

Defining Documents in World History: The Ancient World (2700 B.C.E.-c.500 C.E.)

“This primary source collection, another entry in the Defining Documents series published under the Grey House/Salem Press banner, represents the first title in a new sub-series: *Defining Document in World History: Ancient World*. Like the original series’ prior US-focused titles, the present title is edited by Michael Shally-Jensen.

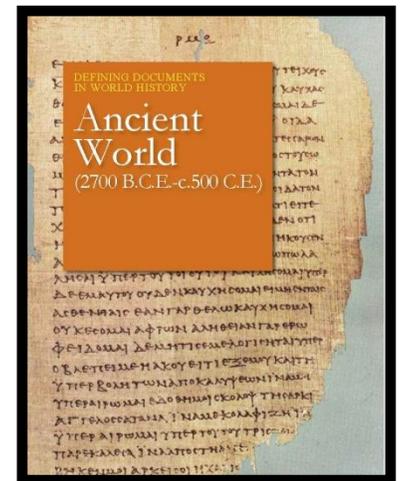
The core of this slim collection is the documents and their analyses. Documents excerpted originated in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Asia (China and India), Greece, Rome, and “Distant Lands” (which turn out to be Europe and modern-day Guatemala). The title contains **40 primary sources** (running one to two pages to ten or more pages), prefaced with a scene-setting overview, “defining moment” description, and some basic data (date, region, author). After the primary source itself and a brief glossary (printed in a shaded box) come the analysis essay and “essential themes.” Closing each section is a brief list of further readings.

Compilation of ancient documents in translation today presents particular challenges to teachers, students, and publishers. These key challenges:

- 1) are the primary sources standard canonical texts or do they represent potentially new and unfamiliar texts to most students?
- 2) are the translations fresh and recent or do they rely on early-twentieth-century translations (which sometimes require a translation of their own!)?
- 3) do the primary sources well represent the entire “ancient” history of the world or do they largely come from well-studied Greece, Rome, Egypt, and Mesopotamia?

Judged by these criteria, this document collection fares relatively well in geographic diversity: eight of the forty documents originated in Asia. The document selection itself is relatively traditional: Code of Hammurabi, Epic of Gilgamesh, Sun Tzu, Bhagavad Gita, Thucydides, the funeral oration of Pericles, Cicero, and so on... **the analytical materials go some distance toward making the primary sources relevant to students.”**
—ARBA Staff Reviewer

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