Document C


Note: During Alexander's march down the Mediterranean coast, many cities surrendered without a fight. Some were happy to have the Persians removed. Alexander treated these cities rather kindly. Tyre ("tire") was another matter. Its citizens refused to surrender. They believed their city was unconquerable because it was built on an island and protected by high walls. Alexander proceeded to build a causeway, or land bridge, of timber and rubble so his soldiers could cross from the mainland to the island. The city held out for seven months and Tyrian counterattacks caused Alexander to lose many men. In the end, however, the causeway was completed and Alexander's army smashed into the city.

When the last organized resistance was broken, Alexander's [soldiers] ranged through the city on a ferocious manhunt. . . . Alexander had ordered that all [except] those who sought sanctuary [safety in the temple] were to be slain, and his commands were executed with savage relish. The air grew thick with smoke from burning buildings. Seven thousand Tyrians died . . . and the number would have been far higher had it not been for the men of Sidon, who entered the city alongside Alexander's troops. Even though Tyre had been Sidon's rival for centuries, these neighbors of the victims, horrified by what they now witnessed, managed to smuggle some 15,000 of them to safety.

The great city . . . was now utterly destroyed. Her king, Azimilik, and various other notables, including envoys from Carthage, had taken refuge in the temple of Melkart, and Alexander spared their lives. The remaining survivors, some 30,000 in number, he sold into slavery. Two thousand men of military age were crucified.

Document Analysis

1. How did Alexander feel about Tyre's ability to hold him off for seven months? How do you know?

2. How might you explain Alexander's decision not to kill anyone who took sanctuary in the temple?

3. What do you learn about Alexander from his decision to crucify 2,000 men?

4. Can you think of military reasons for the severe treatment of Tyrian survivors?

5. How can you use this document to argue that Alexander was great?

6. How can you use this document to argue that Alexander was not great?