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How do historians come to conclusions about what happened in the past? They rely on clues to re-construct the past in the same way that detectives use clues to reconstruct the scenes and conditions that led to a crime. Historians find their clues, or evidence, in "primary sources"—that is, writings, art, buildings, and other material produced by people in the past which survive in the present. This book is a collection of primary sources produced over the course of Western civilization. You might find that your use of these sources is rather like a history job. In a chemistry course your instructor lays out a series of generalizations about, say, chemical reactions. In the lab, your job is to see those generalizations, to see whether the chemical reactions that you actually observe match what your instructor would have predicted. Primary sources offer history students a similar experience. A consideration of certain matters can help you take that opportunity. The first thing to do is to grapple with the source itself. Why is all this important? There are at least a couple of reasons. In the first place, since you are taking a history course, it makes sense that you should come to understand what historians do, and so get an understanding of the grounds on which a knowledge of the past, such as it is, rests. But there is another reason. By using historical evidence, you will be sharpening your skills at reasoned argument from any kind of evidence. Most people encounter arguments that purport to be based on evidence. Journalists, businesspeople, lawyers, politicians, and many others try to persuade you that evidence—"the facts"—shows this or that. By learning how to handle historical evidence well, you learn how better to construct, recognize or recognize of what you hear or read, both in and out of the classroom. In other words, the historian's skills, which this reader aims to help you develop, are not just for doing history. They are for life.

Edited by Michael Burger

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Sources for the History of Western Civilization is a primary source reader designed specifically to allow undergraduate students to interact with historical documents without unnecessary editorial intervention. Volume I

begins in the second millennium BC with The Descent of Ishtar and ends with Thomas Paine's The Age of Reason. New to this edition are an example for students of how to read a primary source, selections from Thucydides' History of the Peloponnesian War, additional material from Augustine's Confessions, additional letters from Sidonius Appollinaris and Desiderius Erasmus, and the Code Noir.

When I teach critical readings such as Plato's Symposium, Perpetua's Martyrdom, or Machiavelli's The Prince, I want my students to do more than brush the surface. Professors and students who want the challenge of engaging deeply with some of the most influential writers in Western history will find this book indispensable. (Leah deVun, Rutgers University) The new edition provides a convenient collection of complete texts often at the heart of Western Civilization surveys along with more unusual readings. (Erik Thomson, University of Manitoba) About the Author Michael Burger is an historian of medieval Europe and the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Auburn University at Montgomery. He is the author of Bishops, Clerks, and Diocesan Governance in Thirteenth-Century England: Reward and Punishment (2014) and The Shaping of Western Civilization (2013).