Through Plutarch’s stories of Alexander, there are many great traits that Alexander exemplifies. Most notably, one of Alexanders greatest trait was his confidence and general stubbornness when faced with issues. Alexander was a very confident man, one who believed in his own way and was well respected because of that. He would face anybody in his path to reach his goals, including his own father Philip. One of Plutarch’s stories that illustrates Alexanders confidence was when Philonicus of Thessaly brought the horse Bucephalas to Philip to sell to him. Philip was hesitant to buy the horse as Bucephalas was not friendly, and would not let any rider near him. Only after Philip had ordered them to lead the horse away, Alexander spoke up in disagreement with his father. At first ignored, Alexander continued to, “interrupt and to murmur indignantly” (Plutarch, 230). Philip, annoyed with his son, questioned his respect for his elders, to which Alexander said he would manage the horse better than anyone.

The two decided that Alexander would give it a shot to ride the horse, and that he would pay the price of Bucephalas if he was unable to. Alexander had the horse face the sun so that his own shadow would confuse him, and then he “ran alongside him for a little way as he
trotted, and stroked him with his hand. When he saw that Bucephalas was full of courage and spirit, he quietly flung off his cloak, leaped up, and bestrode him securely” (Plutarch, 231). Alexanders insistence on his ability to manage the horse led him to be able to ride Bucephalas, which Philip thought to be too difficult a task as the horse was uncooperative. This exemplifies Alexanders confidence as he believed that he was the only one capable of riding the beast and it worked. Alexander was so confident in fact that he was even willing to pay for the horse if he was unable to ride him. Not only did Alexander have confidence in his own abilities, but in the horse’s abilities as well.

Another tale of Alexanders confidence was when he crossed the Granicus to fight the Persian army. Many of Alexanders officers feared the river and deemed it too dangerous to cross due to its depth and difficult terrain, as well as Darius’s Persian army that had soldiers waiting at the crossing. Alexander, however, decided to act and lead his men through the river to the other side. The Macedonians were taken out by the Persian missiles and swept away by the rivers strong current. Alexanders call to cross “seemed those of a mad and desperate commander, rather than one whose judgment was sound” (Plutarch, 237). While his decision was rather radical and dangerous, Alexander still believed in himself and his men with the odds stacked against them. His confidence and ability to lead them into battle is what won the Macedonians the fight. Alexander saw what he wanted and knew what he must do in order to acquire what he wanted. Through his confidence in himself, he led his men to victory.

Alexander proved himself to be a successful leader through his confidence, but the line between confidence and arrogance was very thin. But that reason is what made him as successful as he was. He led with purpose and by example, being so sure in his ways and
thought process. Alexanders trust in his ability to manage a horse who seemed unmanageable
is the sole reason he was able to ride Bucephalas, and his confidence in his judgement and his
men’s ability under his command is what led the Macedonians to defeat the Persians at the
crossing of Granicus. His confidence was bought into by all, including his father and his soldiers,
and that is what makes Alexanders a great leader.