

The Lighthouse of Alexandria

The City of Alexandria

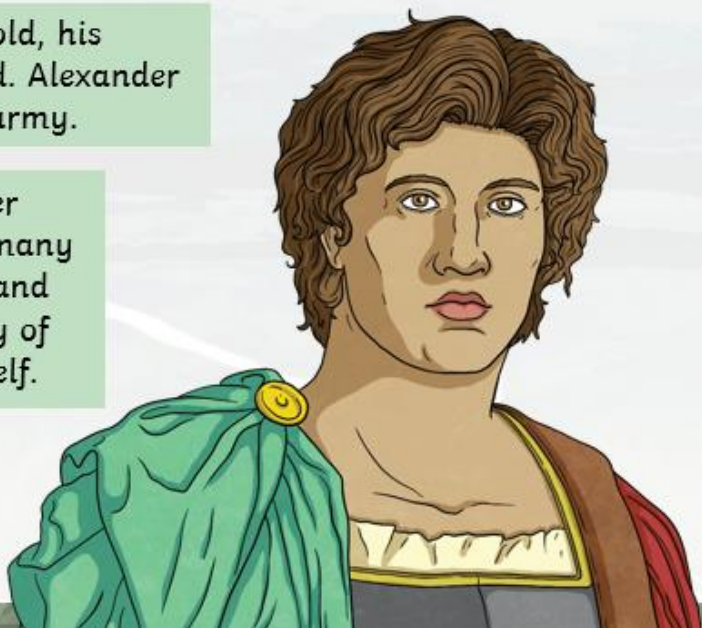
The city was founded by Alexander the Great, King of the ancient Greek kingdom of Macedon, in 331 BC.

Alexander was born in Macedonia in 356 BC.

When Alexander was 20 years old, his father, King Philip II, was killed. Alexander took control of his empire and army.

Alexander wanted an even larger empire and he led his army to many victories, conquering countries and founding cities. He named many of the cities Alexandria after himself.

Alexandria in Egypt still exists today and is the country's second largest city.



What Was Alexandria Like?

Alexandria had two harbours on the Nile delta and because of this, was an important trading area.

The city was carefully designed by Alexander's chief architect, Dinocrates. A royal palace was built, as well as temples dedicated to Greek and Egyptian gods. There was a 1260 metre-long bridge that went from the city to the nearby island of Pharos. Canals dug from the Nile provided houses with fresh water.



Alexandria had a museum, where scholars from all over the world would come to learn. The museum's library was the most famous in the world at the time.

The Lighthouse

One of Alexandria's most famous sites was its lighthouse. It was commissioned after the death of Alexander by Ptolemy I, who had declared himself King of Alexandria.



The Lighthouse

The lighthouse was situated on the island of Pharos, which was accessed from Alexandria by a bridge.

It was built using either blocks of limestone or of granite. The lighthouse is thought to have been around 110 metres high, with the square base being 30 metres wide.

Because the lighthouse was built to guide sailors safely into Alexandria, it was dedicated to two gods, Zeus Soter (god of safety and deliverance) and Proteus (sometimes known as 'The Old Man of the Sea').

It is believed the lighthouse took 15 years to complete.

Did You Know...?

At the time, the Lighthouse of Alexandria was the second tallest structure in the world, behind another wonder of the world, the Great Pyramid of Giza.

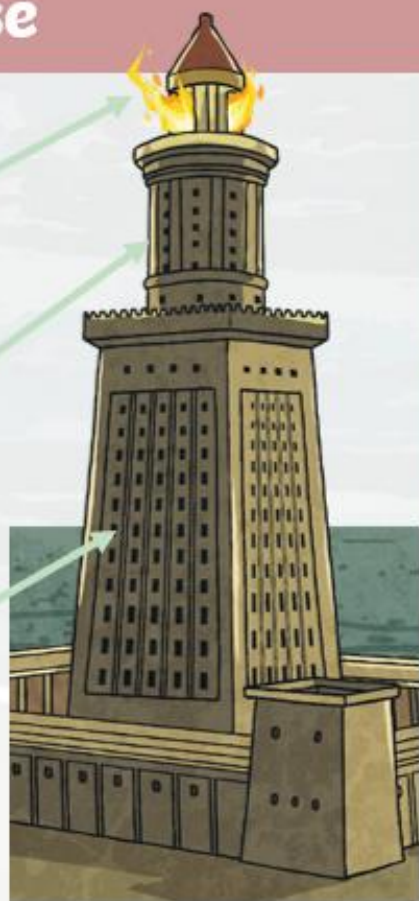


The Lighthouse

The light at the top of the tower was a furnace. Some historians believe that a large mirrored surface was used to reflect the sun's light during the day.

The middle section of the tower was an octagonal structure. This shape would be used to build many lighthouse in later times.

The lower section was rectangular and had a ramp which enabled people and goods to travel further up the lighthouse.



The Destruction of the Tower

Over time, the lighthouse suffered damages from several powerful earthquakes, particularly in the years 796, 950, 1303 and 1323. At times, repairs and additions were made. However, the last historical account of the lighthouse is from the 14th century, which suggests it was completely destroyed around this time. By the 15th century, its foundations had been used to build a fort.



Did You Know...?

The word 'pharos' (the island the lighthouse was on) is often used to describe towers.

The Lighthouse of Alexandria

1. Why was Alexandria an important trading area?

2. How did you get from Alexandria to the lighthouse on the island of Pharos?

3. Explain why a lighthouse would be dedicated to Zeus Soter and Proteus.

4. What was significant about the Great Pyramid of Giza and the lighthouse of Alexandria?

5. What is a furnace?

6. What events damaged the lighthouse at Alexandria?

7. How do we know the lighthouse was probably destroyed in the 14th century?

The Lighthouse of Alexandria: **Answers**

1. Why was Alexandria an important trading area?

It was on the Nile delta and had two harbours.

2. How did you get from Alexandria to the lighthouse on the island of Pharos?

A bridge that was 1260 metres long.

3. Explain why a lighthouse would be dedicated to Zeus Soter and Proteus.

Zeus Soter was the god of safety and deliverance and a lighthouse is to warn ships so they can stay away from danger. Proteus was the 'Old man of the sea' so it would be important to keep him happy to help protect the ships and stop storms.

4. What was significant about the Great Pyramid of Giza and the lighthouse of Alexandria?

The pyramid was the tallest structure in the world and the lighthouse was the second tallest.

5. What is a furnace?

A container which has fire inside it.

6. What events damaged the lighthouse at Alexandria?

Earthquakes in the years 196, 950, 1303 and 1323AD.

7. How do we know the lighthouse was probably destroyed in the 14th century?

The last historical account of the lighthouse comes from the 14th century.