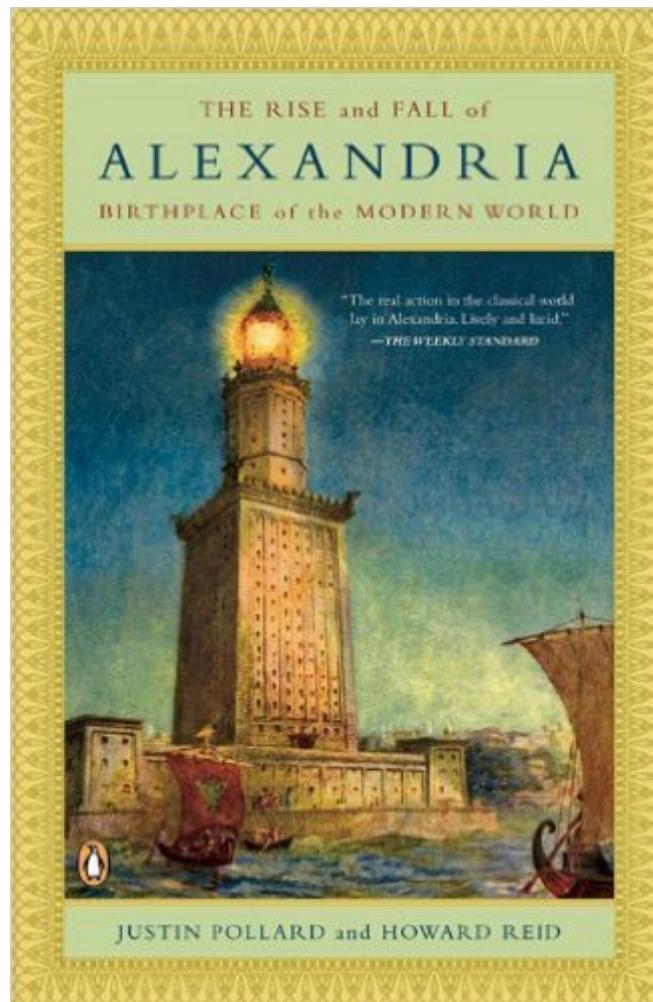


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# The Rise And Fall Of Alexandria: Birthplace Of The Modern World



## **Synopsis**

A short history of nearly everything classical. The foundations of the modern world were laid in Alexandria of Egypt at the turn of the first millennium. In this compulsively readable narrative, Justin Pollard and Howard Reid bring one of history's most fascinating and prolific cities to life, creating a treasure trove of our intellectual and cultural origins. Famous for its lighthouse, its library--the greatest in antiquity--and its fertile intellectual and spiritual life--it was here that Christianity and Islam came to prominence as world religions--Alexandria now takes its rightful place alongside Greece and Rome as a titan of the ancient world. Sparkling with fresh insights on science, philosophy, culture, and invention, this is an irresistible, eye-opening delight.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

This is not a scholarly work nor is it intended to be. The authors are television producers, not historians, and there are no footnotes. Still they provide a good overview of Alexandria. As an academic at heart I have always been fascinated by the idea of a city set up to pursue learning for the sake of learning. The rulers wanted to put Alexandria on the map and to attract the best and the brightest to the city, and it never occurred to anyone that practical use might be made of the cumulative knowledge. To many, like Archimedes, the very thought of practical applications was repugnant. There are a number of small deficiencies in the book whose cumulative impact is mildly annoying, enough to subtract a star. There is way too much use of superlatives. This is totally unnecessary. The reader does not need to be banged over the head with the significance of the events. The book occasionally goes off on tangents and when it does the authors put themselves on shaky ground. They go on at length about the philosophy of Plato and mention the influence of

Heraclitus without mentioning the equal and opposing influence of Parmenides. The authors make it seem as if the mathematics behind Eratosthenes' measure of the Earth's circumference is very complex. It does not diminish his accomplishment at all that the geometry involved is rather straightforward, as could have been shown by a simple diagram. Some diagrams of Hero's devices would also have been helpful. I am guessing that the authors are not particularly strong in science and math. They mention that the information in the epitaph of Diophantus can be turned into a pair of simultaneous equations by those with "mathematical talents." Actually, the information is easily turned into a single simple equation by anyone with a basic knowledge of algebra. The mathematician Apollonius of Perga is mentioned only in passing without reference to his important work on conic sections. Most significantly there is little description of daily life in Alexandria or of the influence of the library on the rest of the city. There is also little description of what life was like inside the library. Still I recommend the book for a quick view of Alexandrian history. My appetite has been whetted and I plan to use the bibliography to learn more about the city.

I am not a scientist and know enough math to barely negotiate my checkbook, but that is perhaps why I find this book so fine. I am a college professor and use many sources to inspire my students. This book is written with wonderful fluidity. It does not insult the reader, yet it reads with great grace and style covering almost a thousand years of history of this great city. If you are not familiar with ancient Alexandria, I highly recommend this for learning about the amazing discoveries and creativity of learning that was the foundation of many of the great sciences that rival ancient Greece. And how much knowledge was lost when the library in the Museum of Alexandria was destroyed. Enthusiastically recommended.

I just finished reading "The Rise and Fall of Alexandria - Birthplace of the Modern World," and I want to start over again. When I read that the authors were television producers on the inside front page, it was difficult for me to believe that it was the only career they had. In fact, both men are anthropologists (Justin Pollard is an anthropologist and archeologist) educated at Cambridge. They took what could have been a stuffy and dry subject and made it sing, gave it wings and inspired me to want to read more. There was only one frustrating omission in the book and that was there were no maps. While reading, I could only visualize the map of the world that was created by Herodotus. Fortunately, I found a book by Michael Grant, "The Atlas of Classical History from 1700 B.C. to 565 A.D.," that I had had for years, which has a map of the world drawn by Herodotus. The best part of this book is how well the authors humanized those historical individuals whose contributions to the

city of Alexandria made it the great center of learning and culture it came to be. I would recommend it for high school students who are thinking of going into the sciences. I believe it will give them a great sense of reverence for the commitment the early Greek scientists, artists and philosophers had and how much of an impact they made upon the world. And, it will give further insight as to why Carl Sagan bemoaned the rise of Christianity which occurred paradoxically in Alexandria.

An outstanding book written about Alexandria Egypt. There are barely any books written on this old and historical city. Having lived there for 30 years, it certainly appealed to me to purchase this book. Rise and Fall of Alexandria is not only about the Ptolemies, and the library of Alexandria, or the Roman Empire. It is the history of: philosophy, mathematics, geography, astrology, medicine, and all the intellectual minds that were born, and came to research study and die in Alexandria. The beginning of Christianity, the translation of the Bible from Hebrew to Greek, what was Christianity and Judaism seen from the eyes of the intellectual Philosophers in Alexandria. Who created the Pharos of Alexandria one of the 7 wonders of the ancient world. Who created roads, palaces, gardens, and libraries. How it all started and how it all ended. It is a very easy book to read, with so much knowledge, that it would have certainly been kept in the old Alexandria Library had it survived the fire. A must read for those who like ancient history.

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