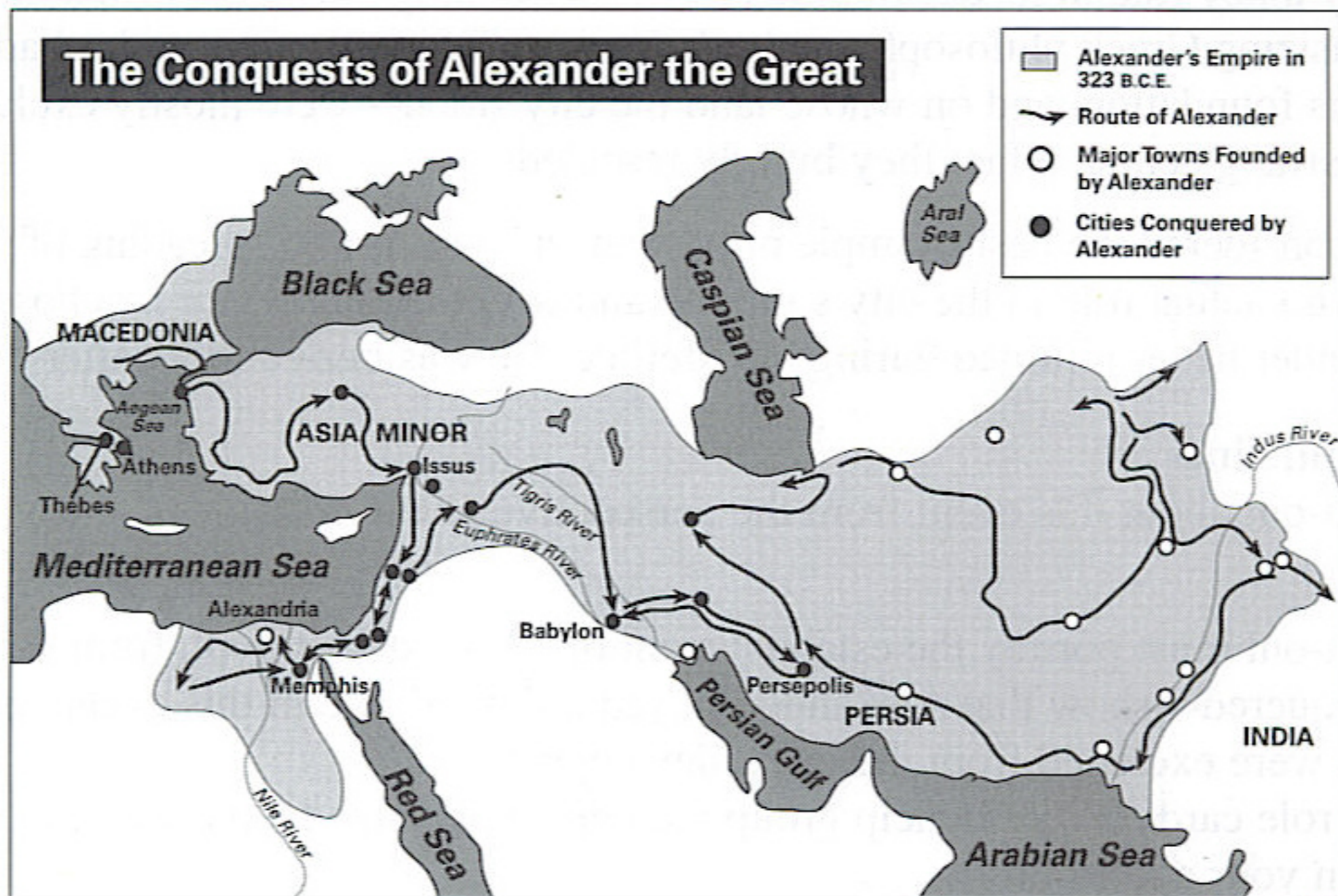


## Information About Event B: Alexander in Egypt from the Perspective of Conquered



After two years in Asia Minor and the Near East, Alexander and his forces arrived in Egypt in 332 B.C.E. The Egyptian people greeted them with mixed feelings. On the one hand, many were relieved and welcomed the conqueror. They hoped he would be an improvement over the Persians, who had ruled Egypt for the previous 20 years, and had been harsh and at times incompetent. The Persians violated, or *desecrated*, Egyptian temples and sacred customs. Egyptians knew that Alexander respected Egyptian beliefs, including their Gods. However, they were also aware of his reputation as a cruel conqueror who slaughtered people and destroyed cities. With this in mind, the Persian governor, or *satrap*, of Egypt willingly surrendered power, and even offered Alexander silver and all his furniture.

In 331 B.C.E., Alexander decided to journey to the oasis of Siwah (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. Many people portrayed the reception Alexander received at Siwah as a true “sign from the Gods.” However, no one knows what really happened during his visit to the oracle. Alexander never revealed exactly what the oracle privately told him. Alexander convinced himself, and many others, that he heard what he wanted to hear all along—that he was the true son of Zeus (or Ammon), King of the Gods. From that point on, Alexander began to encourage others to honor him as a God. This upset many of his followers, who did not believe in the mostly Eastern tradition of emperor worship.

Before Alexander left Egypt to pursue more conquests, he marked out the boundaries for a city near the Nile River, which he named after himself: Alexandria. Soon after Alexander decided to found the city, he designated a Greek architect and planner to build it. However, the Macedonian general Ptolemy I (pronounced TOL-eh-mee), Alexander’s successor as ruler of Egypt, was

actually responsible for much of the city's development. He moved his capital there from Memphis, and saw to it that the city grew as both a commercial port and a huge cultural center.

Although Alexandria became one of the ancient world's leading cities, the Egyptians were not allowed to play a key role in its development. The city mainly became a center for Greek culture, emphasizing Greek philosophy and scholarship. The Egyptians—who had helped build the city from its foundation, and on whose land the city stood—were mostly excluded from this magnificent learning center, a fact they bitterly resented.

Alexandria is considered the best example of Alexander's successful spreading of Greek culture. Yet, he played no actual role in the city's growth and development. Once he chose the site for the city, Alexander never returned during his lifetime. He was buried there after his death.

### **Act-It-Out Guidelines**

Create an act-it-out about this event from the perspective of the conquered, using these guidelines:

1. Your act-it-out must portray the establishment of Alexandria, Egypt, from the perspective of the conquered—show that Alexander played a limited role in this event and that the Egyptians were excluded from the city's development.
2. Study the role cards below to help group members understand what information should be included in your act-it-out.
3. Brainstorm simple actions and lines of dialogue that will help you dramatically convey the information on the role cards.
4. Practice performing your act-it-out so that it incorporates all group members and can be presented in less than 2 minutes.

### **Role Cards**

**Alexander:** Explain who you are. Boast about all of the silver and furniture you obtained from the Persian satrap. Tell the class how you left Egypt before Alexandria was constructed in order to pursue more conquests.

**Macedonian general:** Introduce yourself to the class as Seleucus (pronounced seh-LOO-kuss), one of Alexander's generals. Explain why no one really knows what happened during Alexander's journey to Siwah. Tell the class that Alexander upset many of his followers by claiming to be the son of Zeus.

**Egyptian architect:** Introduce yourself to the class as Ramose (pronounced RAH-mohs), an Egyptian architect. Explain that Ptolemy was actually responsible for much of Alexandria's development. Tell the class that Egyptians, despite their history of building magnificent monuments, were not consulted while Alexandria was being constructed.

**Egyptian scholar:** Introduce yourself to the class as Sety (pronounced SEH-tee), an Egyptian scholar. Explain why the Egyptians welcomed Alexander with mixed feelings. Tell the class that Egyptians were culturally excluded from Alexandria.