

Notes on Quiz #10: Alexander the Great

1. Gosh, Alexander sure was great, wasn't he? (Agree or disagree, and defend your answer.)

The answer will be subjective, so you can argue either way. Arguments in favor of Alexander being "Great" include (a) the inspiration provided by being a hellenized king of Macedon, representing a more advanced and prosperous future for Macedon than his traditional father; (b) his military accomplishments in defeating the greatest empire on earth at the time, the Persians; and (c) the lasting legacy of his hellenization of Persia, Mesopotamia, Canaan, and Egypt.

The arguments against might include such factors as (a) the military successes were made possible by advancements in technology, tactics, and leadership introduced by Philip; (b) similarly, the conquest of Persia was Philip's plan and would have been accomplished by him had he lived; (c) Alexander killed vast numbers of people, and in his excesses led his own army into disaster and a long retreat through a desert that killed off many of his own men; (d) he did not provide for his own succession, leaving his empire to devolve into a warscape of rabid rivals.

2. Why did Alexander treat Persepolis differently than he did Babylon and Susa?

Babylon was an ancient center of culture and religion, and Susa was the city Persians identified with; protecting them and ingratiating himself with their inhabitants, priests, and nobles was crucial to winning over the Persians as their new ruler.

Persepolis, however, was the center of rituals associated with the Persian great king, and had to be destroyed to demonstrate the end of the old rule. It also allowed him to exact revenge on behalf of the Greeks for the destruction of the temples of Athens during Xerxes's invasion of the Aegean in 480.

EC1. All of the following are true about Alexander's sack of Thebes EXCEPT:

- (a) Athens voted military aid for Thebes but held back from fighting alongside them
- ✓ (b) News of Thebes's destruction caused widespread uprising against Alexander and weakened his rule in Greece
- (c) Alexander got his army to Thebes after days of forced marches from Illyria
- (d) The decision whether to destroy Thebes was technically not Alexander's, but that of Thebes's Boeotian neighbors

EC2. Describe the significance of as many of the following as you can: (a) the Battle of Granicus; (b) the Battle of Issus; (c) the Battle of Gaugamela; (d) the Battle of the Hydaspes.

- (a) Granicus – Alexander's army enters Anatolia after the satraps' plan staking everything on killing Alexander fails.
- (b) Issus – A decisive victory against Darius; the first defeat of a Persian army led by its king. Darius's wife, mother, and daughters are captured.
- (c) Gaugamela – Despite being outnumbered Alexander's army decisively defeats the Persians, leading directly to the fall of the Persian empire.
- (d) Hydaspes – Alexander achieves a very costly victory in India, annexing the Punjab, but his armies will fight no further.

EC3. In your opinion, what were Alexander's goals in conquering the East?

There are a number of possible answers here, including bringing the Greek idea to other great and ancient nations, thereby creating the ultimate civilization; removing the threat of Persia from the Aegean; and ensuring the prosperity and security of Macedon through empire.