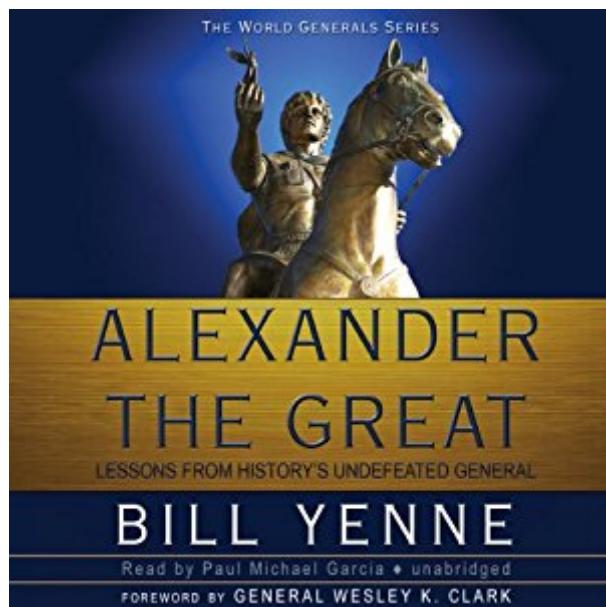


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Alexander The Great: Lessons From History's Undefeated General



Synopsis

Alexander the Great is considered one of the most successful commanders of all time and was known to be undefeated in battle. He is mentioned in the Bible as well as the Qur'an. When asked to name other great military leaders, Caesar reportedly said Alexander was the only great one. Born in 356 B.C., the son of Philip II of Macedonia, Alexander the Great was educated by Aristotle, became a consummate horseman, and commanded a wing of his father's army all when he was still a teenager. By the time of his death at age thirty-two, he had united Greece and amassed an empire that stretched from the Adriatic Sea to the Indus River and included all of Persia and most of Egypt. He ruled as the shah of Persia, a pharaoh of Egypt by right of conquest, and the crowned king of Asia. --This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Bill Yenne's "Alexander the Great" is part of the "The World Generals Series". Like other books in the series, Alexander The Great, is written in a straightforward, chronological manner. There is little speculation or conjecture by the author. When, ancient sources differ, Yenne says something, Plutarch said it happened "this way" but Nicomedia said it happened "this other way." However, what impressed this reviewer was not with how much ancient sources differed, but how similar was their telling of the story. For instance, all sources seem to agree as to the name of Alexander's favorite horse, when entered Babylon, how far he marched his army and so on. In his telling of the story of Alexander, Yenne makes comparisons between Alexander's situation to events in the modern era.

These comparasions make the dry facts (such as the order of battle) become more interesting and relevant. To underscore relevance to the modern era, Yenne's Alexander the Great comes with a short introduction by General Wesley Clark. Clark wants the reader to see how Alexander was great a "quarterback". How he marshalled his forces. How he was able to read "defenses." How, like a great quarterback, he was able to use intuition to make the most of a critical situation. However, as Yenne shows us, Alexander The Great was much more than a "quarterback." Unlike many other ancient, and even modern, generals, Alexander wasn't afraid to be a mentor to his subordinates. He was also an accomplished engineer; he able to find unique technical solutions to challenging tactical situations. He was also quite a diplomat; he was able to turn enemies into allies. Further, he was way ahead of his time culturally. Unlike other conquerors, he genuinely appreciated customs not his own.

Alexander the Great started the fad of discovering India that has yet to abate. He was like a tourist from Hades: he blew into town like he owned the place (he soon did), left things lying around (bodies), stayed up nights drinking, and went to the next place on the tour ("if it's Tuesday, this must be Egypt") with gold coins falling from his bulging billfold. But one can't question his curiosity: I honestly do get the feeling from this biography that one of his great motives in conquest was to explore, and one simply couldn't do that, as a king, with the army left home. Having heard about Alexander the Great all my adult life, all my scholarly life, I finally took the time to learn something much about the man, and am glad I chose this book. Much of the story took me completely by surprise. One takes the Iliad's battle scenes with a grain of salt: the Man of Royal Blood always stands heads and shoulders above the commoner pawns in his army, slashing his way through vast fields of infantry till he meets Royal Blood on the other side, taunts him poetically, then comes to blows. AG took a copy of Homer with him, and really seemed to follow that recipe. Well, not the poems, but fighting from the front, like Aragorn, crossing rivers, climbing scaling ladders with two fellows with the rest of the army still in the field below him. I didn't expect to admire the bloody old villain! But one can hardly help, even in our quasi-pacifist day. It is not hard now to understand why the ancient world was so thunderstruck by his career. This book is reasonably well-written, nothing spectacular.

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