Alexander the Great remains arguably the most famous secular figure in history, and his conquests created a legend that would set the standard by which future leaders would measure their careers. But he was not so much admired in his own lifetime and was, in fact, despised by many Greek subjects, who considered him to be a Macedonian "barbarian." There is little doubt that he was an inspiring leader who performed deeds of great personal bravery. He has been characterized as ruthless to any who opposed him, but fair to those whom he regarded as courageous and skilful. He was probably an overwhelmingly ambitious man who possessed a violent temper that was only made worse by a penchant for drinking too much wine. Aside from leaving a trail of eponymous towns and cities in his wake, Alexander's principal achievement, according to one historian, "appears to have been a grand adventure tied to his own personal ambitions – conquest for its own sake."

**Definitions to help you understand the reading:**

Despised: hated

Barbarian: uncivilized person, lacks education and manners

Penchant: a strong liking for something

Eponymous: giving one’s name to a place