ALEXANDRIA

In 332 BCE, a Greek military leader named Alexander the Great led an army into Egypt. For nearly two centuries at that time, the ancient land had been under control of Persia, a powerful empire in western Asia. As Alexander’s army defeated the Persians, the Egyptian people welcomed Alexander. Some Egyptians even worshipped the Greek general as a pharaoh.

Alexander soon left Egypt to continue his conquests, but before leaving, he established a new capital named for himself on a port city in the Mediterranean Sea. This city called Alexandria became a center of trade between Egypt and other cities in a growing empire.

The Greek rulers who succeeded Alexander constructed the greatest library of the ancient world in Alexander’s capital. The Royal Library at Alexandria collected books from all over the known world and attempted to gather all of the world’s knowledge in one place.

Because books had to be copied by hand, they were very rare before Johann Gutenberg invented the printing press about 1450 CE. Legends say that books were seized from ships sailing into Alexandria’s port. Scribes at the library then copied the books manually. The library would keep the original volumes and returned only the copies to their owners.

The Royal Library at Alexandria was housed in many buildings, but many of those buildings were destroyed over the next nine centuries. The final destruction of the library appears to have occurred in the seventh century of the Common Era.

A modern library, the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, was constructed in Alexandria in 2002. Similar to the ancient library’s mission of pulling together all knowledge, today’s version houses a copy of the Internet Archive, a vast computer collection that attempts to keep a record of nearly anything ever posted on the Internet. You can access the Internet Archive and see archived copies of what websites looked like in the past at www.archive.org.

Fill in the Blanks

A Greek warrior named A___e___a___d___r rescued Egypt from P___r___i___n rule 332 BCE. Alexander established a new c___p___t___l in a city he called A___e___a___d___ia, where his successors later constructed the greatest l___b___a___y of the ancient world.

The Royal Library at Alexandria attempted to gather all of the world’s k___o___l___d___ge in one place. Legends say books were *c___n___i___c___t___d from ships sailing into Alexandria’s p_________. The library lasted almost a *m___l___e___n___um before it was destroyed. A modern library constructed in A___e___a___d___ia in 2002 houses a collection of nearly every Internet___n___t website ever created.

Answer in complete sentences

1. List two civilizations that conquered all or part of ancient Egypt.

2. Irony can be defined as an occurrence that is the opposite of what you would expect to happen. Why is it ironic that we do not know why the Royal Library at Alexandria was destroyed?