

TWELFTH EDITION

Volume 1

# Western Civilizations



**Lerner • Meacham • Burns**

ROBERT E. LERNER  
STANDISH MEACHAM  
EDWARD MCNALL BURNS

# WESTERN CIVILIZATIONS

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*Their History and Their Culture*

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VOLUME 1

TWELFTH EDITION

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## PREFACE

George Orwell once remarked that “keeping the past up to date is a full-time job.” This insight seems particularly telling as a result of the startling rush of events during the last few years. “Trends” that seemed so clear only yesterday have turned out to be no trends at all. In addition, dramatic advances in historical scholarship have cast new light on old problems and have placed into prominence subject matters that historians previously had all but ignored. Accordingly we have worked hard to keep the past up to date for this twelfth edition of *Western Civilizations*. Yet we have always worked within the framework of authorial principles bequeathed to us by E. M. Burns—principles that may have served to make this book a “text-book classic.” We offer a history of civilizations—an evolving account of the ways in which human beings have organized their lives in response to changing environments and persistent needs. Thus we complement narrative passages with discussions of ideas and societal institutions, and we draw heavily on pictorial material to give our readers the best impression possible of how our civilizations really looked. We try as well to avoid a tone of disembodied truth, both because we do not believe there is such a thing and because we want to engage and maintain our readers’ attention. Our urgent desire is to demonstrate without resorting to cheapness that “first-year history” need not be viewed as a chore but might be welcomed as a source of intellectual excitement, even delight.

Although we have gone over *Western Civilizations* line by line in our effort to keep the past up to date, teachers will wish to know where the most significant changes occur. Chapter 5, on Greek civilization, is almost entirely new. Among its new features are a completely reconceived section on women and men in the daily life of ancient Athens, a consideration of the role of the Greek alphabet and the transformation of military techniques in the rise of the *polis*, and an emphasis on the differences as well as similarities between Athenian and modern democracies. About half of the Roman chapter (Chapter 7) is also new. Major innovations here include an

altered treatment of the nature of family life (we have greatly changed our estimation of the role of women), a greater emphasis on the significance of slavery within the Roman economic and social system, and a reorganized discussion of Roman golden-age and silver-age literature. Other noteworthy changes in Parts One and Two are: a revised discussion of the stages of Hebrew religious development; an account of the volcanic eruption on the island of Thera; a reorganized presentation of Minoan social and cultural history; streamlined treatment of Epicureanism and Hellenistic religion; a new discussion of the conversion of Constantine. Finally, we have replaced the abbreviation “A.D.” with “C.E.”: students no longer know the meaning of *anno domini*, and C.E. (standing for “Common Era”) assumes no particular religious commitment.

In the medieval chapters certain terms that would not be readily understandable to beginners, such as *see* and *benefice*, have been eliminated. The treatment of the formation of the Russian Empire in Chapter 12 now distinguishes carefully between Russia proper and the other Slavic-speaking territories. In Chapter 13 the treatment of the Greek studies of the humanists has been rewritten; corrections have also been made in discussions of the work of Raphael and Michelangelo. Chapter 15 contains a rewritten paragraph on Pascal (students are reminded that a computer language was named after him!). Chapter 16 has been reorganized to place greater emphasis on the conflicts produced by changes occurring throughout the society and economy of early-modern Europe and particularly by the effects of proto-industrialization. Treatment of Rousseau has been moved from Chapter 19 (the French Revolution) to Chapter 18 (the Enlightenment) and has been completely rewritten with the aim of presenting Rousseau’s ideas on education as well as government.

Chapter 19, which deals with the French Revolution, has been reshaped; a rewritten section on the origins of the Revolution attends to recent scholarship on the relationship between social structure and politics. Material in Chapter 25, on the challenge of science, has been expanded, as have sections on Russia before the First World War (Chapter 26) and during the war (Chapter 27). In Chapter 28, the treatment of the Soviet Union, Italy, and Germany has been modified in the light of scholarly analysis that distinguishes between authoritarian dictatorships in those three countries. Finally, material in the last two chapters has been thoroughly updated and includes a discussion of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the reordering of politics in Eastern Europe, the reunification of Germany, the economic integration of Western Europe, as well as events in other parts of the fast-changing world of the 1990s.

Robert Lerner has been responsible for Chapters 1 through 15, as well as Chapter 18; Standish Meacham for the rest. To borrow a phrase from the tenth century savant, Gerbert of Rheims: “we write what we know, and what we do not know we learn.” In seeking guidance, we always learn much from colleagues and reviewers. For this edition we are enormously indebted to reviews provided by Clifford Backman (Boston University), David Graf (University of Miami), Carolyn Lougee (Stanford University),



Daniel Orlovsky (Southern Methodist University), Peter Sahlin (University of California, Berkeley), Richard Saller (University of Chicago), Arlene Wolinsky (San Diego Mesa College), and Stephen Wesley (York College of Pennsylvania), and the anonymous reviewers commissioned by our publisher. Robert Lerner is also grateful to Stephen Harris, Alauddin Samarra (St. Cloud State University), Nancy Spatz (University of Northern Colorado), Heide Stier, Steven Williams (University of Northern Iowa), and Rachel Wolford for alerting him to numerous errors, dubieties, and infelicities. Standish Meacham acknowledges the thoughtful advice and suggestions received from Nancy Barker and David Crew (University of Texas). To Simon Cordery and Ann Rodrick he owes special and heartfelt thanks. Without their timely, patient, and professional assistance, he could not have completed this assignment. At W. W. Norton and Company the supervisors of this edition have been Robert Kehoe and Steven Forman. A. Deborah Malmud has gathered illustrations with resourcefulness and awesome perseverance. Our editor, Sandy Lifland, has been unfailingly patient and helpful, teaching us gracefully about a range of matters from Kepler's Laws to Lifland's Laws of "that and which."

Robert Lerner  
Standish Meacham

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# Part One

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## THE DAWN OF HISTORY

*Our story—the human story—begins about two million years ago in Africa. Very recent field research has demonstrated that the earliest “humanlike” species was that of an upright, large-brained primate who foraged for food on the African savannahs some twenty thousand centuries before today. Four hundred thousand years later humanlike creatures began migrating out of Africa, and during the next million and a quarter years such creatures—spread throughout the Eastern Hemisphere—learned how to use fire and to communicate with each other by means of speech. “Neanderthal” peoples followed on the evolutionary chain, and then, around 40,000 years ago, peoples who were fully modern humans from the anatomical point of view. These earliest humans colonized America and Australia and also painted beautiful murals on the walls of western European caves. With the invention of agriculture in western Asia about 10,000 years ago came a dramatic change in the entire nature of human existence, for humans engaged in agriculture stopped being wanderers and settled instead in villages. (Sedentary life led “rapidly” (over the course of about 5,000 years) to civilization—government, writing, arts, and sciences on the one hand; war, social inequalities, and oppression on the other. The earliest Western civilizations emerged in Mesopotamia around 3200 B.C. Thereafter, until about 600 B.C., the most prominent civilizations outside of eastern Asia and America were those of the Mesopotamians, Egyptians, Hebrews, Minoans, and Mycenaeans.)*





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# Chapter 1

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## THE EARLIEST BEGINNINGS

What is particularly interesting about our species? For a start, we walk upright on our hindlegs at all times, which is an extremely unusual way of getting around for a mammal. There are also several unusual features about our head, not least of which is the very large brain it contains. . . . Our forelimbs, being freed from helping us to get about, possess a very high degree of manipulative skill. Part of this skill lies in the anatomical structure of the hands, but the crucial element is, of course, the power of the brain. . . . The most obvious product of our hands and brains is technology. (No other animal manipulates the world in the extensive and arbitrary way that humans do.) The termites are capable of constructing intricately structured mounds which create their own “air-conditioned” environment inside. But the termites cannot choose to build a cathedral instead. (Humans are unique because they have the capacity to choose what they do.)

—Richard E. Leakey, *The Making of Mankind*

### 1. THE NATURE OF HISTORY

Catherine Morland, the heroine of Jane Austen’s novel *Northanger Abbey*, complained that history “tells me nothing that does not either vex or weary me. The quarrels of popes and kings, with wars or pestilences in every page; the men all so good for nothing, and hardly any women at all, it is very tiresome.” Although Jane Austen’s heroine said this around 1800, she might have lodged the same complaint until quite recently, for until deep into the twentieth century most historians considered history to be little more than “past politics”—and a dry chronicle of past politics at that. The content of history was restricted primarily to battles and treaties, the personalities and politics of statesmen, the laws and decrees of rulers. But important as such data are, they by no means constitute the whole substance of history. Especially within the last few decades historians have come to recognize that history comprises a record of past human activities in every sphere—not just political developments, but also social, economic, and intellectual ones. Women as well as men, the ruled as well

*History more than battles  
and treaties*

as the rulers, the poor as well as the rich, are part of history. So too are the social and economic institutions that men and women have created and that in turn have shaped their lives: family and social class; manorialism and city life; capitalism and industrialism. Ideas and attitudes too, not just of intellectuals, but also of people whose lives may have been virtually untouched by “great books,” are all part of the historian’s concern. And most important, history includes an inquiry into the causes of events and patterns of human organization and ideas—a search for the forces that impelled humanity toward its great undertakings, and the reasons for its successes and failures.

#### *New historical methods*

As historians have extended the scope of their work, they have also equipped themselves with new methods and tools, the better to practice their craft. No longer do historians merely pore over the same old chronicles and documents to ask whether Charles the Fat was at Ingelheim or Lustnau on July 1, 887. To introduce the evidence of statistics, they learn the methods of the computer scientist. To interpret the effect of a rise in the cost of living, they study economics. To deduce marriage patterns or evaluate the effect upon an entire population of wars and plagues, they master the skills of the demographer. To explore the phenomena of cave-dwelling or modern urbanization, they become archeologists, studying fossil remains, fragments of pots, or modern city landscapes. To understand the motives of the men and women who have acted in the past, they draw on the insights of social psychologists and cultural anthropologists. To illuminate the lives and thoughts of those who have left few or no written records, they look for other cultural remains such as folk songs, folk tales, and funerary monuments.

#### *Limited evidence and the quest for valid reconstructions*

Of course with all their ingenuity historians cannot create evidence. An almost infinite number of past events are not retrievable because they transpired without leaving any traces; many others are at best known imperfectly. Thus some of the most fundamental questions about “how things were” in the past can either never be answered or answered only on the grounds of highly qualified inferences. Questions regarding motives and causes may not have definite answers for other reasons. Since individual humans often hardly understand their own motives, it is presumptuous to think that anyone can ever be entirely certain about establishing the motives of others. As for the causes of collective developments such as wars, economic growth trends, or changes in artistic styles, these are surely too complex to be reduced to a science. Nonetheless, the more evidence we have, the closer we come to providing valid reconstructions and explanations about what happened in the past. Moreover, the difficulties inherent in assembling and interpreting all sorts of data for the purposes of historical analysis should not be regarded with despair but looked upon as stimulating intellectual challenges.

#### *Approaches to history*

Should we go to the past to celebrate one or another lost age or seek to learn how we got to be the way we are now? Obviously neither one of these extremes is satisfactory, for nostalgia almost invariably leads to distortion, and at any rate is useless, whereas extreme “present-mindedness” also