context:

Because his Egyptian subjects believe pharaohs are descended from gods, they believe Alexander to be divine.

heir

One who inherits or is entitled to succeed to a hereditary rank, title, or office.

Context:

The son of a warrior king, Alexander was heir to a powerful throne.

invincible

Incapable of being conquered, overcome, or subdued.

Context:

After his major conquest at Thebes, the Oracle of Delphi pronounces Alexander

invincible.

monsoon

The season of the southwest monsoon in India and adjacent areas that is characterized by very heavy rainfall.

Context:

The incessant rains of the monsoon are the last straw, and the soldiers refuse to go farther.

oracle

A person (such as a priestess of ancient Greece) through whom a deity is believed to speak.

Context:

Among ancient Greeks and Romans, an oracle was a spiritualist who received and transmitted messages from the gods. Probably the most famous of all oracles, the Oracle at Delphi was situated on the slope of Mount Parnassus.

subjugation

The act of subduing or conquering.

Context:

Alexander's conquest goes far beyond mere subjugation; he intends to colonize the East, extending culture and civilization.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS:

Grade Level:

6-8, 9-12

Subject Area:

world history

Standard:

Understands how Aegean civilization emerged and how interrelations developed among people of the eastern Mediterranean and Southwest Asia from 600 to 200 B.C.

Benchmarks:

(6-8) Understands Alexander's achievements as a military and political leader (e.g., reasons for the disintegration of the empire into smaller areas after his rule; the campaigns, battles, and cities founded in Alexander's imperial conquests).

(6-8) Understands elements of Alexander of Macedon's legacy (e.g., the scope and success of his imperial conquests; his rise to power; methods used to unite the empire).

(9-12) Understands the major events and the significance of the Persian Wars (e.g., the long-term effects of the Persian Wars upon Greece, how the internal political and military structure of the two antagonists in the Persian Wars dictated their strategies, how the Greek city-states were able to defeat the "monolithic" Persian armies and navies, Herodotus' version of the key events of the Persian Wars and how reliable this account

might be).

Grade Level:

9-12

Subject Area:

geography

Standard:

Understands the concept of regions.

Benchmarks:

Understands how regional boundaries change (e.g., changes resulting from shifts in population, environmental degradation, shifts in production and market patterns, wars).

Grade Level:

9-12

Subject Area:

geography

Standard:

Understands the forces of cooperation and conflict that shape the divisions of Earth's surface.

Benchmarks:

Understands the changes that occur in the extent and organization of social, political, and economic entities on Earth's surface (e.g., imperial powers such as the Roman Empire, Han dynasty, Carolingian Empire, British Empire).

DiscoverySchool.com
<http://www.discoveryschool.com>

Copyright 2001 Discovery.com.
Teachers may reproduce copies of these materials for classroom use only.