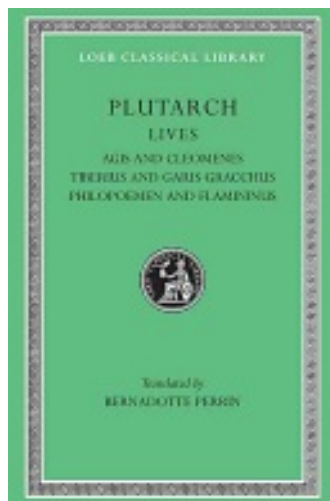


# Plutarch's Lives, Volume 10, ; 1921; Plutarch



When approaching the time of Caesar's assassination, Plutarch wrote, "...many strange prodigies and apparitions are said to have been observed shortly before this event... the wild birds which perched in the forum" (5). As Cicero fled Antony's death sentence, Plutarch wrote, "... a flight of crows rose with a great noise, and made towards Cicero's vessel, as it rowed to land, and lighting on both sides of the yard, some croaked, others pecked the ends of the ropes" (6). On the founding of Rome, he wrote, "...concluding at last to decide the contest by a divination from a flight of birds... Remus, they say, saw six vultures, and Romulus double that number... Hence it is that the Romans, in their divinations from birds, chiefly regard the vulture" (7). (For Remus, who died shortly thereafter, this appears to have been a less propitious sighting.) Description: Since its founding in 1880 by Basil Lanneau Gildersleeve, The American Journal of Philology has helped to shape

American classical scholarship. Today The Journal has achieved worldwide recognition as a forum for international exchange among classicists and philologists by publishing original research in Greek and Roman literature; classic linguistics; and Greek and Roman history, society, religion, and philosophy. One possible limitation of our study is the fact that the goodness-of-fit of the DR model is better than that of the SRDT model for lineage 1. However, on the basis of the results of a simulation study, the estimated substitution rates should still be reliable indicators of the average rate of evolution and can be used to infer the divergence times correctly also in this case (10). Our calculated substitution rates are very close to those reported for other RNA viruses, including some flaviviruses. A phylogenetic study of the entire E gene of various flaviviruses (3) estimated a rate of 7.5 x customer substitutions/site/year, and the divergence times estimated on this basis showed that the Flavivirus genus is relatively young (<10,000 years). As suggested by the phylogenetic trees, the divergence of the three groups of Flavivirus (mosquito-borne, tick-borne, and no known vector viruses) is the earliest event in their evolution and dates back to no more than 5,000 years ago (2), and the divergence of the Culex-transmitted group (including WNV) and Aedes-transmitted flaviviruses (including dengue and yellow fever viruses) has been placed at approximately 3,200 years ago (3). 11. Tsai TF, Popovici F, Cernescu C, Campbell GL, Nedelcu NI West Nile encephalitis epidemic in southeastern Romania. *Lancet* . 1998;352 :767–71 10.1016/S0140-6736(98)03538-7 [PubMed] [Cross Ref] 7. Burt FJ, Grobbelaar AA, Leman PA, Anthony FS, Gibson GV, Swanepoel R Phylogenetic relationships of southern African West Nile virus isolates. *Emerg Infect Dis* . 2002;8 :820–6 [PMC free article] [PubMed] Suggested citation for this article: Galli M, Bernini F, Zehender G. Alexander the Great and West Nile virus encephalitis [letter]. *Emerg Infect Dis* [serial on the Internet]. 2004 July [date cited]. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3201/eid1007.040396> New



York: Random House, 1941. Plutarch. The lives of the noble Grecians and Romans. (tr. J.Dryden; rev. We also thank Cunha for his exhaustive differential diagnosis. We felt we had to address all previously cited diagnoses as well as those not posited in the literature, even though, like Cunha, we did not think most of them were likely causes. We review plant toxins do not induce fever, but some do contain anticholinergic alkaloids that may interfere with perspiration and elevate body temperature. (A book book discusses a variety of poisons and their widespread use by the Greeks, Romans and Scythians [2]. The book illuminates the widespread use of poisons not only on persons but also as weapons in battle and sieges.) Since thermometers were not available at that time, it remains impossible to document this critical vital sign, but since poisoning was specifically mentioned by Plutarch, we felt we could not ignore this possibility. Who are we to ignore Plutarch? 8. Gould EA, de Lamballerie X, Zanotto PM, Holmes EC Evolution, epidemiology, and dispersal of flaviviruses revealed by molecular phylogenies. *Adv Virus Res* . 2001;57 :71–103 10.1016/S0065-3527(01)57001-3 [PubMed] [Cross Ref] Issue online: 13 February 2006; Version of record online: 13 February 2006. References. Capes, WW University life in ancient Athens. London: Longmans, Green, 1877. 3. Zanotto PM, Gould EA, Gao GF, Harvey PH, Holmes EC Population dynamics of flaviviruses revealed by molecular phylogenies. *Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A* . 1996;93 :548–53 10.1073/pnas.93.2.548 [PMC free article] [PubMed] [Cross Ref]

To the Editor: The article by Marr and Calisher (1) concerning the causes of the death of Alexander the Great triggered our curiosity about the possibility of supporting this hypothesis by determining the evolutionary time of West Nile virus (WNV). WNV is a member of the Culex-transmitted clade of flavivirus (which also includes Japanese encephalitis virus, St. Louis encephalitis virus, and Murray Valley encephalitis virus) whose reservoir is birds (1). Like most of the RNA viruses, flaviviruses are characterized by a high degree of genomic variability (2,3). Strains of WNV currently are divided into two distinct lineages on a molecular basis: one with a worldwide distribution and the other, which includes the prototypic strain isolated in Uganda in 1937 that is only found in sub-Saharan Africa and Madagascar.