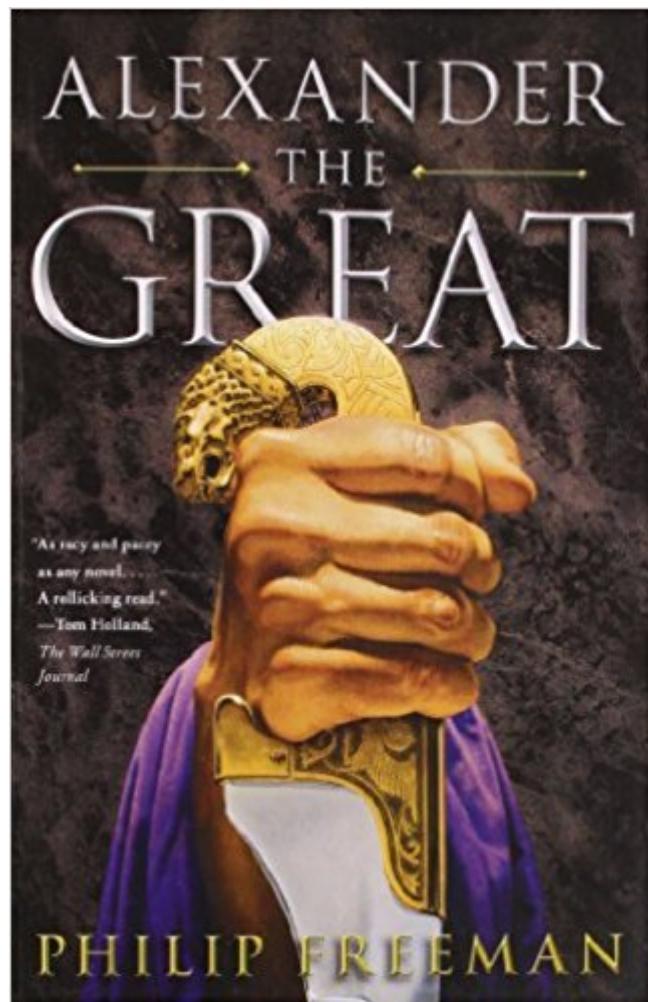


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Alexander The Great



Synopsis

In the first authoritative biography of Alexander the Great written for a general audience in a generation, classicist and historian Philip Freeman tells the remarkable life of the great conqueror. The celebrated Macedonian king has been one of the most enduring figures in history. He was a general of such skill and renown that for two thousand years other great leaders studied his strategy and tactics, from Hannibal to Napoleon, with countless more in between. He flashed across the sky of history like a comet, glowing brightly and burning out quickly: crowned at age nineteen, dead by thirty-two. He established the greatest empire of the ancient world; Greek coins and statues are found as far east as Afghanistan. Our interest in him has never faded. Alexander was born into the royal family of Macedonia, the kingdom that would soon rule over Greece. Tutored as a boy by Aristotle, Alexander had an inquisitive mind that would serve him well when he faced formidable obstacles during his military campaigns. Shortly after taking command of the army, he launched an invasion of the Persian empire, and continued his conquests as far south as the deserts of Egypt and as far east as the mountains of present-day Pakistan and the plains of India. Alexander spent nearly all his adult life away from his homeland, and he and his men helped spread the Greek language throughout western Asia, where it would become the lingua franca of the ancient world. Within a short time after Alexander's death in Baghdad, his empire began to fracture. Best known among his successors are the Ptolemies of Egypt, whose empire lasted until Cleopatra. In his lively and authoritative biography of Alexander, classical scholar and historian Philip Freeman describes Alexander's astonishing achievements and provides insight into the mercurial character of the great conqueror. Alexander could be petty and magnanimous, cruel and merciful, impulsive and farsighted. Above all, he was ferociously, intensely competitive and could not tolerate losing—which he rarely did. As Freeman explains, without Alexander, the influence of Greece on the ancient world would surely not have been as great as it was, even if his motivation was not to spread Greek culture for beneficial purposes but instead to unify his empire. Only a handful of people have influenced history as Alexander did, which is why he continues to fascinate us.

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Customer Reviews

Even before Alexander's death, in 323 BCE, his legend had accelerated, aided considerably by his highly effective skills of self-promotion. Classics professor Freeman has written a compact biography that avoids the pitfalls of romanticizing or understanding the personality of Alexander. It is a well-written, chronological narrative that allows Alexander's remarkable career and achievements to speak for themselves. Freeman doesn't ignore the thuggish aspects of Alexander's efforts, but he does correctly place them within the context of the rather nasty world of both Macedonian and Asian political and military struggles. He also pays ample tribute to Alexander's father, Philip, whose diplomatic and military skills molded the disparate hill tribes of Macedonia into the dominant power in Greece. Justifiably, it is Alexander's conquest of the Persian Empire and northern India that forms the bulk of the story and reveals his true genius, including his leadership, expertise in siege warfare, and ability to hold together what evolved into a huge, diverse army. General readers will appreciate this fine account of a man truly deserving of the title Great. --Jay Freeman --This text refers to the Digital edition.

"An accessible biography . . . readers are sure to come away from Alexander's story with an essential grasp of the details and understanding of his character." ---Kirkus --This text refers to the Digital edition.

Very interesting read about the life of the Alexander the Great. Prior to the book, I really had no idea what he had accomplished. The book was not what I had expected, but it's still very good. Alexander truly is a great conqueror.

Brings Alexander and his times to life. Great descriptions of his personality, war strategies and all the historical characters who were on the world stage at the same time.

I knew nothing about Alexander the Great and bought this book. For an average person wanting to learn about Alexander the Great without diving into a heavy history book this is the #1 choice for you. It reads less like a history book and more like a good story that is based on facts. It's a delight to read and hard to put down.

I like reading history books written in proper documentation form, as opposed to story form. I like the footnotes so I can see what historian is referenced. I really didn't learn anything new like I do when I read historians like Adrian Goldsworthy and some of the others. It was a good book for someone who doesn't know anything at all about Alexander and who think standard history books are dry and dull.

This reader discovered that reading the Bibliography on pages 363-367 first helped with appreciating this book. The text itself reads almost like a novel because the life of Alexander the Great is almost unbelievable. What can be construed as fact and what can be construed as fiction are at the discretion of the reader. The glossary is excellent as are the maps. This writer followed the adventures of Alexander on the second map which is a two page spread. Since the text is really not difficult, this writer wishes that she had read it long ago before taking her first college advanced course which featured the poetry of Catullus. Then, some of the names of places in a few of his poems would not have been so mysterious. Unfortunately, it was not written at that time. Since Freeman's Julius Caesar is on my bookshelf and, as yet, unread, I think that I shall read that book next.

Fascinating history of Alexander. There was enough detail without being overwhelming. The author is a good storyteller.

Mr. Freeman has done what other history authors strive to do by create an exciting read while imparting all the who, what, where, when and why's that make reading history so interesting. Could not put it down. Being over 60, I have read quite a few history books.... this is my top read recommendation in that category.

As much a learning support as an entertainment, this book allows us to follow Alexander along his great achievements, without forgetting to underline the lack of contemporary sources and the necessity to acknowledge the possible mistakes according to which source we have to rely on. We

can still easily follow Alexander and feel like we are watching him progressing with his men year after year.

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