

0. THE YOUNG ALEXANDER - Story Preface

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This image depicts an artist's conception of Aristotle teaching the young Alexander. The work, which J.L.G. Ferris created in 1895, is entitled: "Aristotle Tutoring Alexander."

When he was a boy, and a man, Alexander had the same favorite book: *The Iliad*, by Homer.

Since his mother, Olympias, believed that she was descended from Achilles, her son claimed the same ancestor. It is said that Alexander's tutor, Lysimachus, gained great favor when he nicknamed his young charge "Achilles." (See Fox, page 59.)

Aristotle, at Alexander's request, helped to prepare a special copy of *The Iliad* which the prince prized so highly that he always kept it with him. Even during his years of conquest he traveled with it, calling Homer's tale his "journey-book of excellence in war."

Every night he slept with it, and a dagger, under his pillow. That, at least, is what the legends say.

Alexander spoke fast, walked fast, and was so short that when he conquered Persia even a stool wasn't high enough for his feet as he sat on the Persian throne. He carried his head at a slight angle and his eyes - captured by the official court sculptor Lysippus - gazed intently. Sleep was a bother for both him and Aristotle.

Of his physical features, this much seems certain:

Like his father, he was a very handsome young man. His nose, as statues and paintings stress, was straight; his forehead was prominent and his chin short but jutting; his mouth revealed emotion, and the lips were often shown curling. (Fox, page 41.)

Born under the sign of Leo, Alexander's images on coins depict him wearing the trademark lion-skin cap of yet another claimed ancestor, Heracles (depicted here fighting the Nemean lion). Some scholars think Alexander wore the lion headdress in everyday life. (See Fox, page 41.)

When Alexander was about twelve years old, one of his father's friends gave Philip a beautiful black horse named Bucephalas. Although the horse was extremely expensive - more than three times what one would normally pay at the time for a magnificent mount - Philip was distressed when he inspected the animal. Out of control, it was bucking, kicking and refusing to take commands.

Philip, not anticipating what was about to happen, ordered the horse to be removed.

The king's son, however, had noticed something significant about Bucephalas. He seemed afraid of his own shadow. Taking advantage of that, Alexander soothed the horse and unlike all others, was able to ride him. Philip, it is said, wept for joy and declared that Macedonia would never keep such a prince within her own boundaries.

He gave the horse to his son who eventually rode it in nearly all of his major battles.

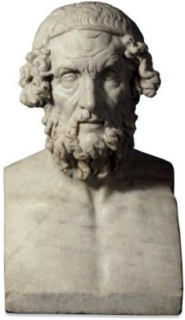
See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/THE-YOUNG-ALEXANDER-Alexander-the-Great>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

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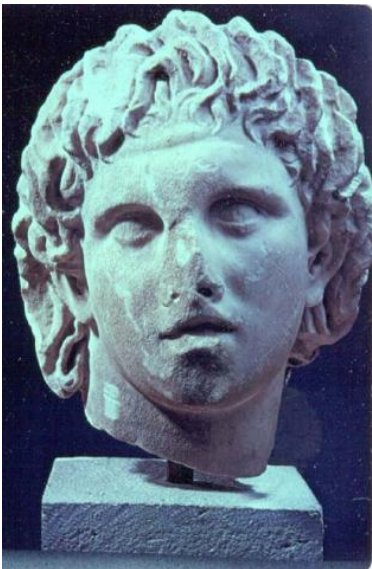
Media Stream



Homer - Ancient Poet

Image online, via the British Museum website.

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Alexander - Contemporary Statue by Lysippos

Image online, courtesy State University of New York at Oneonta [website](#).

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Artist Rendering of Alexander

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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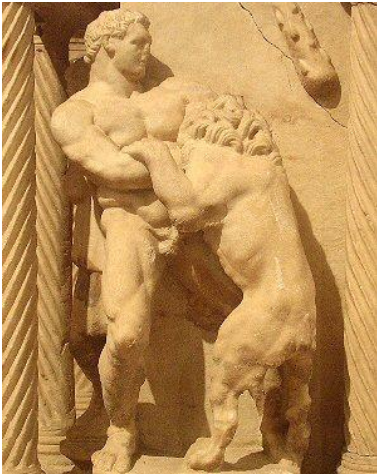


Macedonian Coins Depicting Alexander

Image online, via livius.org website.

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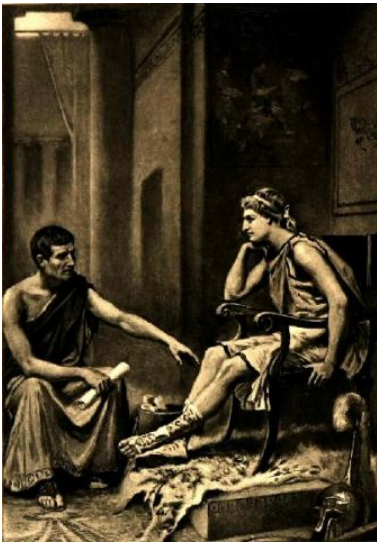


Heracles - Killing the Nemean Lion

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