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PERSIAN WARRIORS DEFEATED

Questions to ask before reading the story:

- What is a counter offensive move? How is it different from a defensive move?
- What is the meaning of the statement “The surest defense is a strong offense”?
- What does it mean to “snatch victory from the jaws of defeat”?

Alexander the Great stood with his army on the western shore of the Tigris River. He and his men had marched north from Tyre, crossing acres and acres of blackened land. Darius III had had his “Immortals” burn to the ground the long wheat grass that had been growing there. He had hoped to slow the advance of Alexander and his mighty fighting force.

Darius’ strategy had done little to delay the progress of the Greek forces. They prepared now to ford the Tigris, and to continue onward toward the village of Mosul. They knew that Darius III and the Persian warriors were camped nearby on the plain of Gaugamela. They remained unaware of Darius’ newest tactic.

When Alexander and his men reached the plain of Gaugamela, they found that the ground had been made level. The Persian chariots stood in formation, ready to attack across that flat surface. Darius expected his scythed chariots to propel themselves forcefully into the Greek forces, with their curved blades ripping at the flesh of both horses and men.

The chariots began their rapid drive toward the army of Alexander the Great. The Greek general, having made a quick assessment of the situation, ordered the ranks of the Greek fighters to split apart. This maneuver left the Persians moving forward, without having anyone to mow down. Because they traveled at great speed, the Persians could not get turned around. Caught between enemy lines, many Persian chariot drivers fell victim to the spears and arrows of their Greek opponents.

Still, Darius was not ready to surrender. He spotted places where his men could outflank the Greeks, sneaking around behind the enemy ranks. Some enemy units met the fate that Darius had intended, that of being run over by the Persian chariots. None of this, however, seemed to faze Alexander the Great.

The Greek general ordered the Companions, the cavalry, to form a wedge. The point of the wedge charged directly at Darius. The Persian King fled, leading to a collapse of whatever resistance he had managed to muster. Alexander the Great again emerged as the victor.

Alexander’s first impulse was to direct his men on a chase after the fleeing Darius. He chose, instead, to go south to Babylon, where he allowed his men to have one month of rest. From there Alexander headed his army east, toward the treasures that lay in central Persia.

assessment-act of estimating the worth or quality or likelihood of something

faze- to disconcert, to fluster

ford- to cross a body of water by wading, riding or driving through

formation-a particular arrangement or order

impulse-a sudden inclination to act, without thought for consequences

muster-to cause to assemble; to summon

ranks-lines of people or things

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Review Questions

1. Where did Alexander the Great and Darius III have their second meeting? _____

2. What pointed object did the flanks of the Greek Companions resemble when they charged at the Persians? _____

3. Who won the battle on the plain of Gaugamela? _____

4. Darius III hoped to beat Alexander by using scythed _____.
5. After defeating Darius III, Alexander the Great took his men to Babylon, where they rested for their journey to central _____.
6. In order to have their second meeting with Darius III, Alexander and his men crossed the _____ River.
7. Did Darius give up when he found his chariots surrounded? _____

8. What do you think? Was Alexander a better general than Darius? Why or why not? _____

Multiple Choice:

1. Alexander the Great marched northeast from Tyre, taking his men to:
 - a. the Euphrates River
 - b. the Tigris River
 - c. central Persia
 - d. a charred plain
2. Which of the following tactics did Darius III not use?
 - a. burning wheat grass above Tyre
 - b. having scythed chariots
 - c. outflanking the Greeks on the Gaugamela plain
 - d. none of the above
3. Which of the following helped to insure the victory of Alexander the Great?
 - a. having scythed chariots
 - b. having the Greek warriors part ranks
 - c. formation of a wedge
 - d. b and c

Matching

Tigris River	site of second meeting between Alexander and Darius
Plain of Gaugamela	where Alexander the Great headed after he had defeated Darius III
Central Persia	crossed by Alexander and his men

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PERSEPOLIS GOES UP IN FLAMES

Questions to ask before reading the story:

- Have you ever been to an art museum? Did it have any statues or stone engravings?
- Do you know anyone who has lost property or possessions due to a fire?
- If someone does something that harms you, should you seek revenge?

Alexander the Great had placed himself before the relief at Persepolis, the richest city in all Persia. He had just come through rooms in which beautiful tapestries covered the walls. Earlier he had seen, in one of the several palatial residences, caskets made from Lebanon cedar, their wooden sides engraved, and decorated with gold and silver. He had admired the high ceilings, supported by fluted columns that held aloft carvings of bulls and griffins.

Now he carefully studied the figures that had been chiseled into the outer stone walls. The dress on some of the figures represented the attire in lands that Alexander had already claimed for himself. The costumes on yet other carved figures represented people in lands that were still part of the vast Persian Empire. These were lands that Alexander planned to conquer. The people shown taking tributes to the Persian King were people whom Alexander intended to subjugate.

Alexander the Great was eager to move on to these distant lands, but his colleagues, who had downed large amounts of wine, stumbled around in a drunken stupor. Their inebriated minds stirred up within them a desire for revenge. They wanted to make the Persians pay for the damage a former Persian king, Xerxes, had done after invading Athens, more than 150 years earlier. Goaded by these drunken men and beguiled by members of his harem, Alexander the Great ordered the burning of Persepolis.

Men and women, holding aloft flaming torches, raced up and down the terraces of Persepolis. Flames ignited the wooden beams of the palaces once built by Xerxes. Looters fought off the heat of the inferno in order to drag out gold vessels, and to tear silver rings from heavy draperies.

When the fires had died out, all that remained were the tall stone columns and the exquisite stone carvings on the outer walls. Alexander the Great had left, for discovery by future visitors, the Persian soldiers who were untouched by the leaping flames. These “Immortals” still march today in precise formation across the chiseled stone remains of Persepolis.

beguiled-tricked

chiseled-cut and shaped into wood or stone

exquisite-having special beauty

fluted-having ornamental grooves

goaded-stimulated to activity

griffin- a mythological creature with the head of an eagle and wings on a lion's body.

inferno- a place resembling hell; somewhere intensely hot, a raging fire

relief-a method of carving or molding in which the design projects from the surface.

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Review Questions

1. What Persian city did Alexander the Great set afire? _____
2. What Persian king had set Athens afire? _____
3. Why did Alexander the Great put a torch to Persepolis? _____

4. The Persians brought cedar from _____ to Persepolis.
5. The Persians decorated the tall columns of Persepolis with bulls and _____.
6. The burning of Persepolis was intended as revenge for the burning of _____.
7. Is the griffin a creature from Greek mythology? _____
8. What do you think? Are the ruins of Persepolis something you would like to see? _____

Multiple Choice:

1. Which of the following did Alexander the Great not find at Persepolis?
a) tapestries hanging on walls c) relief showing Persians on march
b) fluted columns d) none of the above
2. Which of the following did Alexander’s men take from Persepolis?
a) gold vessels c) a and b
b) silver rings d) none of the above
3. Alexander the Great set fire to Persepolis because Xerxes put a torch to:
a) Athens c) Rome
b) Alexandria d) Tyre

Matching

Persepolis	torched by Xerxes
Athens	torched by Alexander the Great
	in central Persia
	in Greece

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Answers to review questions for “Persian Warriors...”

1. on the plain of Gaugamela
2. a wedge
3. Alexander the Great
4. Chariots
5. Persia
6. Tigris
7. No
8. Answers will vary

Multiple choice:

1. b
2. d
3. d

Matching

Alexander crossed the Tigris.

Alexander met Darius III on the plain of Gaugamela.

After winning the battle with Darius, Alexander went to central Persia.

Answers to questions for “Persepolis...”

1. Persepolis
2. Xerxes
3. His colleagues wanted to get revenge.
4. Lebanon
5. Griffins
6. Athens
7. no
8. answers will vary

Multiple choices:

- 1) d
- 2) c
- 3) a

Matching:

Persepolis was in central Persia. It was set afire by Alexander the Great.

Athens was in Greece. It was set afire by Xerxes.