HERO

**Directions:** The legacy of Alexander the Great has been debated throughout the centuries. Now it is time for you to join the conversation by reliving the events of Alexander’s conquest of the East through the eyes of his conquering force of Macedonian soldiers. View history from their perspective. Read and annotate all five pages (the summary of events and the four detailed accounts), underlining important points. Then, use the organization sheet (only the side titled “Alexander the Great: Hero”) to compile talking points to argue that Alexander should be remembered as a hero. During class, we will have a full period discussion/debate on this topic, so be ready!
Key Events in Alexander’s Military Career

Background Information About Alexander the Great
Alexander the Great was born in 356 B.C.E. in the kingdom of Macedonia, north of mainland Greece. Although he lived only to the age of 32, he ruled the largest empire the world had ever seen, stretching from the Mediterranean Sea to the Indus River. Alexander was a strong military leader, and he conquered many foreign lands with the powerful army his father had left to him. He failed to designate a legitimate heir to succeed him after his death. He died in Babylon (present-day Iraq) in 323 B.C.E. The divided empire he left behind quickly crumbled as various groups fought to control its vast lands.

Event A: Alexander in Thebes
In 335 B.C.E., the Greek city-state of Thebes revolted and declared its independence from Macedonian rule. Alexander the Great, ruler of Macedonia and all of Greece, traveled to Thebes with 30,000 troops to crush the revolt. Alexander’s forces were more experienced than the Thebans, and also greatly outnumbered them. While the Thebans fought with determination, Alexander’s army eventually defeated them. After the battle, Alexander’s troops destroyed the city.

Event B: Alexander in Egypt
In 332 B.C.E., Alexander the Great and his forces arrived in Egypt. The Macedonian forces met no resistance when they entered the country, and the Egyptians enthroned Alexander as king, or pharaoh. In early 331 B.C.E., Alexander made a journey to a desert oasis, where he claimed the Oracle of Ammon identified him as the true son of the Greek God Zeus. Before he left Egypt, Alexander founded a new city northwest of Memphis, and named it after himself: Alexandria. The city later grew to become a center for culture and learning for several hundred years.

Event C: Alexander in Persia
In 334 B.C.E., Alexander the Great set out to conquer the Persian Empire, the most powerful empire in the ancient world. Thousands of Macedonians and Persians were killed in the numerous battles in Persia. At the Battle of Issus, Alexander’s forces defeated the Persian army led by King Darius III. After capturing and destroying the Persian capital of Persepolis, Alexander became the unquestioned ruler of the Persian empire. While he ruled, he appointed many Persians as governors in his conquered territories and allowed the Persians to continue practicing their customs and beliefs.

Event D: Alexander in India
In 327 B.C.E., Alexander the Great led his forces across the Hindu Kush mountains and entered India. Over the next three years, his troops fought many battles to conquer various Indian rulers. Both the Macedonians and the Indians suffered heavy casualties. During his time in India, Alexander closely questioned the Brahmins, or holy men, to learn about Hinduism. After a victory at the Battle of the River Hydaspes, Alexander’s troops began the long journey home to Macedonia.
Information About Event A: Alexander in Thebes from the Perspective of Conqueror

When Philip II of Macedonia was assassinated in 336 B.C.E., the Macedonian army immediately accepted Alexander as his father's rightful successor. News of Philip's death then traveled to the League of Corinth, the federation of Greek city-states that Philip had assembled after he conquered all of Greece. The league members elected Alexander to be Philip's successor as commander-in-chief. They gave him the power to secure troops from mainland Greece to make war against Persia—the most powerful empire in the ancient world at the time.

However, the Greek city-state of Thebes was a reluctant participant in this plan. In 335 B.C.E., while Alexander was fighting some rebellious tribes in Macedonia, false reports of his death reached Thebes. The Thebans seized this opportunity to declare their independence from Macedonian rule. Alexander was furious. This direct challenge to his authority threatened his plans to unite Greece and conquer Persia. He marched his army south 240 miles to the gates of Thebes to crush the rebellion.

When Alexander arrived at Thebes, he had more than 30,000 troops at his command. Some of the troops came from Greek city-states in the League of Corinth. Alexander hoped his enormous army would convince the Thebans to ask for peace. He waited for three days, but the Thebans maintained their resistance. The Macedonians sent a message that any citizen of Thebes who wanted to could join Alexander's troops and share the peace that all of Greece enjoyed. The Thebans sent a message back that any Macedonians who wanted to could join them and overthrow the "tyrant of Greece." Alexander was stunned at the rebellious attitude of the Thebans—and was determined to defeat them.

An intense battle began. The Macedonians under Alexander were more experienced fighters and greatly outnumbered the Thebans. However, the citizens of Thebes were determined, and they fought long and hard. Alexander called in reserve troops, and they were assisted by other Macedonian troops who were stationed in a military post, or garrison, within the city. These combined forces ultimately helped Alexander triumph.

Although his soldiers killed many Thebans in battle, Alexander treated some of the rebels with compassion. His troops brought before him one Theban woman who had killed a Macedonian general. The woman was not apologetic, and she remained defiant even to Alexander. Still, he decided to spare her life because he admired her courage. Alexander also showed mercy to several priests, the family of a famous Theban poet named Pindar, and some citizens who remained friendly to Macedonia. Once he controlled the city, though, Alexander put its fate in the hands of his troops from the Greek city-states of the League of Corinth. They decided to destroy what was left of Thebes.
Information About Event B: Alexander in Egypt from the Perspective of Conqueror

After two years in Asia Minor and the Near East, Alexander and his forces arrived in Egypt in 332 B.C.E. For the previous 20 years, the Persians had ruled Egypt, and the Egyptians welcomed Alexander more as a savior than an invader. The Egyptians believed that Alexander would show more respect for their religious practices and cultural traditions than the Persians had done. As a result, Alexander’s troops met no resistance when they arrived at the city of Memphis, and the Egyptians treated him as a king, or pharaoh. It is believed that he may also have had a traditional Egyptian coronation ceremony.

In early 331 B.C.E., Alexander left most of his forces behind and set out on a religious journey to the oasis of Siwah (pronounced SEE-wah) to visit a prophet. He arrived at the site of a famous Oracle of Amon (pronounced AH-mun), the Egyptian King of the Gods. Historians believe Alexander was anxious to hear predictions from the oracle of success in future battles. They also believe he wanted to confirm that he was—as his mother had often told him—the true son of Zeus.

Alexander’s visit to the oasis excited the Egyptian people. No pharaoh had ever visited the oasis. According to the legend, when Alexander arrived at the temple of the oracle, the oldest of the priests greeted him as Son of Ammon, and King. This greeting confirmed Alexander’s belief that he was a true “Son of the King of the Gods.” Alexander asked the oracle several questions, the most significant of which was whether he would indeed conquer the whole world. The answer was yes.

Before he left Egypt, Alexander laid the foundation for an important new city. He chose a site northwest of the city of Memphis, and named it after himself: Alexandria. Alexander chose this site because he believed the new city—located on the Egyptian coast—could develop into an important port and trade center. Alexander helped lay the plans for his new city. He decided where the marketplace and the temples should be located. He also determined which Gods should have their temples in the city’s foundation, and even allowed temples to be built honoring Egyptian Gods.

Alexandria later became a magnificent city and a center for learning that would last for hundreds of years. The Alexandria Museum became a center of Greek and Near Eastern culture. Its library—at the time the largest in the world—contained hundreds of thousands of volumes. The library helped to preserve important Greek and Near Eastern cultural achievements. It also served as a study center for some of the greatest Greek minds in literature, philosophy, science, and mathematics. Alexandria flourished in part because of Alexander’s great respect for knowledge and various cultural traditions—not only those he brought with him from Greece, but those he found in Egypt as well.
Information About Event C: Alexander in Persia from the Perspective of Conqueror

When Alexander the Great set out for Asia Minor in 334 B.C.E. with 35,000 troops, the Persian Empire was the largest in the world. Its territory stretched thousands of miles, across deserts and mountains, from Egypt to India. It had been the dream of Alexander’s father, Philip II, to invade and conquer Persia. As ruler of all of Greece, Philip intended to avenge the destruction the Persians had inflicted upon Greece during the Persian Wars nearly 150 years earlier. In addition, the Persians were a strong rival for control of the profitable trade routes in the eastern Mediterranean. For these reasons—and because he was already thinking of ruling vast new lands—Alexander set out to fulfill his father’s dream.

In his many victories against the Persians during the next several years, Alexander showed his military genius time and again. His use of superior tactics and skilled battle strategies helped him defeat Persian forces that sometimes had him outnumbered by two to one. This was especially true at the Battle of Issus (pronounced ISS-uss), a key turning point in Alexander’s Persian campaign.

At the Battle of Issus in 333 B.C.E., the Persians—led by King Darius III (pronounced DAHR-ee-yuss)—had more than 70,000 troops. Alexander’s forces numbered about 40,000. Prior to the battle, the two armies passed each other through separate mountain passes during the night. When Alexander realized what had happened, he ordered his men to double back. This maneuver trapped the Persian army with its back to the sea, in a “corner” where the northern and eastern Mediterranean coasts meet. Alexander then led a charge with his cavalry. Darius panicked and fled in his chariot, causing much of his army to flee with him. Alexander captured thousands of men and much of the Persian king’s riches.

Within three years after the Battle of Issus, Alexander captured and destroyed the Persian capital of Persepolis (pronounced pur-SEP-oh-liss) and claimed the right to rule all of Persia. Yet he showed much respect for the conquered Persians. He appointed many Persian governors in the territories he conquered—governors who would now be loyal to him. He allowed many Persians to continue practicing their religious traditions. He even adopted some Persian customs himself, including the wearing of Persian clothing. Each of these actions was part of his ultimate goal—to rule an empire that merged the best aspects of both the western and eastern worlds.
Information About Event D: Alexander in India from the Perspective of Conqueror

For years Alexander had heard fantastic stories about the lands east of Persia. Intrigued by these tales, in 327 B.C.E., he led his troops over the Hindu Kush mountains into the plains by the Indus River. The Greeks called this region India. (Many of Alexander’s campaigns took place within the boundaries of modern-day Pakistan.) As Alexander made his way farther east, some local rulers willingly submitted to him and paid him tribute. Then, in the summer of 326 B.C.E., Alexander faced a shrewd and brilliant Indian king named Porus (pronounced POR-uss). This leader came armed with a large military force and a fearsome new war “machine”—elephants.

The two forces met at the River Hydaspes (pronounced hy-DASS-peh). Alexander’s troops had never battled an army with elephants. At first the troops could not even cross the river. Porus stationed his elephants all across the river’s eastern bank, and the beasts frightened the Macedonians’ horses. Porus also believed that Alexander could not cross because the battle took place during the monsoon season, when heavy rainfall was expected every day.

The major battle that followed proved to be Alexander’s military masterpiece. Alexander divided his forces into three groups. He took one group far upstream, using the heavy rains to conceal his movements. He quickly crossed the river, and surprised the enemy with a full-scale attack. With his cavalry force, he attacked from two directions along Porus’s line of foot soldiers, cavalry, and elephants. Then Alexander sent another group of cavalry to attack the Indian forces from the rear. As the cavalry attacked, they killed many of the elephants’ riders and drove the animals back into the Indian forces. The riderless elephants panicked. They began to cause more destruction to Porus’s forces than to Alexander’s. Finally, Alexander sent in his infantry to finish the job. The Indian troops were surrounded and could not fight back effectively. Porus gave himself up personally to Alexander. Alexander rewarded his bravery by granting Porus’s wish to rule Indian territory—in Alexander’s name.

After the Battle of the River Hydaspes, Alexander continued to move farther east. During the conquests that followed, he often came across Indian holy men, called Brahmins (pronounced BRAH-minz). These men held great power with various Indian kings. Alexander would question the Brahmins closely, trying to learn as much as he could about the Indian religion known as Hinduism. Some people believe Alexander was especially intrigued with the similarities between Hinduism and early Greek thought. One such similarity was belief in the existence of a natural law in the universe, a law that even a great conqueror such as Alexander could not disobey, or defy. In the fall of 326 B.C.E., Alexander decided to begin the journey home. Still, during his time in India, he showed an interest in learning much about the land he wished to add to his expanding empire.