

SEVEN WONDERS OF THE ANCIENT WORLD

Lighthouse of Alexandria

Sailors off the coast of Egypt often ran into a troubling problem: they couldn't see where they were going. Without the benefit of electricity or modern navigational tools, these sailors couldn't always find the right harbor or even the right coastline. Thieves would take advantage of this situation, laying traps for confused sailors who crashed along hidden shores.

In the 3rd century BC, Ptolemy I decided to put an end to all this trouble. He ordered a gigantic lighthouse to be built on the island of Pharos, right off the coast of Alexandria, Egypt. Standing at nearly 500 feet, the Lighthouse of Alexandria was almost impossible to miss. Sailors who spotted the bright light only had to follow it straight into the safe and welcoming arms of the city of Alexandria. Three earthquakes, striking less than fifty years apart, turned the noble Lighthouse of Alexandria into a pile of rubble. Today on Pharos, all that is left are bits and pieces of the lighthouse's foundation.

FILL IN THE BLANK **Answer Key**

Complete the sentences with the missing words from the word bank.

500 feet

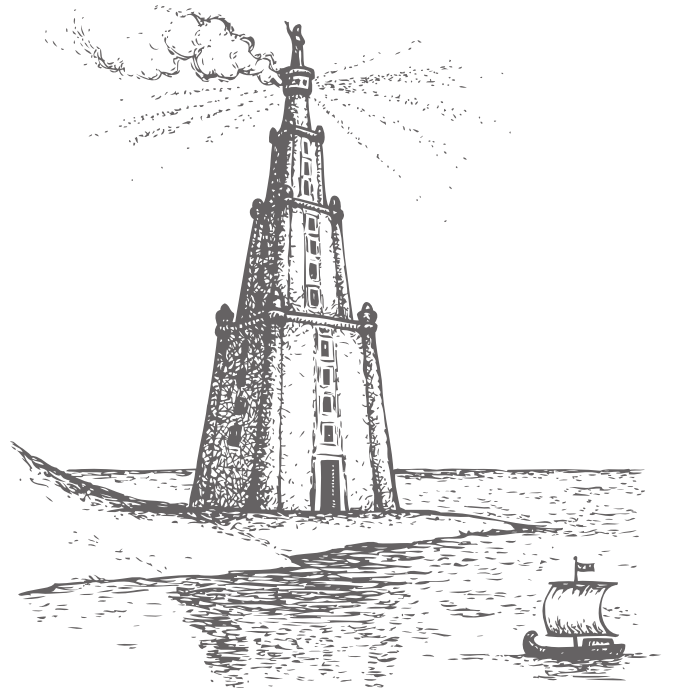
Egypt

250 feet

Ptolemy

Pharos

1. The lighthouse was built on the island of Pharos.
2. Ptolemy ordered the construction of the lighthouse.
3. The wonder of the world is 500 feet tall.
4. The city of Alexandria is in the country of Egypt.



QUESTION AND ANSWER **Sample Answers**

Answer the questions from the text on the previous page.

1. Lighthouses have been used as guiding beacons, or lights, for centuries. What are some other ways to guide lost sailors to port?

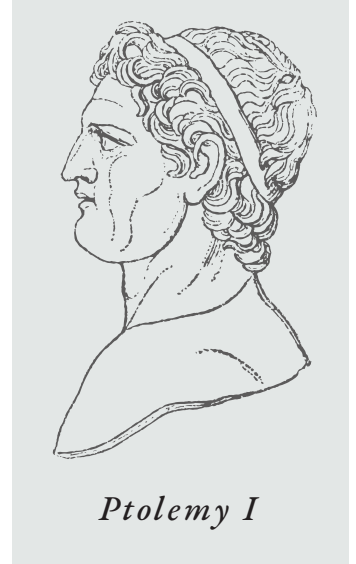
Compasses and navigational tools like sextants and radar are ways to guide lost sailors to port.

2. What reasons did Ptolemy I have to build the Lighthouse of Alexandria? Did the safety of sailors benefit him at all?

Without a lighthouse, sailors couldn't find the right harbor or coastline. Not only was this dangerous for the sailors, who might get lost, crash into the shore, or be vulnerable to thieves, it was a risk to the security and economy of Alexandria.

3. Why do you think the Lighthouse of Alexandria has not been rebuilt? Do you think lighthouses are still as necessary as they once were?

With electricity and navigational tools, sailors are more likely to spot cities and coastlines, even at night.



Did You Know?

The lighthouse operated by redirecting light using a concave mirror located on the third tier. During daytime, the sun was the light source. At night, it was a lit fire located underneath the mirror.

