

# Alexander the great essay 9

People



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Alexander the Great Alexander the Great was a king and conqueror. He is commonly referred to as " the most powerful leader of all time. " What is it that makes him such a powerful leader? What has he accomplished that has made him so significant? Were his accomplishments positive or negative? These are all questions that when combined as one create a debate that has been going on for decades. There are those who admire Alexander's military achievements and ability to carve out the largest empire the world has seen. Then there are those who perceive him as a selfish, cruel madman with drinking problems.

This paper will outline the different sides taken on Alexander and the question as to what his significance/influence was and whether it was good or bad. Alexander the Great was the son of Phillip II, king of Macedonia. Phillip had always done much to prepare him for a military and political future (Lewis 48). Alexander served as a regent for his father at the young age of 16 for the start of his military career. After the assassination of his father he obtained the throne in 336 B. C. E. and leader of the League of Corinth. In 335 B. C.

E he crushed Macedonia's borders and destroyed the city of Thebes. This caused Athens to join the league with no fight. 334 B. C. E. was the year of his first great victory, which opened Asia Minor to conquest. He then, in 333, met the Persian King for the first time and caused him to flee by charging even though Alexander was outnumbered. This was the beginning of the end for Persia. Alexander went on and in his 13 year reign was conquering the Mediterranean, forming new cities, and producing an empire touching on 3 continents and encompassing 2 million sq miles (O'Brien 44).

Such work is something one should be proud of and many agree that conquering all of Persia in such a short amount of time is Alexander the Great's biggest accomplishment. Balcer obviously agrees with that stating that Alexander succeeded in forming the largest western empire of the ancient world and removing Persian intervention in Greek affairs (Balcer 121-122). Sacks obviously agrees as well saying that his "principal achievement was the conquest of the empire of Persia," (14).

The perspective of many scholars is that Alexander really was "the greatest leader" and through the conquering he undertook he achieved many great things. This is the side of the debate in which scholars find Alexander's significance to be a positive thing. It is argued he was a "military genius with iron will and boundless ambition," (O'Brien 45). Scholar Edmund Burke clearly supports this idea in saying that in his accession to the Macedonian throne his foundation of Alexandria, conquest of the Persian Empire and his strategic and tactical genius makes him a "legend" (Burke 67).

He was not the only scholar to refer to him as a legend for a professor at Boise State notes that Alexander exhibited tremendous bravery, didn't let a wound stop him, never lost a battle, had those around him believe he was invincible, and knew and loved his men. Combining all these factors created an army that could not be stopped and its accomplishments outdid anything that had been seen yet. Alexander and his troops had become a "legend," (Knox). Alexander had also been seen as the reason for successfully spreading Greek culture that still exists today.

Oriental and Greek cultures blended and flourished as a result of the Empire, making Greek culture his true legacy (Balcer 124). The Hellenistic Era took place right after Alexander's death and he is said to be the one who ushered this fascinating era. (O'Brien 46). The scholars are right, Alexander truly is a legend for he was the finest battlefield commander of the ancient world and remade the map of the ancient world (Sacks 14). Not just anyone can achieve such success, there seems to be something extraordinary about this man.

Yet, not everyone agrees that he was so extraordinary. Yes, he did carve out the largest empire and at an amazingly rapid pace but his aims and ambitions were different than spreading Hellenism throughout the western Mediterranean and near the east. He was a self-confident man who only wanted to conquer for self-pleasure. Alexander is the reason that corruption and peculation were treated with casualness during this time. His pleasure was when his peoples were loyal to him and that was all that was necessary for his approval.

It was because of him that Macedonia lost its manpower through the strenuous battles he continuously fought. He left it as a weakened kingdom. His empire is given so much credit but it was only based on rapid military conquest and died right after his death (Stoneman 92-94). It is believed that Alexander conquered to rule, not to blend cultures. Heavy drinking led to disastrous incidents and hastened his death. An example of such a disaster was the burning down of Persepolis in a drunken revel. This is not an attribute of a good leader.

He also lacked long-range planning and neglected his kingdom's future by exhausting himself in warfare while he delayed fathering a royal successor. His selfishness is proved by his act of casually killing any threats to the throne at the beginning of his reign (Sacks 15). Those who see Alexander in a negative manner obviously have quite strong opinions about it. They see him as more of a madman than the most powerful leader. It is easy to see where they get their assumptions from for they look at the bloodshed part of Alexander's reign.

Instead of focusing on the rare ability he had to conquer so successfully they use the old journals and other texts used to learn about Alexander and don't see past the drunken stories and jump to the negative side of his actions to make them cruel. Those who make assumptions about him being the greatest military leader of all time look at the historical records we have of them and analyze his tactics realizing they really are extraordinary. No other person has conquered so much, so fast and left such a legacy.

I agree with those who see him as a significantly positive influence so it's easier to see where they are coming from. I look at the whole picture; his achievements were unlike anyone else's in history and as a King he was only trying to do the best for his country. He deserves the credit he has received for spreading Greek culture; there is no other way it would have happened. Scholar Burke put it perfectly when in his article he states, "when mention is made of a man of action and genius, there is perhaps no one of the ancients who so quickly comes to mind as Alexander the Great" (Burke 67).