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Source: Lucius Flavius Arrianus, *The Campaigns of Alexander*, circa 130 CE.

Note: Ancient biographers of Alexander told these stories. They are retold here by Arrian and a modern-day historian. True or not in their detail, the stories reveal two sides of Alexander that were probably accurate.

The Legend of the Helmet

The army was crossing a desert of sand; the sun was already blazing down upon them, but they were struggling on under the necessity of reaching water, which was still far away. Alexander, like everyone else, was tormented by thirst, but he was nonetheless marching on foot at the head of his men. It was all he could do to keep going, but he did so, and the result (as always) was that the men were the better able to endure their misery when they saw that it was equally shared. As they toiled on, a party of light infantry which had gone off looking for water found some—just a wretched little trickle collected in a shallow gully. They scooped up with difficulty what they could and hurried back ... to Alexander; then, just before they reached him, they tipped the water into a helmet and gave it to him. Alexander, with a word of thanks for the gift, took the helmet and, in full view of his troops, poured the water on the ground. So extraordinary was the effect of this action that the water wasted by Alexander was as good as a drink for every man in the army.

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Source: Ian Worthington, *Alexander the Great: Man and God*, Longman, 2004.

The Legend of the Hat Band

Alexander was himself steering the trireme [a warship with oars], when a strong gust of wind fell on his broad-brimmed Macedonian hat, and the band that encircled it. The hat, being rather heavy, fell into the water. However, the band was carried along by the wind, and was caught by one of the reeds growing near the tomb of one of the ancient kings....[O]ne of the sailors swam off towards the band and snatched it from the reed. But he did not carry it in his hands because it would get wet while he was swimming. He therefore put it around his own head and brought it to the king. Most of the biographers of Alexander say that the king gave him a talent* as a reward for his zeal. Then he ordered his head to be cut off [because] the prophets had explained that ... he should not allow the head that had worn the royal head band to be safe.

* More than \$10,000

Document Analysis

1. In the first story, why did Alexander pour the water on the ground?
2. In the second story, why did Alexander give the soldier who saved the hat band a reward? Why did he then order the man's head cut off?
3. How can you use these legends to argue that Alexander was great?
4. How can you use these legends to argue that Alexander was not great?