

# Defining Documents in World History: Nationalism & Populism (320 B.C.E.-2017 C.E.)

## Reviews

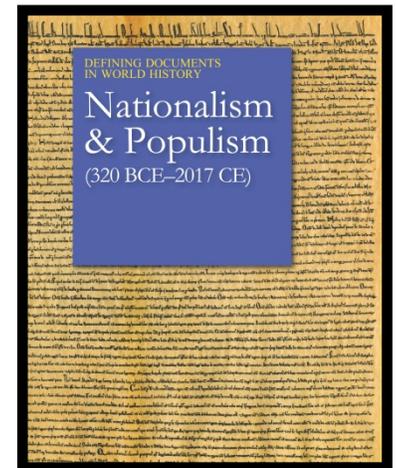
"If, as Tacitus once said, "money is the sinew of war," then documents are its muscle, either to commence a war, or to end one. The current volumes nicely undergird this assumption. Contained in these volumes are facsimiles of the documents from the beginning of the common era of states, with Aristotle and the Athenian Constitution, to the present day.

However, it isn't just reproductions of those documents. Each section **begins with an evaluative essay about the era**. Each chapter in that section **explains the historical document** in its context; stressing so-called tipping points that may well have been **the defining moment** for the defining document, as well as a brief overview of the author or authors of the document. Following the document itself is a careful, **studied but highly readable analysis of it**, why it is important, and what it may have led to: prosperity or impoverishment. Short bibliographies follow each chapter.

Volume one contains documents in relation to nationalism and populism, beginning with the ancient and medieval eras and including the American and French Revolutions, the 19th century, and the First World War. The second volume follows a similar pattern, beginning with the Second World War followed by Cold War documents and other documents from the 20th and 21st centuries. While it may well be in the eye of the beholder, it's hard to imagine anyone finding the announcement of the Trump candidacy equivalent to Magna Carta and the Declaration of Independence, but all three are here.

The Renaissance and early modern era volume (roughly 1380-1600) follows a very similar pattern, collecting documents that define those years. Included are documents referring to the Black Death, Joan of Arc's letter to Henry VI, a brief snippet of the *Divine Comedy*, Columbus's letter about the discovery of America, the Dutch declaration of independence, and much more.

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**These volumes are indispensable aids** in an age that relies more and more on second hand or even tertiary reported information rather than the ipsissima verba, the very words themselves. While most, if not all such documents are on the ubiquitous web, not many still look at them, or read them in context. These volumes go a long way to act as an anodyne to our penchant for responding first and thinking, if at all, much later.”

-ARBA

Edited by historian Simonelli (Youngstown State Univ.), this recent issue in the publisher's "Defining Documents in American History" series offers **thorough analyses of a wide spectrum of seminal documents and declarations pertaining to the political conceptions of nationalism and populism**. Ranging from Aristotle's Athenian Constitution in 328 BCE to Donald Trump's presidential candidacy announcement and 2017 inaugural address, the **59 chronologically ordered entries** include treaties, laws, court orders, letters, diplomatic correspondence, sermons, and reflective essays. The texts are organized into sections, each centered on a crucial event (the American or French Revolutions, WW I, WW II, the Cold War, etc.). A brief, one-page introduction to each section gives historical and political context, while individual entries start with an overview and biographical sketches of individuals involved, providing either the entire text or excerpts of the documentary source. Each one offers a **"Defining Moment"** plus an analysis that takes a careful look at the text and its meaning in its time period and today. The volume includes a **12-page comprehensive bibliography**; a **helpful index** for users seeking topics that span multiple essays; a separate, **valuable glossary** for each primary source; and occasional photo-facsimiles of original documents. Themes point out the author's rhetorical intent and conclude with a short list of further readings. The clear emphasis is on the documents themselves, rather than the scholarly interpretation of these documents.

**Summing Up: Highly recommended. High school through upper-level undergraduate students; general readers.**

-CHOICE