

This approach would be a non-starter as the main method of instruction in the UK at the current time. Few teachers have any experience of using spoken Latin, and the age range, lack of contact time and the exam-driven nature of our education system militate against it. However, my experience is that there is great value in introducing a little spoken Latin: it promotes greater fluency in reading and can be enjoyable for teachers as well since it introduces a very different dynamic with students.

Some of this book could be adapted for brief bursts of spoken Latin – for example for learning or revising parts of the body or for adverbs of place or the less common prepositions. It would also be a good text for a Latin club. Younger learners would enjoy the physicality and practical approach. A Level students would appreciate seeing how Latin has been a living language and can still be used to communicate and to internalise basic grammar in a more natural way. This book is a great resource for teachers who think they can't speak Latin but are interested in giving it a go with their students. With such a structured resource, trying it out becomes a real possibility.

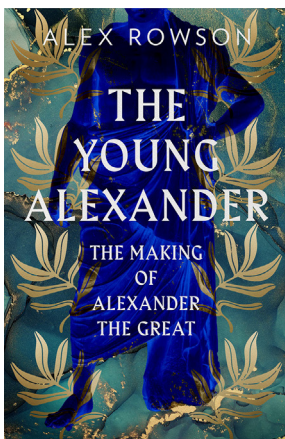
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## The Young Alexander. The Making of Alexander the Great

Rowson (A.) Pp. xviii + 494, ills, maps, colour pls.  
London: William Collins, 2022. Cased, £25. ISBN:  
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In the prologue of this book Alex Rowson quotes the old adage that 'everybody has their own Alexander', such is the diversity of opinions about the fourth century BC king of Macedonia, who conquered much of Asia and reputedly wanted to conquer even more.

Part one of Rowson's book focuses on Alexander's childhood and the importance of Alexander's father to his subsequent military achievements, exploiting the archaeological evidence primarily. Based on this evidence, he provides intriguing insight into the

Macedonian army culture under Alexander and Philip II, Alexander's father. For example, he refers to the arrow heads with the message 'an unpleasant gift' found in the remains of Olynthus, which was sacked by Philip; as Rowson remarks, such finds provide glimpses of the culture in the Macedonian army encouraged by Philip.

On the other hand, as well as primary sources, he acknowledges his debt to the novelist Mary Renault, even naming his first chapter

after her first Alexander novel. This influence is used effectively to draw out the possible interpretations of the evidence, and Rowson is not uncritical of Renault's interpretation at times.

Furthermore, Rowson presents the relevant archaeological debates in a clear manner, such as evidence for the Nymphaion or supposed Asklepios at Mieza being the location for Alexander's lessons with Aristotle. In this section he uses questions about the lack of infrastructural remains to highlight the problems with the Nymphaion, then lays out Angeliki Kottaridi's argument about the Asklepios - and her comparison of the site to surviving Macedonian barracks - to convincing effect. This discussion of the archaeology, combined with references to Plutarch and epigraphy, is the foundation for Rowson's argument that Alexander's school curriculum combined military training with academic exercises.

Rowson's background as a journalist comes to the fore when he uses this archaeological evidence to provide vivid descriptions, such as what Pella might have been like. That is not to say he moves into the realm of fantasy, since the extensive footnotes show he has read widely from the literary sources. Nor is Rowson shy to use topographical descriptions in conjunction, as exemplified by the section on Alexander's childhood attendance at the religious centre of Dion.

Moreover, his narratives are clear and even arresting, most notably his chapter on the Battle of Chaeronea, combining Diodorus' report with archaeological research and snippets from biographies. Rowson's account of the injuries on the excavated Theban bones reminds us about the human cost of Alexander's successes even this early in his career.

Furthermore, he looks ahead to the influences on Alexander's later actions. Most notably, he compares Plutarch's accounts of Philip's anger at Alexander with Alexander's murder of Cleitus the Black, demonstrating the similar temperaments of father and son. In this way, he helps us to understand the murder in the wider context of Alexander's character development from childhood.

In part two, Rowson investigates the evidence for Alexander's early reign. Again, he combines recent archaeology with literary sources to produce a gripping narrative about the events surrounding Philip's assassination, resulting in an atmosphere of threats and plots. Consequently, his argument is convincing, that Alexander was no more than necessarily violent on his ascension, considering the circumstances.

Building on this point, he devotes a chapter to the possible rediscovery of Philip's tomb at Vergina. Although on first reading this section feels like a tangent, he makes pertinent points, such as how the unfinished decoration shows Alexander's haste to move on from the funeral and tackle civil unrest. Therefore, the archaeological debates explored in that chapter are proved to be integral to his argument, at least when reread.

Likewise, Rowson effectively combines topographical descriptions of Thrace with Arrian's evidence (after a clear introduction to the provenance of this source) to illustrate the early signs of Alexander's military genius, displayed on his first independent campaign there; Rowson illustrates the daunting heights of the mountains, which emphasises all the more Arrian's portrayal of Alexander's clever tactics in defeating the tribes there. Moreover, the detail of the inscriptions there concerning the preservation of wood offer fascinating insight into Alexander's early preparations for his Persian campaign.

He has less physical evidence, as he admits, to compare to the literature about Alexander's siege of Thebes. Nevertheless, he matches precise examples in Arrian and Diodorus to what has been excavated at that location, analysing these matches to again

convincingly argue that Alexander's eventual success was down to effective use of the efficient Macedonian military machine bequeathed by Philip.

Rowson finishes with a brief summary concerning Alexander's Asian conquests. Although this is compressed, Rowson still commendably lays out the relevant archaeological debates, such as whether Persepolis was burned accidentally or intentionally. The chapter thus proves a fitting climax to the book.

Aside from archaeology and novels, one might suggest Rowson could acknowledge, if not engage with, the leading modern scholars more explicitly. For example, he uses Miltiades Hatzopoulos' argument that Philip organised Macedonian regional government; this is somewhat different to the view of Robin Lane Fox concerning the family clans in Macedonia, and comparison of the two perspectives would be interesting.

Furthermore, some may say Rowson should be more critical of evidence in primary literary sources. For example, he quotes Valerius Maximus as evidence that Philip II was generous with money, without acknowledging that the source is secondary and based on unverified evidence. Similarly, he uses Plutarch's memorable story of how Alexander tamed Bucephalus the horse, without questioning how an inexperienced teenager could accomplish such a deed.

The addenda to the book are very useful; Rowson includes maps which the reader finds oneself looking back at continually, whilst the images of wall paintings and archaeological remains help the reader to picture the scenes described by Rowson, contributing to the readability of the book. A glossary of key words also renders the book a useful reference point.

Since the book is so readable, it would be stimulating reading for sixth form students taking the Alexander module as part of the Ancient History A Level. Additionally, Rowson's (less-than-flattering) analysis of the evidence for Demosthenes could stimulate discussion in any sixth form class studying the *Democracy and the Athenians* option for Classical Civilisation A level. For teachers, the book is a timely and informative reminder of the enduring appeal of Alexander as a historical figure, well worth a read.

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## Oh My Gods

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*Oh My Gods* follows Helen, Zeus' teenage daughter as she navigates a new school, new family, new home... and her very first kiss, all while trying to conceal a very big secret; her family are really gods.

Helen has been living with her Jamaican grandmother since her mother died, but now she has moved to London to live with her father Zeus and his unusual family. Zeus is either too interested in what Helen is up to, insisting on Sunday study sessions, or totally absent spending every moment with his 'lady friend'. The house is



rarely empty though, as her incredibly beautiful and annoying older sister Aphrodite has a room upstairs and Eros (agony aunt) and Apollo (musician) are always in and out.

There are two key rules they all have to live by or the council of the gods could recall them to Olympus or, worse, remove their immortality: One: 'gods must not reveal their immortal identity for any reason'; Two: 'gods must not use their powers to interfere with the fate of mortals for any reason'.

Zeus has an extra rule, too: no mortals in the house. This means Helen can never have a sleepover with her new friends and is destined to be the school weirdo. With Apollo and Aphrodite both seeking fame and money, the family is on thin ice, and to add fuel to the fire, Helen's new boyfriend is not as benevolent or mortal as he seems.

The strengths of this book are in its supportive female friendships and how it deals with teenage emotions and desires. It successfully blends Jamaican, Greek and British cultural elements and handles a deceased parent sensitively and beautifully.

Unfortunately, the plot may fail to engage many readers as the points of drama are being able to throw a cool house party and having a first kiss; that is, until near the very end, when the family are put on trial for breaking the rules - which is when the novel is at its best. The characters of the gods feel two-dimensional to any reader familiar with Greek mythology, and the teenage characters do at times feel like stereotypical teen caricatures.

While it does offer a different take on Greek gods that may draw some readers to Classics, it is more teen flick than meaningful modern reception, and young people interested in Greek mythology may be put off by the premise.

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## Stoic Wisdom. Ancient Lessons for Modern Resilience

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While philosophy has long been one strand in the study of the classical world, not everyone clicks with Plato or Aristotle. Stoicism provides a more practical approach to the question of how to live the good life, but it has tended to be regarded as the poor relation. However, it has been staging a comeback over the last few years. Ryan Holiday's *Daily Stoic* podcasts have had over 100 million