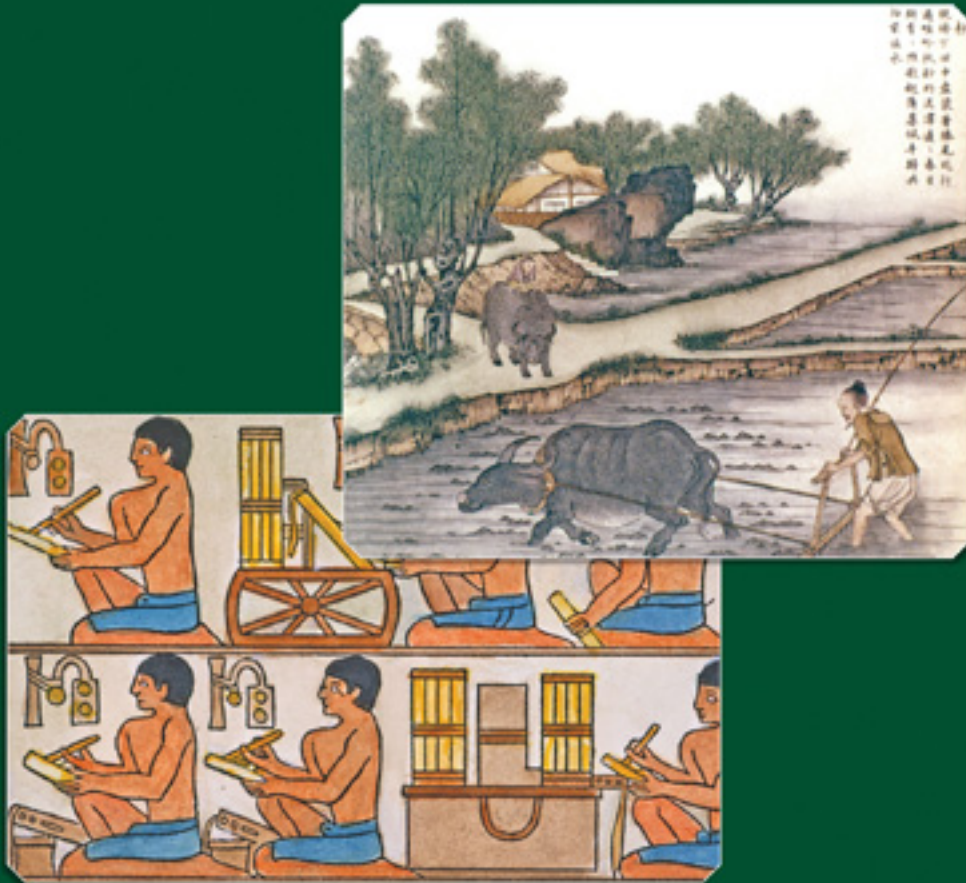


## DOCUMENTS

Interpreting Alternative Viewpoints  
in Primary Source Documents

# Slaves, Peasants, and Scribes in the Ancient World

*Complex social structures were at work  
in the civilizations of the ancient world.*



Samples are provided for evaluation purposes. Copying of the product or its parts for resale is prohibited. Additional restrictions may be set by the publisher.

## *Debating* the DOCUMENTS

Interpreting Alternative Viewpoints  
in Primary Source Documents

# Slaves, Peasants, and Scribes in the Ancient World

---

The 2017 World History Course and Exam Description of the College Board Advanced Placement Program\* lists five themes that it urges teachers to use in organizing their teaching. Each World History *Debating the Documents* booklet focuses on one or two of these five themes.

### *The Five Themes*

- 1. Interaction between humans and the environment.** (demography and disease; migration; patterns of settlement; technology)
- 2. Development and interaction of cultures.** (religions; belief systems, philosophies, and ideologies; science and technology; the arts and architecture)
- 3. State-building, expansion, and conflict.** (political structures and forms of governance; empires; nations and nationalism; revolts and revolutions; regional, transregional, and global structures and organizations)
- 4. Creation, expansion, and interaction of economic systems.** (agricultural and pastoral production; trade and commerce; labor systems; industrialization; capitalism and socialism)
- 5. Development and transformation of social structures.** (gender roles and relations; family and kinship; racial and ethnic constructions; social and economic classes)

### *This Booklet's Main Theme:*

- 5** Development and transformation of social structures.

\* AP and Advanced Placement Program are registered trademarks of the College Entrance Examination Board, which was not involved in the production of and does not endorse this booklet.

# Contents

<b>Teacher Introduction</b> . . . . .	1
<b>Suggestions to the Student</b> . . . . .	5
<b>Introductory Essay</b> . . . . .	6
<b>Slaves, Peasants, and Scribes Time Line</b> . . . . .	7
<b>First Group of Documents</b> . . . . .	8
Study the Documents . . . . .	10
Comparing the Documents . . . . .	12
Comparison Essay . . . . .	13
<b>Second Group of Documents</b> . . . . .	14
Study the Documents . . . . .	16
Comparing the Documents . . . . .	18
Comparison Essay . . . . .	19
<b>Document-Based Question</b> . . . . .	20
<b>Worksheet Answers and Guidelines</b> . . . . .	21
<b>Visual Primary Sources</b> . . . . .	23

# Teacher Introduction

## ★ Using Primary Sources

Primary sources are called “primary” because they are first-hand records of a past era or historical event. They are the raw materials, or the evidence, on which historians base their “secondary” accounts of the past.

A rapidly growing number of history teachers today are using primary sources. Why? Perhaps it's because primary sources give students a better sense of what history is and what historians do. Such sources also help students see the past from a variety of viewpoints. Moreover, primary sources make history vivid and bring it to life.

However, primary sources are not easy to use. They can be confusing. They can be biased. They rarely all agree. Primary sources must be interpreted and set in context. To do this, students need historical background knowledge. *Debating the Documents* helps students handle such challenges by giving them a useful framework for analyzing sources that conflict with one another.



*“Multiple,  
conflicting  
perspectives are  
among the truths  
of history.  
No single  
objective or  
universal account  
could ever put an  
end to this endless  
creative dialogue  
within and  
between the past  
and the present.”*

From the 2011 Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct of the Council of the American Historical Association.

## INTRODUCTION

### ★ *The Debating the Documents Series*

Each *Debating the Documents* booklet includes the same sequence of reproducible worksheets. If students use several booklets over time, they will get regular practice at interpreting and comparing conflicting sources. In this way, they can learn the skills and habits needed to get the most out of primary sources.

#### **Each *Debating the Documents* Booklet Includes**

- **Suggestions for the Student and an Introductory Essay.** The student gets instructions and a one-page essay providing background on the booklet's topic. A time line on the topic is also included.
- **Two Groups of Contrasting Primary Source Documents.** In most of the booklets, students get one pair of visual sources and one pair of written sources. In some cases, more than two are provided for each. Background is provided on each source. *Within each group, the sources clash in a very clear way.* (The sources are not always exact opposites, but they do always differ in some obvious way.)
- **Three Worksheets for Each Document Group.** Students use the first two worksheets to take notes on the sources. The third worksheet asks which source the student thinks would be most useful to a historian.
- **One DBQ.** On page 20, a document-based question (DBQ) asks students to write an effective essay using all of the booklet's primary sources.

### ★ *How to Use This Booklet*

#### **1. Have students read “Suggestions for the Student” and the Introductory Essay.**

Give them copies of pages 5–7. Ask them to read the instructions and then read the introductory essay on the topic. The time line gives them additional information on that topic. This reading could be done in class or as a homework assignment.

#### **2. Have students do the worksheets.**

Make copies of the worksheets and the pages with the sources. Ask students to study the background information on each source and the source itself. Then have them take notes on the sources using the worksheets. If students have access to a computer, have them review the primary sources digitally.

NOTE: If you are using these materials with an AP world history class, an honors class, or some other group of advanced and/or more knowledgeable students, you may want to make more written sources available to them on this topic. Do a basic Internet search for sources that provide additional perspectives and then add to the sources provided here.

### 3. “Debate the documents” as a class.

Have students use their worksheet notes to debate the primary source documents as a class. Urge students to follow these ground rules:

- Use your worksheets as a guide for the discussion or debate.
- Try to reach agreement about the main ideas and the significance of each primary source document.
- Look for points of agreement as well as disagreement between the primary sources.
- Listen closely to all points of view about each primary source.
- Focus on the usefulness of each source to the historian, not merely on whether you agree or disagree with that source’s point of view.

### 4. Have students do the final DBQ.

A DBQ is an essay question about a set of primary source documents. To answer the DBQ, students write essays using evidence from the sources and their own background knowledge of the historical era. (See the next page for a DBQ scoring guide to use in evaluating these essays.)

The DBQ assignment on page 20 includes guidelines for writing a DBQ essay. Here are some additional points to make with students about preparing to write this kind of essay.

#### **The DBQ for this Booklet (see page 20):**

“Social inequality increased as civilizations developed. It was harsh, but it was necessary for order and for cultural growth.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?

- Analyze the question carefully.
- Use your background knowledge to set sources in their historical context.
- Question and interpret sources actively. Do not accept them at face value.
- Use sources meaningfully to support your essay’s thesis.
- Pay attention to the overall organization of your essay.

## INTRODUCTION

### ★ *Complete DBQ Scoring Guide*

Use this guide in evaluating the DBQ for this booklet. Use this scoring guide with students who are already familiar with using primary sources and writing DBQ essays.

#### **Excellent Essay**

- Offers a clear answer or thesis explicitly addressing all aspects of the essay question.
- Does a careful job of interpreting many or most of the documents and relating them clearly to the thesis and the DBQ. Deals with conflicting documents effectively.
- Uses details and examples effectively to support the thesis and other main ideas. Explains the significance of those details and examples well.
- Uses background knowledge and the documents in a balanced way.
- Is well written; clear transitions make the essay easy to follow from point to point. Only a few minor writing errors or errors of fact.

#### **Good Essay**

- Offers a reasonable thesis addressing the essential points of the essay question.
- Adequately interprets at least some of the documents and relates them to the thesis and the DBQ.
- Usually relates details and examples meaningfully to the thesis or other main ideas.
- Includes some relevant background knowledge.
- May have some writing errors or errors of fact, as long as these do not invalidate the essay's overall argument or point of view.

#### **Fair Essay**

- Offers at least a partly developed thesis addressing the essay question.
- Adequately interprets at least a few of the documents.
- Relates only a few of the details and examples to the thesis or other main ideas.
- Includes some background knowledge.
- Has several writing errors or errors of fact that make it harder to understand the essay's overall argument or point of view.

#### **Poor Essay**

- Offers no clear thesis or answer addressing the DBQ.
- Uses few documents effectively other than referring to them in “laundry list” style, with no meaningful relationship to a thesis or any main point.
- Uses details and examples unrelated to the thesis or other main ideas. Does not explain the significance of these details and examples.
- Is not clearly written, with some major writing errors or errors of fact.

# Suggestions to the Student

## ★ *Using Primary Sources*

A primary source is any record of evidence from the past. Many things are primary sources: letters, diary entries, official documents, photos, cartoons, wills, maps, charts, etc. They are called “primary” because they are first-hand records of a past event or time period. This *Debating the Documents* lesson is based on two groups of primary source documents. Within each group, the sources conflict with one another. That is, they express different or even opposed points of view. You need to decide which source is more reliable, more useful, or more typical of the time period. This is what historians do all the time. Usually, you will be able to learn something about the past from each source, even when the sources clash with one another in dramatic ways.

## ★ *How to Use This Booklet*

### 1. **Read the one-page introductory essay.**

This gives you background information that will help you analyze the primary source documents and do the exercises for this *Debating the Documents* lesson. The time line gives you additional information you will find helpful.



### 2. **Study the primary source documents for this lesson.**

For this lesson, you get two groups of sources. The sources within each group conflict with one another. Some of these sources are visuals, others are written sources. With visual sources, pay attention not only to the image’s “content” (its subject matter) but also to its artistic style, shading, composition, camera angle, symbols, and other features that add to the image’s meaning. With written sources, notice the writing style, bias, even what the source leaves out or does not talk about. Think about each source’s author, that author’s reasons for writing, and the likely audience for the source. These considerations give you clues as to the source’s historical value.

### 3. **Use the worksheets to analyze each group of primary source documents.**

For each group of sources, you get three worksheets. Use the “Study the Document” worksheets to take notes on each source. Use the “Comparing the Documents” worksheet to decide which of the sources would be most useful to a historian.

### 4. **As a class, debate the documents.**

Use your worksheet notes to help you take part in this debate.

### 5. **Do the final DBQ.**

“DBQ” means “document-based question.” A DBQ is a question along with several primary source documents. To answer the DBQ, write an essay using evidence from the documents and your own background history knowledge.



## *Slaves, Peasants, and Scribes*

“The poor ye shall always have with thee,” says Jesus in the Christian New Testament. Is this true? Has it always been true? Or to put it another way, is social inequality inevitable?

It’s unlikely that any certain answer will ever be given to this question. Some historians do say that in small ancient hunter-gatherer bands (of perhaps 25–50 people), there was just too little wealth for anyone to have. In any case, each member depended totally on all the others in such groups. Small and uncertain food supplies and other resources had to be shared equally. Little could be stored, since the group had to move to follow the game during the year. Without any ability to collect and save goods, no one could grow wealthy. In this context, a code of sharing and cooperation would naturally develop.

Some historians also say that within such small tribes, men and women would have been quite equal. Men did the hunting and protected the group from its enemies. Women gathered nuts, berries, edible roots, and other foods that probably made up the bulk of what people ate. Also, women cared for children, a vital activity given how small the group was and how hard it was for it to survive. These crucial social roles may well have led to a good deal of equality between men and women.

Yet, no one really knows if such social equality existed in as pure a form as we have just described. After all, hunting and fighting in those distant times took great physical strength. A few strong males in each band or tribe might well have dominated others. Also, without books or writing, the group’s experiences and knowledge had to be stored in the heads of the oldest members. Therefore, these elders may also have enjoyed higher status than others. A shaman or other religious figure might have had extra prestige and power as well. Nevertheless, equality and cooperation were probably the norm for these groups.

With agriculture, food surpluses, and settled life, this began to change. Then came complex civilizations with cities, kingdoms and empires, monumental buildings, irrigation and water-

control systems, writing, and long-distance trade. To guide and regulate this more complex life, wealthy and powerful elites emerged to rule over lower classes of peasants, laborers, and slaves. In other words, sharp differences of power, status, and prestige arose. Religious ideas and ceremonies often gave spiritual support and backing for the rulers of these more complex societies and their unequal division of wealth and power. Here are three views about the causes of this social inequality:

1. Inequalities arose because of a need for protection. That is, strong leaders and armies were needed to protect the stored wealth, landed property, and other resources of these settled civilizations. Nomadic warriors and others found these things too tempting. Hence, warfare arose, and this created inequality.
2. Food surpluses allowed some to develop new skills, as artisans, engineers, merchants, soldiers, and priests. To encourage these skills, greater rewards had to be offered. Inequality resulted as small specialized elites gained control over society’s growing resources.
3. Inequality is simply a part of human nature, perhaps even a necessary and beneficial part. Someone has to lead. Someone has to create or innovate. Some inequality has always existed, even in the simplest societies. The rise of civilization only enabled it to grow wider.

Historians have tried to account for social inequality in the complex societies that emerged starting around 3500 BCE. The visual sources here will only offer you some clues about the causes of this inequality. However, these sources will help you as you begin to explore, think about, and debate the nature and the causes of this key aspect of human history.

# Slaves, Peasants, and Scribes Time Line

**9000–3500 BCE**



As the climate warms and human populations increase, hunter-gatherer bands slowly learn to tend to wild plants. Settled farming and the herding of domesticated animals develop. By 8000 BCE, agricultural villages exist in North Africa and in the “Fertile Crescent,” in Mesopotamia. The wheel, pottery, and use of metals follow in those regions and elsewhere. Agriculture emerges in Mesoamerica and in the Andes by at least 5500 BCE. By 4000 BCE, evidence of rice cultivation occurs in China.

**3500–2700 BCE**



By 3500 BCE, along the Nile in northern Africa and along the Tigris and Euphrates (Mesopotamia) in Southwest Asia, the first complex civilizations appear. Before 3000 BCE, the Sumerians in Mesopotamia develop writing in cuneiform on clay tablets. Sumerian city-states form. Kingship soon appears, along with fortified walls around cities and monumental building of temples and palaces. All this is evidence of the power of rulers and priests. Around 3100 BCE, Upper and Lower Egypt are united under Menes, the first Pharaoh. Irrigation and other water control projects are developed along with other signs of a growing ability to control and coordinate the labor of large numbers of people.

**2700–2200 BCE**



During the Egyptian Old Kingdom (2700–2200 BCE), the great pyramids are built, probably by skilled laborers and peasants when not needed in the fields, rather than by slaves. Egyptian hieroglyphics become standardized. A civilization arises along the Indus river in northwestern India (today’s Pakistan) starting around 2600 BCE. In Mesopotamia in 2340 BCE, Sargon establishes the Akkadian empire.

**2200–1700 BCE**



The first Babylonian Empire arises in Mesopotamia (approximately 1900–1600 BCE). Hammurabi (1792–1750 BCE) produces his famous law code. It makes clear the power of king and priesthood and the sharp class divisions in Babylonian society. In Egypt during the Middle Kingdom (approximately 2050–1650 BCE), the Pharaohs are at the height of their power. Around 1900 BCE, the Indus River civilization begins to collapse.

**1700–1000 BCE**



Egypt’s New Kingdom rules. In China, carved oracle bones from the Shang Dynasty (around 1570–1050 BCE) are the earliest examples of Chinese writing. By around 1200 BCE, the Olmec civilization arises in swampy lowland areas in what is now southern Mexico. Large statues are built. Luxury artifacts from far away suggest a sizable trading network.

**After 1000 BCE**



Throughout the Eurasian landmass, new civilizations arise after about 1200 BCE, as the iron age and other changes end the sole dominance of the older river valley civilizations. Buddhism, the prophets of the Old Testament, Confucius, and other thinkers in varied ways protest, deal with, seek to ease, or accept a place for social inequality. After 1000 BCE, the Maya in Mesoamerica build ceremonial structures and, much later, develop writing and create complex solar calendars. Maya civilization reaches its height from about CE 200–900, with city-states, palaces, pyramids, carved stone texts, and more.

## DOCUMENT 1

## Primary Source Document 1



The Granger Collection, New York

### Information on Document 1

This illustration shows a Chinese peasant guiding a water buffalo as it pulls a harrow across rice paddy. Harrowing breaks up the clods of plowed earth and removes weeds. The illustration is dated 1689, yet the scene in it is not that different from what would have been seen centuries earlier in China.

Harrowing was only one of many stages in rice-paddy cultivation. The rice seedlings are first raised in seedling beds. Then the field is plowed, harrowed, and fertilized, often with dung. After several weeks, the

field is flooded and the rice plants are transplanted into it. The flooding keeps weeds under control. Once the rice plants are growing well, the field can be drained. At harvest time, the rice is cut and the grains of rice are threshed and winnowed (thrown in the air) to loosen and separate their outer husks.

As this suggests, the life of a traditional peasant was a hard one of long days at work in the fields.