
The Story of the World

HISTORY FOR THE CLASSICAL CHILD

Volume 1: Ancient Times

From the Earliest Nomads to the Last Roman Emperor

REVISED EDITION

with new maps, illustrations, and timelines



by Susan Wise Bauer

illustrated by Jeff West



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INTRODUCTION

How Do We Know What Happened?

What Is History?

Do you know where you were born? Were you born at a hospital, or at home? How much did you weigh when you were born? What did you have to eat for your first birthday?

You don't remember being born, do you? And you probably don't remember your first birthday party! So how can you find the answers to these questions?

You can ask your parents. They can tell you about things that happened long ago, before you were old enough to remember. They can tell you stories about when you were a baby.

These stories are your "history." Your history is the story of what happened to you from the moment you were born, all the way up to the present. You can learn this history by listening to your parents. They remember what happened when you were born. And they probably took pictures of you when you were a baby. You can learn even more about your history from these pictures. Did you have hair? Were you fat or thin? Are you smiling or frowning? What are you wearing? Do you remember those clothes?

You have a history—and so do your parents. Where were they born? Were they born at home, or at a hospital? Where did they go to school? What did they like to eat? Who were their

best friends? How can you find the answers to these questions? You can ask your parents. And if they don't remember, you can ask *their* parents—your grandparents.

Now let's ask a harder question. Your grandmother was once a little girl. What is *her* history like? How much did she weigh when she was born? Did she cry a lot? When did she cut her first tooth? What was her favorite thing to eat?

You would have to ask *her* mother—your *great*-grandmother. And you could look at baby pictures of your grandmother. But what if you can't talk to your great-grandmother, and what if you don't have any baby pictures of your grandmother? Is there another way you could find out about your grandmother's history?

There might be. Perhaps your grandmother's mother wrote a letter to a friend when she was born. "Dear Elizabeth," she might write. "My baby was born at home on September 13. She weighed seven pounds, and she has a lot of fuzzy black hair. She certainly cries a lot! I hope she'll sleep through the night soon."

Now, suppose you find this letter, years later. Even though you can't talk to your great-grandmother, you can learn the *history* of your grandmother from her letter. You could also learn *history* if your great-grandmother kept a diary or a journal, where she wrote about things that happened to her long ago.

In this book, we're going to learn about the *history* of people who lived a long time ago, in all different countries around the world. We're going to learn about the stories they told, the battles they fought, and the way they lived—even what they ate and drank, and what they wore.

How do we know these things about people who lived many, many years in the past? After all, we can't ask them.

We learn about the history of long-ago people in two different ways. The first way is through the letters, journals, and

other written records that they left behind. Suppose a woman who lived in ancient times wrote a letter to a friend who lived in another village. She might say, “There hasn’t been very much rain here recently! All our crops are dying. The wheat is especially bad. If it doesn’t rain soon, we’ll have to move to another village!”

Hundreds of years later, we find this letter. What can we learn about the history of ancient times from this letter? We can learn that people in ancient times grew wheat for food. They depended on rain to keep the wheat healthy. And if it didn’t rain enough, they moved somewhere else.

Other kinds of written records tell us about what kings and armies did in ancient times. When a king won a great victory, he often ordered a monument built. On the monument, he would have the story of his victory engraved in stone letters. Or a king might order someone in his court to write down the story of his reign, so that everyone would know what an important and powerful king he was. Thousands of years later, we can read the stone letters or the stories and learn more about the king.

People who read letters, journals, other documents, and monuments to find out what happened in the past are called *historians*. And the story they write about the past is called *history*.

What Is Archaeology?

We can learn about what people did in the past through reading the letters and other writings that they left behind. But this is only one way of doing history.

Long, long ago, many people didn't know how to write. They didn't write letters to each other. The kings didn't carve the stories of their great deeds on monuments. How can a historian learn the story of people who didn't know how to write?

Imagine that a whole village full of people lived near a river, long ago. These people don't know how to write. They don't send letters to their friends, or write diaries about their daily life. But as they go about their duties every day, they drop things on the ground. A farmer, out working in his wheat field, loses the iron blade from the knife he's using to cut wheat from the stalks. He can't find it, so he goes to get another knife—leaving the blade on the ground.

Back in the village, his wife drops a clay pot by accident, just outside the back steps of her house. It breaks into pieces. She sighs, and kicks the pieces under the house. Her little boy is playing in the dirt, just beyond the back steps. He has a little clay model of an ox, hitched to a cart. He runs the cart through the dirt and says, "Moo! Moo!" until his mother calls him to come inside. He leaves the cart where it is and runs into the house. His mother has a new toy for him! He's so excited that he forgets all about his ox and cart. Next day, his father goes out into the yard and accidentally kicks dirt over the clay ox and cart. The toy stays in the yard, with dirt covering it.

Now let's imagine that the summer gets drier and drier. The wheat starts to die. The people who live in the village have less and less to eat. They get together and decide that they will pack up their belongings and take a journey to another place, where there is more rain. So they collect their things and start off down the river. They leave behind the things that they don't want any more—cracked jars, dull knives, and stores of wheat kernels that are too hard and dry to use.

The deserted village stands by the river for years. Slowly, the buildings start to fall down. Dust blows overtop of the ruins. One year, the river floods and washes mud over the dust. Grass starts to grow in the mud. Eventually, you can barely see the village any more. Dirt and grass cover the ruins from sight. It just looks like a field by a river.

But one day a man comes along to look at the field. He sees a little bit of wood poking up from the grass. He bends down and starts to brush dirt away from the wood. It is the corner of a building. When he sees this, he thinks to himself, "People used to live here!"

The next day he comes back with special tools—tiny shovels, brushes, and special knives. He starts to dig down into the field. When he finds the remains of houses and tools, he brushes the dirt away from them. He writes down exactly where he found them. And then he examines them carefully. He wants to discover more about the people who used to live in the village.

One day, he finds the iron knife blade that the farmer lost in the field. He thinks to himself, "These people knew how to make iron. They knew how to grow wheat and harvest it for food. And they used iron tools to harvest their grain."

Another day, he finds the clay pot that the farmer's wife broke. Now he knows that the people of the village knew how to make dishes from clay. And when he finds the little ox and cart that the little boy lost in the yard, he knows that the people of the village used cows, harnessed to wagons, to help them in their farm work.

He might even find out that the people left their village because there was no rain. He discovers the remains of the hard, spoiled wheat that the people left behind. When he looks at

the wheat, he can tell that it was ruined by lack of rain. So he thinks to himself, “I’ll bet that these people left their village during a dry season. They probably went to find a place where it was rainy.”

This man is doing history—even though he doesn’t have any written letters or other documents. He is discovering the story of the people of the village from the things that they left behind them. This kind of history is called *archaeology*. Historians who dig objects out of the ground and learn from them are called *archaeologists*.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

Alexander the Great**Philip and His Son**

If the Greek cities had stayed friends and allies, like they were when they fought against the Persians, Greece would have been a strong country. But instead, Sparta and Athens fought. They were like brothers who were too busy arguing with each other to notice that a bully is coming.

In this case, the bully was a king named Philip, who ruled a country called Macedonia. Philip noticed that Athens and Sparta had become weaker and weaker after years of battle. And so he came down into Greece with his army and conquered the Greek cities. They barely had enough energy to resist.

Now Philip ruled Macedonia and Greece. But he wanted even more cities. He wanted to sail across the Aegean Sea to Asia Minor and take over the Persian Empire as well. But before he could attack Persia, Philip died. And his son Alexander took over his throne.

Do you know what the name *Alexander* means? It means “ruler of men.” Alexander became the most famous “ruler of men” ever. He was known by the whole world as “Alexander the Great.”

Alexander had always been an unusual boy. Even as a child, he was strong and brave. Nothing scared him. When he was

still a small boy, he went with his father Philip to look at a warhorse that Philip wanted to buy. The horse, a huge black stallion named Bucephalus, bucked and kicked constantly. No one could ride him.

“He’s too wild,” King Philip said. “I don’t want him. I would never be able to manage him.”

“I can ride him!” Alexander said.

“Nonsense!” Philip said. “You’re too little.”

“But I can!” Alexander insisted.

“If you can ride him, I’ll buy him for you,” Philip promised.

Alexander had been watching Bucephalus carefully. He noticed the horse kicked and reared whenever the sun threw his shadow on the ground in front of him. Alexander thought that the huge stallion was frightened of his shadow. So he walked fearlessly up to the horse, took his bridle, and turned him so that he couldn’t see his shadow. Instantly, Bucephalus stood still. He allowed Alexander to mount him and ride him around.

Philip bought the horse for Alexander. And when Alexander became king after his father’s death, the great black stallion Bucephalus always carried him into battle. He even named a city after his horse. He called it Bucephala!

Alexander had many opportunities to ride his warhorse into battle. His father Philip had conquered Greece, but Alexander had even larger goals in mind. He wanted to rule Persia. The Persians had given up trying to conquer Greece, but their empire was still the largest in the world. It stretched all the way from Asia Minor to India. And Alexander wanted it.

When Alexander met the Persian army in Asia Minor, he used his cavalry—soldiers riding on horseback—to push the Persians back. Asia Minor was now his. But could he conquer the rest of the Persian Empire?

According to one story, Alexander stopped at a city in Asia Minor and saw there, in the city's center, a chariot tied to its axle with a huge, complicated knot of rope, larger than a man's head. "What is that?" he asked.

"That is the Gordian Knot," the people told him. "We have a legend about it. The man who loosens that knot will rule all the rest of Asia. But it is impossible to untie the knot. Hundreds of men have tried, and no one has ever succeeded!"



Alexander and Bucephalus

Alexander studied the knot carefully. Then he took out his sword and sliced the knot in half.

“There,” he said. “I have loosened the knot.”

No one had ever thought of doing that before. But the prophecy of the knot came true. Alexander conquered all the rest of Asia. He went south into Egypt and was crowned the pharaoh of Egypt. And then he came back up into Mesopotamia and took over the rest of the Persian Empire.

Now Alexander was king of more land than anyone else had ever ruled. He was truly “Alexander the Great”—the ruler of the largest empire the world had ever seen.

Alexander’s Invasions

When Alexander the Great arrived at the edge of the Persian Empire, he wanted to keep going. He wanted to conquer all of India.

Alexander’s army began to invade India. Alexander learned how to use elephants in combat. And his soldiers won most of their battles.

But the Indians who fought against Alexander were fierce warriors as well. Even though the soldiers from Macedonia won many battles, more and more of them died claiming these victories. Finally, Alexander’s army mutinied. After a particularly difficult battle, in which over a thousand soldiers were killed or badly wounded, the army refused to go any further. “Be content with what you have!” they told Alexander. “We don’t want to go on dying to make your empire bigger.”

The Empire of Alexander the Great

Alexander didn't want to stop. He stayed in his tent, sulking. He refused to see anyone, hoping that his army would change its mind. But the men were firm: They would not fight in India any longer.

Finally Alexander agreed. He gave up trying to take over the rest of India. Instead, he put his energy into running the huge kingdom he already had.

Alexander wanted the people of the future to remember what a great ruler he was. And he knew that cities last for years and years. So he built new cities all over his empire. He named many of these cities after himself: Alexandria. Some of these cities still stand today. Just as Alexander intended, they remind us that Alexander the Great was the greatest conqueror of ancient times—and ruled over the hugest empire that the world had ever seen.

The most famous city called Alexandria is in Egypt. Alexandria was built near the Nile River and the Mediterranean Sea, so that merchants could reach it easily by ship. Alexander himself marked out the city's walls, but he died before he could see any

of the city's buildings. But after his death, Alexandria became the greatest city in the world. Many famous scholars and writers lived in Alexandria. It became a center for art, music, and learning. Today, Alexandria is still a big and important city.

Just outside Alexandria was the biggest lighthouse in the world. It was called the Pharos, and it was 330 feet tall. Ships could see it from miles away. They used its light to sail safely into the harbor of Alexandria.

Do you remember reading about the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World? These were seven amazing sights of ancient times. We learned that the Hanging Gardens of Babylon and the Great Pyramid are two of the Seven Wonders. The Pharos is the third. No one had ever seen a lighthouse as large as this one.

The Pharos was destroyed long, long ago. No pictures of the Pharos survive from ancient times. But only a few years ago, divers found huge chunks of stone at the bottom of Alexandria's harbor. This stone may be all that is left of the Pharos.

The Death of Alexander

Alexander the Great became king when he was only twenty. Most people today haven't even finished college when they are twenty. But at this young age, Alexander inherited a throne and all the responsibilities of a ruler.

It only took Alexander eleven years to spread his empire all across the ancient world. One story tells us that when Alexander was still young, he burst into tears one day because

there was no more of the world left to conquer. He had already conquered it all.

What would Alexander the Great have done next? We will never know, because Alexander died suddenly when he was only thirty-two. He was planning on taking an expedition with his army when he began to feel weak. He decided to wait a day or two until he felt better. "Go ahead and make all the preparations," he told his generals. "We will go as soon as I feel better."

But that day never came. Alexander got weaker and weaker. Finally, he was too weak to speak. His generals came to see him, but Alexander could only move his eyes. The next day he died.

No one knows exactly why he died. Some people think he might have been poisoned by one of his generals who wanted his power. Others say that he probably died of malaria—a fever caused by mosquitoes who carry certain kinds of germs. We will never know for sure. Alexander's body was put into a glass coffin and taken back to the city of Alexandria. The coffin was placed into a stone sarcophagus, there in Alexandria.

Alexander's generals knew that no one else could keep control of Alexander's large empire. Only Alexander could manage to rule such a huge kingdom. So they divided it up. One of the generals took Macedonia and the northern part of Alexander's kingdom in Asia Minor. Another general, named Ptolemy I, took over Egypt. His family would rule Egypt for three hundred years. Ptolemy was responsible for finishing the city of Alexandria; he built a huge library in Alexandria and filled it with books. A third general, named Seleucus, took over the southern part of Asia Minor and Alexander's lands in Asia, almost all the way over to India. The descendents of Seleucus were called the Seleucids, or the Syrians.

Now Alexander's great empire had become three separate kingdoms, with three kings fighting for power. Alexander had brought a very brief time of peace by uniting different cities and nations into one country. But that time of peace was over. Alexander's three generals and their descendents would spend the next hundred years fighting over control of different parts of Alexander's old kingdom.

Note to Parent: Philip conquered the Greek city states in 338 BC/BCE. Alexander the Great ruled from 336–323 BC/BCE.