



Is it Time for a “490 B.C. Project”?

High Schoolers Need to Know Our Classical Heritage

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INTRODUCTION

When Americans knew classical history, they could reach beyond partisan differences by drawing on the shared roots of our civilization. American students once learned, for example, about the Greek victory at Marathon in 490 B.C. This kept Greece from being swallowed up by the Persian Empire and ushered in the Golden Age of Athenian democracy which, for all its shortcomings, was a pathbreaking achievement. Democratic Athens, counterbalanced by Sparta’s tripartite system, led to broad-based polities and ultimately the Roman Republic. From there we trace a clear line to Magna Carta and the Renaissance republics, to the Enlightenment, and ultimately to the American Founding in the years around 1776.

Without classical knowledge, Americans are likely to misconstrue the achievements of 1776—not to mention other significant historical moments (as evidenced in recent inconclusive contentions over the events of 1619). Unfortunately, contemporary school curricula leave students with major gaps in their knowledge of classical history and the humanities more broadly.

In recent decades, K-12 education policy has been roiled by both the “Math Wars,” discovery learning versus explicit instruction as the best way to teach math;¹ and the “Reading Wars,” phonics versus whole language as the best way to teach children to read.² Our current report finds that a new, extremely significant education issue has emerged—and that educators, parents, and citizens in general need to familiarize themselves with it, because the fight over this topic may be the most important of all the previous cultural fault lines. The issue is the systematic neglect of the *content* of history and literature in favor of reading *skills*—how to analyze a paragraph of text in a preconceived mode, with no concern with the actual content or meaning of the work—and also the overemphasis on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) and the corresponding neglect of the humanities.

This report argues that instruction in the foundation of the humanities is an essential and coequal complement to teaching the foundations of STEM and that the foundation of the humanities in the West is the history, literature, and philosophy of Classical Greece and Rome. (This, of course, is not to denigrate the other civilizations of roughly that same era—Chinese, Indian, and Middle Eastern—that have also profoundly influenced the world, but rather that Greco-Roman civilization was directly ancestral to our own and the antecedent that elucidates many of our current political, economic, and cultural traditions. Just as a biography starts with the childhood of its subject, so does the study of a

civilization.)

Generations of Americans have also rightly seen a basic knowledge of classical civilization as necessary for full participation in the political life of our country, because the American Republic owes so much of its foundational ideas to the cultural examples and constitutional models provided by ancient Greece and Rome. These foundational ideas should be made available to all citizens. In addition, the ancient Greek and Roman worlds supply the intellectual foundations for virtually all college-level discussions in the humanities in the West. Currently, and rather shockingly, a chronological straightjacket confines discussion of the Greco-Roman classical world to middle school in most states (grade six in California, for example), when it should also be taught in high schools to prepare students for citizenship as well as for college humanities. (Some states, such as Texas, do teach the classical world in high school, but only as part of a class on the “World History” of all civilizations, from the Paleolithic to Putin. Typically only two or three weeks are spent on Greece and Rome.)

As we shall see in this report, teaching the classical world in the United States has declined steadily since before World War II—partially because of the past convictions by many university classicists that the entire field must be tied to difficult mastery of Latin and Greek, which imposes a significant burden on the modern student. Fortunately, over the last fifty years, a cornucopia of excellent translations has emerged of virtually all significant classical texts, and indeed are exclusively used in the British GCSE and A-level courses in classical civilization. Latin and Greek are, of course, still required in order to train a new generation of professional classicists; however, they are not needed when learning the classical foundations of citizenship and the humanities.

In Part I of this report, we will explore the evolution of how the classical world has been taught in the United States up to the present. Throughout this long period—until recent decades—there has been a clear separation in the goals of elementary education

(that is, K-8) and secondary education (four years of high school and four years of undergraduate college). The goal of elementary education was universality—that is, to provide the basic and shared knowledge needed by all citizens. Secondary education, at least until recent years, was intended for the more academically inclined. Over two centuries, the details of what all citizens were expected to know about the ancient world changed, particularly after World War I, with the advent of “social studies.” Likewise, the classical content of secondary education changed as colleges evolved from training clerics to providing a liberal education in “the humanities” for gentlemen and currently to educating roughly one-half of all Americans based on initial “general education” and “core” requirements.

We conclude Part I with an overview of the actual situation today in Northern California: what is taught about classical civilization in state-approved K-8 textbooks; the curricula of local high schools and the International Baccalaureate Program; and what incoming freshmen appear to know at three San Francisco Bay Area universities (Stanford University, University of California, Berkeley, and Santa Clara University). Unfortunately we find that the current public school curriculum shortchanges students in both the classical foundations of the American experiment in government and the Greco-Roman foundations of the humanities.

Part II covers the effect that the most recent education reform movement—the Common Core initiative—has had on the teaching of the classical world. We find that its emphasis on reading skills instead of content has had a negative effect on the already-dubious trajectories of current textbooks, at least in those reading assignments that have been produced under the new regime. We present the clearest evidence of this influence by examining two textbooks written by the same author for the same publisher, one before the Common Core adoption, the other after. We find that the post-Common Core book is significantly worse in both coherence and readability, and that the changes to the old text pertaining to “reading skills” have

introduced a significant number of errors.

In Part III we present our fundamental conclusions and recommendations. We conclude that teaching the literature, history, and philosophy of Classical Greece and Rome in both elementary education and high school remains an essential foundation both for citizenship in our republic in the current era and for university study of the humanities. It is thus a necessary complement to teaching the foundations of STEM. We also confront head-on one of the most vexatious issues: whether an adequate knowledge of the classics requires an understanding of Greek and Latin. Our conclusion is that in the twenty-first century, this is no longer the case: as previously remarked, excellent translations exist of almost all significant classical texts, and there are readable and reliable texts of classical history and culture.

Our concrete recommendations are these: we think that the current sixth-grade ancient history textbooks and curricula are far too crowded with information about a dozen different civilizations, from the Paleolithic to the Byzantine Empire, with extensive sections on Egypt, Mesopotamia, China, and India, as well as Greece and Rome. The textbooks are essentially simplified high school or college texts with all the correct scholarly concerns—for example, a Braudel-like focus on the geography of Greece determining the independence of the various *poleis*.³ We think this sixth-grade course should be drastically simplified and made more “anecdotal.” To paraphrase the movie *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valence*, its job is to “teach the legend,” to intrigue students with stories from the classical world so as to prepare them for a much more scholarly study in high school.

We further recommend that a two-year classical civilization series be part of the high school curriculum along with the current math, science, English, and modern history series. This can most easily be accomplished by adopting the British General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE; formerly General Certificate of Education O-level) and GCE A-level courses in classical civilization. These

courses are taught entirely in English translation, making it unnecessary to master Latin and Greek to receive a sound grounding in the humanities. We also confront a major issue that has emerged in recent decades: can treating Greco-Roman antiquity as profoundly important to present day multiethnic Americans be reconciled with our commitment to intellectual and cultural diversity? We argue that it most certainly can and, in fact, enhances the idea of diversity within a common culture.

In the course of researching this report, we interviewed more than a dozen classics professors at Stanford University, the University of California, Berkeley, and the Jesuit Santa Clara University. We also consulted with officials and former officials in the California Department of Education as well as several teachers of grades six through twelve who have taught the ancient world. The authors would like to thank them all, particularly Richard P. Martin, Raubitschek Professor of Classics at Stanford, who sponsored Morgan Hunter as a visiting scholar; Eric Zilbert, education research and evaluation administrator at the California Department of Education, who guided her through the process of getting access to the STAR test results; and an anonymous reviewer who is an expert on the process that led to California’s K-12 History–Social Science Framework. The conclusions, however, are our own.

PART I. THE CLASSICAL WORLD IN AMERICAN EDUCATION

During the founding years of the United States in the eighteenth century, knowledge of classical authors was “nearly universal” among colonists with “any degree of education.”⁴ An understanding of classical exemplars was common currency among the Founders, as it was among their contemporaries in Europe. History and biographies from ancient Greece and Rome were taught throughout the American colonies in the eighteenth century in both primary and higher education. All of the Founders were thoroughly familiar with classical

analogies and metaphors, even though only about 30 percent had higher education.⁵ During the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries, university study of the classical world gradually became a specialized field-of-interest mostly to scholars. However, much of popular culture retained an emphasis on classical stories. For example, speeches were a popular form of entertainment in the era before radio and TV, and are rife with classical references.⁶ In addition, elementary education also retained a strong emphasis on teaching the classical world until the rise of “social studies” following World War I.

Eighteenth-Century Origins: Republicanism and Science

Beginning in the 1960s, Bernard Bailyn,⁷ followed by his student Gordon Wood,⁸ and then, somewhat later, J. G. A. Pocock,⁹ showed that the Founders of the American Republic were deeply immersed in a political ideology that these scholars called the “republican tradition.” They traced this political philosophy back to early sixteenth-century republican Florence, through the English Civil War and the Whig opposition to James II in seventeenth-century England, and then in the eighteenth century to a transatlantic common idiom in America, England, Scotland, France, and the Low Countries. This ideology held that the state should be modeled on the classical idea of the “republic” and strongly disfavored the actually existing alternatives: monarchy, tyranny, and empire.

The Bailyn-Wood-Pocock proposal that this “republican” ideology was foundational for the United States has been embraced by many, and criticized as incomplete by others, but has generally been accepted as sound in many respects.¹⁰ However, more recent scholarship has shown that in America this republican tradition, often emphasizing agrarianism—which in England was traditionally against large-scale commerce and skeptical of urban elites, was combined with a “pro-commerce, pro-innovation, but anti-monopoly” tradition, exemplified by Franklin, but also Jefferson.¹¹ Isaac Kramnick traced this “liberal” or “scientific”

tradition to northern English thinkers associated with the Lunar Society of Birmingham, especially Joseph Priestly and Erasmus Darwin (Franklin was a corresponding member, as was Adam Smith). Most of the members of the Lunar Society were religious Dissenters, and freedom of thought was integral to their approach to religion, commerce, and scientific investigation. The Lunar Society also included many of the men who were in the process of ushering in the Industrial Revolution (e.g., Richard Arkwright and James Watt).¹² Their new element was the emphasis on individual liberty along with republican ideas, whereas classical republics had been totalizing institutions, demanding the complete allegiance of citizens in both mind and body and underscoring the citizen’s responsibilities as much as his innate rights. Ultimately, this “liberal” or “scientific” strain of republicanism came to dominate in America.

Both elementary education and higher education taught the classical world, but for different reasons. For the vast majority, whose only access was to elementary education, the ancient world was taught to provide a common referent for participating as a citizen in the new American Republic. The overarching intention was to provide citizens with an understanding of what the Founders were trying to accomplish when they used classical republics as their model to create the United States. Students needed to understand what “tyranny” was and why the Founders wanted to avoid it, what the difference was between a “republic” and a “kingdom,” why the former was to be preferred to the latter, and how, in turn, a “republic” differed from a “democracy.” The classical world provided many such examples that had inspired the Founders, so they were taught to young citizens to help them understand the Founders’ intentions.

At the university level, however, the classical texts—history, philosophy, and literature—were taught primarily to improve students’ command of Latin and Greek.¹³ University education in the eighteenth century was principally focused on theology: Anglicanism at Oxford, Cambridge, and

William and Mary, and various forms of Calvinism at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton. Ministers needed to know Latin and Greek to read many of the key texts in their field, especially the Greek New Testament and the Latin Vulgate. Mathematics and “natural philosophy” rounded out the curriculum,¹⁴ and many of the books in these fields were also in Latin (e.g., Newton’s *Principia Mathematica*).

In addition, several important universities, notably Glasgow, established professorships of “moral philosophy” during the eighteenth century. This field, like “natural philosophy,” aimed at establishing truths in their fields without the aid of revelation or sacred texts, by citing illustrative passages and documentation from Greek and Roman literary authors and historians, and as well as natural philosophers. Like theologians, moral philosophers were expected to know their sources, especially the relevant classical political and historical texts. The holders of the Chair of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow University included Francis Hutcheson, Adam Smith, and Thomas Reid, all notable figures in the Scottish Enlightenment, which was very close in spirit to Priestly’s Lunar Society of Birmingham. It was through moral philosophy that classical republican ideas first entered university-level discussions and publications.

The Nineteenth Century: The Rise of the “Humanities” and “Classics” in American Universities

In the nineteenth century, elementary education did not change significantly in content, although it became much more widespread—indeed, essentially universal in the North by the middle of the century. There the classical world was still taught to produce citizens who understood classical metaphors and how the American Republic was based on classical models. But during the course of the nineteenth century, the university system changed dramatically.

After the Civil War, universities no longer focused on the practical task of producing ministers who could read Greek and Latin; the new

university functioned primarily as a system for producing cultivated gentlemen.¹⁵ The goal of all this recalibrated instruction in ancient languages was character formation:

The study of Greek and Latin [was imagined] as fundamental to forming ethical human beings and upright citizens. ...Anyone who aspired to be truly educated in the republic of letters had to be steeped in the tradition of character formation through the study of ancient letters. This classical education tradition resonated powerfully in America, running through the thought of ministers, statesmen, lawyers, artists, and other educated citizens.¹⁶

Those who remember attending “public” schools in Britain during the 1950s often recall that it was precisely the sheer *difficulty* of mastering Greek and Latin grammar and vocabulary that was held to build the most character. (As Calvin—of *Calvin and Hobbes*—once said, imitating his father, “Calvin, go do something you hate! Being miserable builds character!”) Throughout the nineteenth century, classical languages and literature remained the core of secondary education and the principal subject of university education. (Classical scholars might make up one-half the faculty of small colleges.)¹⁷

But the nineteenth century also saw the addition of modern literature, history, and philosophy to the traditional courses of theology and secular Greek and Roman writings. A course of study evolved in higher education during the nineteenth century as a modern version of the *literae humaniores* at Oxford.¹⁸ Like *literae humaniores*, the new course in American universities would be broad based—it would cover history, literature, and philosophy—but now including modern history, modern languages and literature, and modern philosophy, instead of just that of ancient Greece and Rome.¹⁹ As the “Greats” was the original nontheological subject at Oxford, so this course was intended to be the central course of study at modern, up-to-date American universities. This new course, combining history, literature, philosophy, and languages—both ancient and modern—was called

the “humanities” in the United States, and it defined what the phrase “liberal education” came to mean.²⁰ But the heart of the humanities was still the original Greats, now called the “classics,” and was still taught in the ancient tongues.²¹ Classics required intensive study of two ancient languages, whereas the rest of the humanities was taught in English. Nonetheless the enlargement of the curriculum beyond the difficult classical languages also ensured the expansion of higher education, redefining the college student body in more populist terms to include those who might not have had the time, money, inclination, or ability to master Greek and Latin.

The rise of the humanities seemed to place the study of the ancient world in a central location, now contained in classics. But this transformation was a double-edged sword. The difficulties of learning two complex ancient languages, both with large vocabularies and complex grammars, came to be associated just with classics, not with university education as a whole. Classics professors were often caricatured as pettifogging pedants, obsessed with grammar, while the rest of the humanities was felt to be the truly liberal education.²² Meanwhile, classics professors were among the first American scholars to embrace the new German source-based historical scholarship, whose maxim was to understand history *wie es eigentlich gewesen* (“as it actually was”) instead of seeing history as a collection of teachable moral exemplars. The new methods placed great emphasis on thorough textual analysis, which made this type of learning even more remote from undergraduates, and more suitable for training new classics professors. At about this time, in the last decades of the nineteenth century, graduate schools were introduced in the United States, along with the German PhD degree. The result was that classics was increasingly seen as an esoteric discipline, a trend that continued steadily throughout the twentieth century. Instead of the heart of the humanities, classics came to be viewed as an appendix of unclear utility.

The Twentieth Century: “Social Studies” vs. History in Elementary Education

The advent of the Progressive movement in the early twentieth century led to a pernicious change in elementary education, namely, the replacement of history with “social studies.” Ralph Ketcham, Anders Lewis, and Sandra Stotsky write:

In 1913 a committee led by Thomas Jesse Jones, a Welsh immigrant deeply interested in the education of African Americans, created a report entitled “Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education.” Jones and other members of the committee believed that education had to be made “relevant” to students. And history, according to Jones, was not relevant to the vast majority of students who would, after a few years of schooling, go off into factories and never have to bother themselves with the boring, arcane facts of the past. In place of history, schools should offer “social studies” classes that would help children accept their lot in life by teaching them skills they would need in the factories of the modern world.²³

The Jones report was widely adopted by Progressive education reformers throughout the country and led many states to replace history with social studies. As Ketcham and his colleagues point out, “History was too far removed from the immediate needs and wants of children. It was too arcane, too academic, and too likely to involve abstract thoughts. The fragile minds of so many American youngsters could simply not handle history.”²⁴ As late as 1967, an article entitled “Let’s Abolish History,” argued that “no teacher at any grade level ... should teach a course in history as content.”²⁵ One reason for Progressive hostility to history, especially ancient history, was the evolution of university history instruction during the nineteenth century into a much more scholarly endeavor under the influence of German universities. The more modern German approaches to scholarship were correctly thought to be much too advanced for younger students, while the earlier attitude was condemned as old fashioned and out of date.

The heyday of social studies in America was the 1950s, when trust in “experts,” especially “scientists,” even social scientists, reached an all-time high. Sputnik and the Soviet scientific challenge, along with the later Japanese and European economic challenges as these countries recovered from World War II, led American educators to challenge their comfortable, rather unexamined, assumptions of American educational superiority. The impact of these challenges on science and mathematics instruction was profound, is well-known, and continues to this day in its current manifestation as STEM. The impact on social studies was more subtle (in essence, it led to the pendulum swing back to history, instead of the “practical instruction” of social studies advocates).²⁶ Parents began to ask questions such as “Why doesn’t my kid know who Thomas Jefferson was? Why do kids in Europe and Japan know more?” Curriculum committees began establishing the foundations of a comprehensive series of historical instruction in the earlier grades, instead of such social studies pablum as “know your community.”

But now that history content was back on the table, new issues arose: What should we teach about history? Whose history? Great men or social forces? What about women and minorities? America? Europe? Non-European cultures? Ancient history was also affected. By the end of the twentieth century, the rise of multiculturalism led to the worry that too much study of Greco-Roman antiquity was “Eurocentric.” Such pressures intensified with the publication of “The 1619 Project” by the New York Times Magazine in 2019, which recalibrated all of American history as a function of the institution of slavery. At the same time, the arrival of many excellent English translations of classical texts, such as Richmond Lattimore’s Homer and Aeschylus, David Grene’s Sophocles, William Arrowsmith’s Euripides and Aristophanes, and Emily Wilson’s Seneca, had made the teaching of Greek and Latin much less necessary in order to appreciate these works. Paradoxically, the Greco-Roman world is now far easier to study than

ever, even as its importance is being questioned as never before.

The Twenty-First Century: The Ancient World Today in K-12

In order to understand the way the classical world is taught today, one must examine the issue at three levels: federal, state, and local school district. Federalism ensures that education is fundamentally the responsibility of state governments, but many states have in turn delegated much of this responsibility to school districts. The federal government basically uses its grants to induce states to follow its recommendations, but has little direct authority. The most recent effort by the federal government to pressure states to adopt its education policy was the so-called “Common Core” standards, which themselves were an effort to address the problems with the previous federal effort known as “No Child Left Behind.” The effectiveness of Common Core is still too early to definitively assess, but the early results are not promising. Common Core and its effects on ancient history instruction are discussed at great length in Part II of this paper.

In California, the state has specified “content standards” for “history-social science” for kindergarten through twelfth grade.²⁷ Ancient history is covered only in grade six, for which there are eight standards for ancient Greece and eight for ancient Rome.²⁸ In its wisdom, the state education department has approved state-wide textbooks for grades six through eight, while it left the choice of high school textbooks to the individual districts. This brings another player into the game: textbook publishers. California middle schools are the largest textbook market, so publishers spare no expense to get their books approved: e.g., by developing special California editions that carefully follow the state’s standards. We collected examples of most of the textbooks that were approved for the twenty-first century before the adoption of the Common Core-associated standards in 2016.²⁹ They are all very similar; the 2006 version by McGraw-Hill Glencoe discussed in Part II is typical. The chapters in this

book on ancient Greece and Rome are basically chronological narratives, with reasonable illustrations. There are errors (see Part II), but the text is for the most part accurate.

A problem is that the section on the Greeks and Romans represents only about one-third of the book—with another third dedicated to the ancient Near East, and still another to China, India, and the Americas. We confirmed with a curriculum developer that teachers are almost never able to teach the entire textbook unless they proceed at lightning speed. Many just skip what they do not feel like teaching. Another problem is that the text’s target is sixth graders, age twelve, yet this is the only class in ancient history that students will have until they reach college. Consequently, there is a noticeable effort to make the textbook a kind of “high school lite”—scholarly instead of captivating. (The McGraw-Hill Glencoe book is essentially just a simplified version of the earlier parts of its high-school *World History* text.) Many of these young students will never have heard of Achilles, but they are the perfect age to teach stories from antiquity in the old-fashioned way, the way that captivated children from Alexander the Great through the twentieth century. Instead the book makes history scholarly, factual, dry, and boring. Here is how the McGraw-Hill textbook describes the assassination of Julius Caesar:

His enemies feared that Caesar wanted to be king. These opponents, led by senators Brutus and Cassius, plotted to kill him. Caesar ignored a famous warning to beware the Ides of March (March 15). On that date in 44 BC, Caesar’s enemies surrounded him and stabbed him to death.

And here is Antony and Cleopatra:

Antony fell in love with the Egyptian queen Cleopatra VII and formed an alliance with her. Octavian told the Romans that Antony, with Cleopatra’s help, planned to make himself sole ruler of the republic. This alarmed many Romans and enabled Octavian to declare war

on Antony. In 31 BC, at the Battle of Actium off the west coast of Greece, Octavian crushed the army and navy of Antony and Cleopatra. The couple then fled to Egypt. A year later, as Octavian closed in, they killed themselves.

One has to have a positive gift for the mundane to turn two of the most exciting, romantic stories in world history into this snoozefest. There will be no contemporary Alexander sufficiently inspired by these narratives to keep the book under his pillow while he dreams of achieving great things.

Until it was cancelled in 2013 with the advent of the Common Core, California tested students in the ninth grade on what they learned about history in grades six through eight. These STAR tests show that students’ retention after two years of what they learned in the sixth grade was quite poor. The results of these tests are still available online, although the questions are still confidential.³⁰ After much effort, and thanks to the help of Eric Zilbert of the California Department of Education, Morgan Hunter was able to examine the actual questions for the year 2012, so we could see what questions the students found difficult. (Interestingly, Mr. Zilbert told us that Ms. Hunter was the only scholar to have ever requested to see the questions.) The questions are all multiple choice, with four possible answers. The average question was answered correctly by 50 percent of students. The students did best (70 percent correct) on a question about the purpose of Roman aqueducts and worst (26 percent) on a question about the method Socrates used to teach his students. Since 25 percent will get the question right if they all guess randomly, this is pretty disheartening.

California confines the ancient world to grade six because it has a detailed chronological framework for teaching history, grade by grade:

- Grade six Ancient history
- Grade seven Late antiquity through Renaissance/Reformation
- Grade eight American history through nineteenth century
- Grade nine Electives
- Grade ten Early modern history to

- Grade eleven present American history, late nineteenth century to present
- Grade twelve More electives

Other states have different systems. Florida has one year of world history in middle school (ancient through the Byzantine Empire) and one year in high school (late Middle Ages to present). Texas crams all of world history into one year of high school.

Students in the Palo Alto school district are required to take eight semesters of social studies to graduate, along with eight semesters of English, six of math, four of science, four of languages, two of arts, four of physical education, two of “career technical education,” one of “living skills,” and five additional unspecified semesters. Gunn High School and Palo Alto High School, the two high schools in the Palo Alto school district, rate in the top ten public high schools in the state. We analyzed their history curricula to see what California public education is capable of at the highest level. Neither school covers the ancient world *at all*. Instead, they split the California Department of Education’s tenth grade course on “early modern to the present” into a two-semester, ninth-grade course on “early modern to World War II” and a one-semester, tenth-grade course on “World War II to the present.” Students are only required, by the district and by the University of California, to take two semesters of the three world history courses offered, despite suggesting that students complete seven overall courses per semester in grades nine and ten, and at least five in grades eleven and twelve.

We compared these curricula with those of Castilleja and the Menlo School, two excellent private schools in the area. Finally, we examined the curricula of Exeter and Andover, arguably the best private schools in the country, and the Boston Latin School, the oldest public school in America and still one of the best. None of the other California high schools covered the ancient world either. On the other hand, the East Coast schools did a better job of teaching ancient history, but did so mostly in the context of learning Latin (and to

some extent Greek). We also examined the ancient history course in the International Baccalaureate (IB) Program. But while the course is excellent, we could not find a single high school in California that taught it, including all the schools that advertise their participation in the IB program.

Why is there so little effort to teach the ancient world in high schools? The answer seems to be that colleges do not insist upon it. We found that, although the Greco-Roman world is formally taught in middle and high schools, nonetheless very few students wind up knowing much about it. Most faculties of university classics departments, who would seem to be eager to invest in future students, remain quite blasé about this situation. Some faculty were pessimistic about classics departments, but felt confident that their own sub-disciplines would survive: “Archeology will survive, because it’s actually interesting.” Others had more quirky reasons to be positive: “After AI takes over all STEM fields, all that will be left will be classics!” Some faculty members were educated in Europe in earlier decades, when classics was universally taught, and haven’t thought much about American primary and secondary education. Others seem to consider their own deep interests in the classics to be a personal eccentricity, like bird watching, and stay content to share their discoveries with their fellow birders. As we have said, high schools have responded to this lack of interest by universities in the classical knowledge of high school graduates by essentially dropping formal study of the ancient world. This narrowing focus represents a continuation of the trend begun in the late nineteenth century of concentrating study of the classical world in a handful of scholars, who reproduce themselves by educating a new handful of graduate students—the entire enterprise predicated on a few universities still believing that classics remains the core of their humanities disciplines.³¹

Despite the essential absence of formal instruction on this topic beyond the sixth grade, surprisingly, there seems to be a genuine, albeit largely untapped, interest among students in much of

the subject matter of classics: mythology, stories from Greek and Roman history, and so on. Even the “AI will save us” professor said his Chinese students were very interested in classical history and literature. This interest seems to be driven by popular culture: especially movies, television, and, in recent years, video games. College professors at local universities (Stanford, Berkeley, and Santa Clara) report large enrollments for courses such as “the classics in film” or “classical mythology,” but only a small interest in majoring in classics, which is the key datum that matters to university administrations. Nevertheless, many more students do major in classics as undergraduates, and even get classics PhDs in graduate school, than can find jobs as new classics professors. It’s a strange situation—this unmet demand for learning more about the classical world, one not driven at all by career prospects, but rather by genuine interest in the subject. We will return to this issue in Part III, “Conclusions and Recommendations.”

PART II. THE ANCIENT WORLD UNDER THE COMMON CORE

In recent years, debates over math and reading instruction have been exacerbated by the adoption of the federally promoted Common Core standards in mathematics and English language arts (ELA) by virtually all the states.³² This report finds that the Common Core ELA standards have had a profoundly deleterious effect on teaching the ancient world. The new standards move in exactly the wrong direction: they further emphasize what was already too central in the old “No Child Left Behind” era, namely, the systematic neglect of the *content* of history and literature in favor of reading *skills*. They have left the states to set content standards, which have largely remained where they were, with the classical Greco-Roman world crammed into the sixth grade, along with prehistory, ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt, early Chinese and Indian civilizations, and Mesoamerica.

By narrowing the focus to a single state, California, and a single subject, Greco-Roman history,

we show that the Common Core has had a harmful effect on the teaching of ancient Greece and Rome in California. The most compelling evidence is the decline in quality of textbooks *written by the same author*, from before to after the Common Core adoption in California.

The Common Core versus the Content of History and Literature

Perhaps not surprisingly, promoters of the Common Core have often overlapped with enthusiasts for “STEM” education, with its emphasis on “useful” knowledge. The “reading skills” focus in English language arts, with its entirely content-free approach, seems more intent on making sure students can read short memos from HR than learn anything about the past. The Common Core testing strategy also focuses almost exclusively on basic mathematics and “reading skills,” and not at all on history and literature content.³³

The implementers of the Common Core, in California at least, are remarkably uninterested in *testing* what students have learned about the content of history. The federal education policy that preceded the Obama-era Common Core, namely the Bush Administration’s “No Child Left Behind,” was often criticized for too much testing; by contrast, the implementation of the Common Core has been, in California at least, accompanied by a significant reduction in the number of tests, particularly in history. For example, California’s previous “Standardized Testing and Reporting” (STAR) program, which tested students several times in English language arts, mathematics, science, and history-social science, was cancelled in July 2013 and replaced with the Common Core-coordinated “California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress” (CAASPP), which only tests English language arts (reading skills) and mathematics. (There have been proposals to fund and write a new history-social studies test for eighth graders, but so far none has emerged.) In part this is because the influential California Council for Social Studies has in recent years

successfully lobbied against any state-wide testing of history-social science.³⁴

The suggestion that the creators of the Common Core cared little about the content of history, especially the history of the ancient world, is also confirmed by recent changes at the College Board. In 2012, the main architect and proponent of the Common Core, David Coleman, moved to head the College Board. Under his leadership, the College Board announced in 2018 that the World History AP course and test would no longer cover any material before 1450.³⁵ After many protests, the final decision was made to begin AP World History in 1200 and rename the course AP World History: Modern, with the vague promise of some future AP World History: Ancient. For the time being, however, the College Board has abolished any history before 1200.³⁶ Since in California all ancient history instruction is confined to the sixth grade, it seems that currently the conventional wisdom is that only modern history is useful for anyone over the age of thirteen.

The Common Core and Ancient History in California

In 2013, California adopted the federally promoted Common Core standards.³⁷ The relevant portions for ancient history are on pages eighty-seven and eighty-eight, which describe a set of vaguely worded “reading skills,” again with no content. Much more importantly, in 2016, the California State Board of Education adopted a Common Core–associated curriculum for history and social science, an 855-page gigantic “Framework,”³⁸ which references the Common Core State Standards document throughout. Chapter ten, dealing with grade six, covers “Ancient Civilizations.”

The 2016 Framework is a significant rewrite of the pre–Common Core 2005 Framework,³⁹ which was only 249 pages long and much easier to read. The 2005 document itself was basically an extended commentary on the 1998 sixty-eight-page “Content Standards” document that described a set of facts about history that children were expected to

learn in each grade.⁴⁰ The 2005 Framework had approximately twelve pages of text for each grade from K-12, comprising six pages of a mini-textbook and six pages repeating the 1998 content standards. The remaining text of the 2005 Framework was a 15-page cogent description of the goals—e.g., “Democratic Understanding of Civic Values” and “Knowledge and Cultural Understanding”—very worthwhile goals indeed; and eight appendices, comprising sixty pages.

The 2016 post–Common Core Framework is completely different. The goals section has been dropped and replaced with a virtually unreadable introduction emphasizing “inquiry-based skills”: e.g., “[students] learn to develop skills in demand in twenty-first-century labor markets”—shades of the Jones Report. The 1998 content standards now appear, unchanged, in Appendix C; however, the six-page mini-textbooks of the 2005 Framework have been greatly expanded and packed with instructional “guidance” for teachers, focused on “skills” and liberally referencing the Common Core reading standards. The appendices have been redone, with content-oriented ones replaced with teaching strategies.

The evidence strongly indicates that this additional “guidance” has had a very negative effect on the writing of textbooks, even though the actual content standards have not changed.

Comparing Two Textbooks by the Same Author, Written Before and After the Common Core

We now turn to a direct comparison of two sixth-grade textbooks on ancient history, written by the same author: one in 2006, before the Common Core, and the other in 2019, after the Common Core’s adoption in California and the publication of the associated Framework.⁴¹ Both of these books are California-approved textbooks for sixth grade, written by Jackson Spielvogel, the author of numerous textbooks. It is striking that the earlier book is much easier to read and has fewer errors. Far from improving the teaching of the ancient world, the

Common Core has made it far more difficult.

The earlier textbook⁴² follows a conventional narrative structure, largely based on chronology, but with digressions on relevant subjects. The illustrations are appropriate and reasonably well-chosen. There is only one “reading skills” interruption per section (e.g., “Reading Check. Cause and Effect. Why did the Spartans focus on military training?”). We found errors in this book, as can be seen in the next section, but by and large, there seems to be a single authorial mind behind the text. Our major complaint with this book is that its origin as a simplified section of a high-school textbook (Spielvogel’s own *World History*⁴³), likely makes it rather dull for younger readers.

The later textbook,⁴⁴ on the other hand, eschews a single, clear narrative for a fashionable, hyper-text-like, and very confusing structure. The body of the text consists of a sequence of largely disconnected units, each with a title and a few paragraphs of text. It appears as if a more continuous text had been broken up into “bites” by a subsequent editor, who seems to have believed that students cannot absorb a narrative, but only short, single-topic units. There are also fewer illustrations, but many more “reading skills” questions, often one per page. These changes have made the text much less engaging and have also introduced additional errors.

What has our examination of these two books shown us? Firstly, the earlier text is much better written, much more interesting, and much easier to follow. But more surprisingly, the later text also has many more errors: in the next section, we show that sixteen errors were found in both versions and an additional twenty errors were introduced into the 2019 version. So the earlier had sixteen errors, and the later had thirty-six errors. Clearly this evidence suggests that the Common Core has had a deleterious effect on ancient history textbooks.

How do we explain the decline in the textbook? We think the post-Framework editing process now includes a layer of “reading specialists” in line with the Common Core focus. These editors apparently *do not know the content*, so the edits often introduce

errors and always seem to drain the blood and interest from the book. The change can be directly attributed to the adoption of the Common Core emphasis on reading skills instead of content.

What has been the effect of these textbooks on what students learn? Here we come to the testing issue. As we mentioned above, California’s “Standardized Testing and Reporting” (STAR) program, which tested students in the ninth grade on ancient history, was cancelled in July 2013 and replaced with the Common Core–coordinated “California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress” (CAASPP), which only tests English language arts (reading skills) and mathematics. So far, no replacement content tests in history have been written, let alone approved.

Details of the Textbook Comparison

Discovering Our Past: Ancient Civilizations by Jackson J. Spielvogel, McGraw-Hill Glencoe and National Geographic, 2006.

World History and Geography: Ancient Civilizations by Jackson J. Spielvogel, McGraw-Hill 2019.

There follows a comparison of errors and issues we encountered in the Greece and Rome chapters of both books.

The Ancient Greeks (Ch. 5 of 2019, Ch. 7 of 2006)

Pages 5:156–57: The 2019 textbook has a single timeline for the whole chapter (2000 BCE to 330 BCE) with eight events noted. 2006 has four separate timelines for each of the four sections, with a total of twelve events noted.

2019 missed opportunity: The 2019 timeline does not include the “Greek Dark Age” (a term used in the text) or even mention Pericles, whereas the 2006 version does, allowing students to place important events on the timeline.

Page 5:163: “As the Dorians pushed into Greece, thousands of people fled the Greek mainland. They settled on the Aegean Islands and the western shore of Anatolia. By 750 BCE many descendants of the people who ran away returned to the Greek

mainland. They brought back new ideas, crafts, and skills. Small independent communities developed under local leaders who became kings. These people called themselves Hellenes, or Greeks.” The corresponding section in the 2006 book (page 7:340) correctly only mentions the settlements of the islands and shore of Anatolia—no mention of a “return” or “Hellenes.”

2019 errors:

1. There is no evidence for any return to the mainland; the people who stayed were Aeolic-speaking Thessalians and Boeotians in the north, Ionic-speaking Athenians in Attica, and Arcado-Cypriot-speaking Arcadians in the Peloponnese. The emigrants were Aeolians along the north Aegean coast of Anatolia and the island of Lesbos, Ionians along the middle and southern coast and most Aegean islands, and Cypriots in Northern Cyprus.
2. There is no evidence that the Doric *poleis* (the “communities”) in the Argolid, Lacedaemonia, or Messenia appeared any later than the Ionic or Aeolic *poleis* on the mainland. There is some evidence that Old Smyrna (Ionic) on the Anatolian coast was the earliest *polis*, which may be the source for this misinterpretation. The idea of the polis may have gone from Anatolia to the mainland, but not the people.
3. The word “Hellenes” is found in the *Iliad*, where it is said to be a name for the followers of Achilles “who were called Myrmidons or Hellenes.” It is extremely unclear how this name came to be applied to all the speakers of the Greek language. It may have had something to do with the rise of the Olympic Games (after the mid-700s), a local festival that was eventually broadened to all “Hellenes.” The word never meant “descendants of people who ran away from the Dorians.” The Latin word “*Graeci*” (our “Greek”) was applied

to some Hellenic colonists in Italy for unknown reasons.

Page 5:165: “At the center of each polis was a fortress built on a hilltop. The hilltop that a fort was built on was called an *acropolis*.”

Page 7:341: “The main gathering place in polis was usually a hill. A fortified area, called an acropolis, stood at the top of the hill.”

2019 error: The fort was called the *acropolis*, not the hill; the word “*acropolis*” means “high fort” or even “high city” in earliest Greek and is cognate with similar words in other Indo-European languages.

Pages 5:166 and 7:342: In a discussion on “What Citizenship Meant to the Greeks”: “Women and children might qualify for citizenship, but they had none of the rights that went with it.”

Error by both: A misunderstanding of the word *polites* (“citizen”), which was largely bound up with the obligation of military service. (Both texts understand however that “citizens had a duty ... to fight for their polis as citizen soldiers,” but fail to recognize the implications for citizenship: one must be *able* to fight in the army. Even today, almost all armies exclude women from combat, and of course children.) All males were citizens upon reaching the requisite age, if they met certain other qualifications, which were *polis* dependent (in Athens, under Pericles, a citizen must also be the son of citizen father and a mother who had a citizen father). All inhabitants of a *polis*—resident aliens, women, children, citizens, and slaves—had rights, but different ones. The 2006 version has a very nice primary source document here: the Athenian ephebic oath.

Pages 5:166 and 7:342: Both textbooks identify citizenship with service in the phalanx, which is only partially true. Military service was the key to citizenship, and for most *poleis*, that indeed meant service in the phalanx. But in many cities, including Athens, there were citizens who were not hoplites. At Athens, rowers of triremes in the

navy were citizens, and in many poleis, lightly armed *peltasts* were also citizens. So were the *hippeis* or mounted troops. Hoplites had to purchase their own arms—a shield, cuirass, helmet, and greaves—a cost that required at least a middling income.

Pages 5:166–67: “During battles, rows of hoplites marched forward together shoulder to shoulder. They raised their shields above them to protect them from enemies’ arrows.”

Page 7:34: “With their shields creating a protective wall, they gave their enemies few openings to defeat them.”

2019 error: The Greek *poleis* almost never used the bow and arrow in battle; the author is thinking of the Roman *testudo* (turtle) formation. The 2006 statement is correct—the shields formed a kind of protective wall against *spears*, not arrows.

Page 5:167: “Such strong loyalty to their own city-state divided the Greeks. ... This lack of unity weakened Greece, making it easier to conquer.”

Page 7:342: “A lack of unity always existed among the Greek city-states.”

2019 misleading statement: The Persians didn’t find Greece very easy to conquer. There is always a tension between freedom and unified collective military action, and resolving that tension requires sophisticated political structures, which the Greeks developed. In fact, they invented the *koinonia*, or federal league, such as the Delian League, formed to resist Persia, and later the Achaean League and the Aetolian League, both of which were militarily formidable. The Greeks were eventually conquered, but so were the “unified” Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, and later Romans. The 2006 more-neutral statement is correct.

Page 5:168: “The death of his teacher caused Aristotle to leave Athens ...” This section is not present in the 2006 version.

2019 error: According to Diogenes Laertius,

Aristotle left Athens because Plato’s nephew was selected to be the new leader of the Academy, not Aristotle.

Page 5:168: “Aristotle once again found himself in Athens during Alexander’s reign. Having observed various governments and peoples around Greece, Aristotle describes a harsh reality in Athens.” There follows a long quote from Aristotle’s *The Constitution of Athens*. This section is not present in the 2006 version and appears to be a failed attempt to introduce a primary source document.

2019 error: The quotation describes conditions before the time of Solon (circa 580 BC), 250 years before Alexander. Aristotle is not condemning conditions in contemporary Athens, but those of a much earlier era.

Page 5:169: “Most tyrants who commanded city-states ruled fairly.”

Page 7:346: “Most early Greek tyrants, though, acted wisely and fairly.”

Likely error: We know the names of several seventh- and sixth-century BC tyrants: Peisistratos of Athens, Polycrates of Samos, Cleisthenes of Sicyon, Theagenes of Megara, Periander of Corinth, and Pheidon of Argos are perhaps the most mentioned in our sources. Of these seven, all were described as successful in war, some were patrons of the arts, and various social and political innovations were attributed to them. They all seem to have been mostly concerned with securing their own power. “Fairness” seems to be largely in the eye of the beholder, and none were universally regarded as such. It is more accurate to say that tyrants exercised autocratic power, usually seized by force and used both wisely and savagely.

Page 5:170: “Sparta did not set up overseas colonies.”

Page 7:346: “... its people did not set up colonies.”

Error: Sparta had one, very famous, overseas colony: Taras in Italy, later called Tarentum,

now called Taranto. It was founded in 708 BC.

Page 5:172: “Spartans continued to use heavy iron bars for money when other Greeks used coins.” This myth is not found in the 2006 version.

2019 likely error: Supposedly the Spartans used obeloi (roasting spits) as money, according to Plutarch in the *Life of Lycurgus*. Plutarch states that these were very unwieldy, which is the source of the book’s “heavy iron bars.” However, the actual *obeloi* found at many Greek sites are pencil sized and very light and portable. Moreover, there seems to be no evidence anywhere, except Plutarch’s late (circa 100 AD) statement, that obeloi were ever used as currency. Sparta started minting its own coins in 280 BC, according to the authority on Greek coinage (Charles. Seltman, CAH Plates III, 1984), who also argues that prior to that date, Sparta used foreign coins, not spits.

Page 5:174 (box on “Solon”) : “He improved the economy by requiring all sons to continue in the same jobs their fathers had.” The 2006 version does not contain this gem, which has several errors, unique to the 2019 version:

1. According to Plutarch, this is not an accurate summary of Solon’s reform. Plutarch says, “He ... made a law that no son should be obliged to relieve a father who had not bred him up to any calling” (Life of Solon, 22). Presumably, this means that he incentivized fathers to teach trades to their sons.
2. The writer seems to be thinking of Diocletian, not Solon, who did bind sons to their father’s trade, so he could tax them more efficiently.
3. Diocletian’s law hardly “improved trade,” which wasn’t its goal. In fact, its goal was to preserve the imperial army and its tax base. In that, it succeeded.

Page 5:176: “The city-states ... defeated the Persian navy at Marathon.” The 2006 version does not have this amazing error.

2019 error: This is a real howler. The author of this summary is obviously thinking of the naval battle of Salamis. The land battle of Marathon was won by Athens alone, with the assistance of a small detachment from Plataea. The Marathon battle is correctly described only four pages later (180–81), as well as in the 2006 edition. I suspect that an editor has “hypertexted” the author’s original manuscript to make it more “readable,” as part of teaching “reading skills.”

Page 5:176: “Instantly he sent off messengers to make proclamation ... that fresh levies [taxes] were to be raised.” Once again, the 2019 version introduces a primary source, only to use it incorrectly. This is not found in the 2006 version.

2019 error: The Greek word translated here as “levies” is *stratien*, whose meaning is “army.” The parenthetical “taxes” is incorrect. The correct interpretation is “manpower levies to form a new army,” not “taxes to fund an army.”

Page 5:179: “Then, sometime in the 600’s BCE, a religious teacher named Zoroaster preached a new monotheistic religion.”

Page 7:353: “Its founder, Zoroaster, was born in 660 BC.”

Likely error: This dating of Zoroaster is far too definite. His era is not known to within, literally, a millennium. The best evidence suggests his era as between circa 1500 BC and 510 BC (when inscriptional evidence of Zoroastrianism is found). The language of the earliest parts of the Zoroastrian *Avesta* are quite similar to the very early Sanskrit of the Indic Rig Veda, which goes back to circa 1500 BC, suggesting the *Avesta* dates to soon after the divergence of the Indic and Iranian language families. Other data suggests a much later date, but nothing is certain.

Page 5:181: “According to Greek legend, a young messenger raced twenty-five miles from Marathon to Athens with news of the victory. When the runner reached Athens, he cried ‘Victory,’ and

then collapsed and died from exhaustion.”

Page 7:355: “The runner raced nearly twenty-five miles from Marathon to Athens. He collapsed from exhaustion and, with his last breath, announced, ‘Victory.’ Then he died.”

Error: The source of this story is Herodotus who wrote that the messenger only died after also running from Athens all the way to Sparta with the news and back.

Page 5:183: The Battle of Salamis: “The Greeks had fewer ships, but their boats were smaller and faster and could outmaneuver the Persian ships.”

Page 7:356: “Greek ships were smaller, faster, and easier to steer than the big Persian ships ...”

Error: This is exactly backwards. According to Herodotus, the Greek ships were heavier and less maneuverable than the Persian ships, which is why they preferred to fight in the constricted waters of the Salamis channel. The Greeks won by using hoplites as marines to board and seize the Persian vessels.

Page 5:186: “Pericles made Athens a more democratic city-state. He appointed people to positions because of their abilities, not because they were members of a certain social class.”

Page 7:360: “Pericles included more Athenians than ever before in government. He allowed lower-class male citizens to run for public office, and he also paid officeholders.”

2019 error: Pericles didn’t appoint anyone. He was an elected general. Almost all other positions in Athens were determined by lot, with a few assigned by the Assembly (e.g. liturgies, such as paying for tragedies). The only known recommendation that Pericles made to the Assembly (which was accepted) was of Phidias, the sculptor, to decorate the Parthenon. The 2006 statement is correct.

Page 5:188: “Athenian men worked as farmers, artisans, and merchants. They often finished their daily work in the morning. They spent afternoons exercising at the gymnasium.”

Page 7:362: “Athenian men usually worked in

the mornings and then exercised or attended meetings of the assembly.”

Error: Surely the author intended to say, “Some upper-class men spent afternoons exercising at the gymnasium.” The 2019 version is somewhat more egregious.

Page 5:189: The three paragraphs about Aspasia in the 2019 version are filled with errors. The 2006 version is correct.

1. She was a *hetaira*, a kind of Greek geisha. She was educated in art, literature, and music, and often participated in philosophical discussions at *symposia*. She was Pericles’s mistress and, like many mistresses, was often accused by his enemies of influencing him. She was not a “democratic symbol” and did not “encourage other females to participate in government and demand their rights.”
2. If the author wished to cover an influential woman, he should have mentioned Sappho, who was viewed as the Tenth Muse by the Greeks. In aristocratic Lesbos, Sappho’s home, there was a tradition of female participation in intellectual activity.

Page 5:194: “The author [of the *Odyssey*], believed to be Homer, was born sometime between the 1100s BCE and the 700s BCE.” This passage is not in the 2006 version.

2019 silly: This sounds like a pretty safe bet, since Troy VI and Troy VII were destroyed somewhere just before or during “the 1100s BCE” and the Homeric Epics were recited at the Panathenaea in the mid-500s. But actually, M. L. West thinks Homer was born in the 600s BCE,⁴⁵ and some Hellenistic historians thought that Homer was an eyewitness to the Trojan War, which would have put his birth in the 1200s BCE. You can’t be too cautious about dates. On page 211, the author uses the conventional, and likely correct, dating of Homer to the 700s.

Greek Civilization (Ch. 6 of 2019, Ch. 8 of 2006)

Page 6:220: “Plato planned a career in government. However, he was horrified by the death of his teacher, Socrates. As a result, Plato left politics and spent many years travelling and writing. When Plato returned to Athens in 387 BCE, he started the Academy.” Not found in the 2006 version.

2019 misleading statement: It would be better to write “left Athenian politics” and then add a sentence about his later unfortunate intervention in Syracusan politics in the 360s at the invitation of Dion. Some say this led to Plato being briefly sold into slavery.

Page 6:224: “The first important Greek scientist was Thales. ... Another Greek scientist, Pythagoras, ...” The author distinguishes Greek “scientists” from ancient people in general, who thought that their gods controlled nature. The 2006 version does not mention Thales at all, but correctly calls Pythagoras a “philosopher,” not a “scientist.” There are multiple errors in the 2019 version, which introduces the ideas of “scientist” and Thales, only to get them both wrong.

1. It is a category error to call these early pre-Socratic philosophers “scientists.” The scientific method of hypothesis, experiment, new hypothesis, etc., wasn’t discovered until the seventeenth century by Galileo.
2. The 2019 version does not explain what Thales’s theories actually were: i.e., everything is made of water.
3. Thales believed that “all things are full of gods,” so it would be just as true to say that he wanted a more rational understanding of gods.
4. Pythagoras could be more correctly described as the first mathematician, but he was also a philosopher of reincarnation and a hater of beans (for some reason). This is a missed opportunity to describe him as such.

Page 6:225: “Hippocrates created a list of rules

about how doctors use their skills to help patients. His rules are listed in the Hippocratic Oath.” The author briefly summarizes the oath and then writes, “Doctors around the world still promise to honor the Hippocratic Oath.” The 2006 version does not mention Hippocrates.

Missed opportunity: The Hippocratic Oath is short and quite readable. This is a perfect example of an interesting text that could be in a separate box. This is the only example of an improvement by the 2019 version: it mentions Hippocrates.

The Roman Republic (Ch. 9 of 2019, Ch. 9 of 2006—2019 is always listed first)

Pages 9:330–32 and 9:427–28: The description of the “struggle of the orders” in both books is completely credulous of Livy’s account, which is clearly modeled on the struggle of the *optimates* and the *populares* of his own day. Modern scholarship regards much of this as mythical. The patricians were likely priestly families, similar to the priestly families of ancient Greece. Some may have been wealthy landowners, but many were not. Their supposed opponents, the plebeians, were, in fact, participants in a different debate, that over frequent compulsory military service. “Plebs” likely meant “civilian” originally.

Page 9:331: “The Senate was a group of three hundred patrician men.”

Page 9:428: “[The Senate] was a select group of three hundred patrician men ...”

Error: From the early days of the republic, and probably even under the kings, the Senate included both *patres* (men from priestly families) and *conscripti* (non-*patres*).

Page 9:333: “The American legal system like the Roman legal system assumes a person is innocent until proven guilty.”

Page 9:431: “A person was seen as innocent until proven guilty.”

Error: The presumption of innocence was introduced into Roman law in the middle

of the second century AD; it was not found under the republic.

Page 9:333: “As the Romans conquered more people, they expanded their system of laws. They created laws that would apply to people who were not Roman citizens. These new laws were known as the Law of Nations. The Law of Nations identified the laws and rights that applied to all people everywhere in the Roman lands.”

Page 9:431: “They created a collection of laws called the Law of Nations.”

Misleading statement: The issue here is with the word “created” in the second sentence. The *ius gentium* (law of nations) governed noncitizens who appeared before Roman magistrates. It was meant to be a “lowest common denominator” set of laws that were to be found in the laws of any community, but stripped of distinctive elements that differed between communities. The Romans had no real desire to legislate for foreigners, so they did not think of the *ius gentium* as “created”; rather, they saw it as *induced* by comparing many different law systems. Later, as the Stoic idea of *ius naturale* (natural law) became widely known, the *ius gentium* was often said to embody elements of the natural law, and the distinction between them became blurred; however, the philosophers’ *ius naturale* was thought to be deduced from pure reason, while the jurists’ *ius gentium* was induced. Confusingly, the later Roman jurists sometimes used the *ius naturale* almost as a synonym for *ius gentium*. Slavery was the one practical issue that separated the two: it was not in the *ius naturale*, but was part of the *ius gentium*. However, both *ius gentium* and *ius naturale* were seen as “discovered” not “created.”

Page 9:338: The quote about Caesar’s assassination is taken from Plutarch’s *Life of Brutus*—not, as is confusingly misattributed, to a supposed text by one Marcus Brutus. This is another failed attempt by the 2019 version to introduce an original source.

Pages 9:344 and 9:439: The discussion of the Julian and Gregorian calendars in both textbooks

implies that the key difference between the two is that “the Gregorian calendar is based on the date of the birth of Jesus.”

Error: Neither calendar changed the start date. Both were concerned with the number of days in the year: the Julian used 365.25 (an extra day every four years); the Gregorian was more precise, with 365.2425, by skipping leap years on years divisible by one hundred, unless they are also divisible by four hundred. Thus 1900 was not a leap year, but 2000 was. In Caesar’s day, the year was specified either by the consuls’ names or by the year since the founding of Rome (AUC). Christians had started with the date of Jesus’s birth for about a thousand years before Gregory.

Page 9:345: “Cleopatra was the daughter of an Egyptian king.” The 2016 version, for some reason eschews the simple “queen of Egypt” or “Egyptian queen” for the more complicated circumlocution “daughter of an Egyptian king,” which presents problems because of her entirely Macedonian forbears.

2019 misleading statement: Cleopatra VII was the daughter of Ptolemy XII. As can be deduced from his name, he was a Ptolemaic ruler of Egypt. Virtually all the Ptolemaic kings were named Ptolemy (and many of the queens Cleopatra). They were all descended from the Macedonian conquerors of Egypt, going back to Ptolemy I, the companion of Alexander. Many of them married their sisters, and they all married Macedonians. They all spoke Greek, and none of them spoke Egyptian or spent much time outside of Alexandria, the Alexander-founded Greek city on the Mediterranean that served as the Ptolemaic capital. Cleopatra VII was the first Ptolemaic ruler to even learn Coptic, the language of Egyptian natives. She was the daughter of an Egyptian king, in the same way that, say, Mary Curzon was the daughter of an Indian ruler.

Page 9:355: “[Hadrian] wrote, dictated [spoke aloud], heard others, and conversed with his

friends; and all at the same time.” This is a muddled addition to the 2019 version, again in an attempt to introduce a primary source.

2019 confusing statement: The author of the *Life of Hadrian* is praising the emperor’s verbal facility — his ability to write on his own, dictate to a scribe, listen, and talk to friends “all at the same time” — presumably meaning he was like a busy executive talking on two telephones while conversing with someone at his desk. The textbook author’s interpolation, “spoke aloud,” only confuses the issue, because it looks no different than the later, “talk to his friends.” “Dictate” is perfectly adequate.

Roman Civilization (Ch. 10 in 2019, Ch. 10 in 2006—2019 is always first)

Page 10:364: “On other days, crowds watched gladiators battle to the death or beast fighters fight wild animals in stadiums such as the Coliseum.”

Pages 10:464–65: “Gladiators fought animals and each other.”

Two errors in the 2019 version:

1. Gladiators were expensively trained professionals and almost never fought to the death.
2. There were professional “beast fighters,” but most spectacles involving wild animals were executions of criminals.

Page 10:374: “In spite of Constantine’s reforms, the empire continued to decline.” His “reforms” included wage and price controls and locking every son into his father’s job.

Page 10:477: “Constantine’s changes did not halt the empire’s decline in the west.”

Tautology: “In spite of being shot in the head, John’s health continued to decline.” This is also an example of a “Fox Butterfield story,” such as “In spite of falling crime rates, prison populations continue to rise.” At least the 2006 version didn’t call them “reforms.”

The Rise of Christianity (Ch. 11 in 2019, Ch. 11 in 2006—2019 is always first)

Page 11:405: “[Paul] ... was a Roman citizen.”

Possible error: Paul is described as a Roman citizen in the *Acts of Apostles*, but not in any of the authentically Pauline letters. Moreover, *Acts* uses Paul’s alleged Roman citizenship to explain his imprisonment in Rome, allegedly after an appeal by him to the emperor, from an arrest in Judea. Christians at the time of *Acts*, in the wake of the devastating Jewish War, had much more reason to demonstrate their Roman *bona fides* than Paul himself did. We simply do not know.

PART III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

American ideas of republican, representative government, the checks and balances of a constitution, and the dangers of dictatorship, not to mention the tensions between a republic and an empire, all come directly from the actual experience of Republican Rome. Our ideas about democracy, the idea that there is a natural law for all human beings, the question of whether slavery is natural, all come from the ideas and politics of the Greek *poleis*. Both Greece and Rome wrestled more than two thousand years ago with what citizenship meant, what freedom meant, what justice meant—just as we wrestle with them today. The Greeks and Romans had different gods than we have, spoke different languages than ours, and had radically different technologies and different presuppositions about the nature of the universe. Yet they faced many of the same problems and dilemmas that we now face. They were uniquely self-critical and framed their solutions through empiricism and reason, which marked a departure from prior civilizations. Studying them and what they wrote gives us a different perspective on those problems and can help us as educated citizens to find our own solutions.

One cannot seriously study Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* or Eugene O’Neill’s *Mourning Becomes*

Electra without knowing something about Roman history and Greek tragedy. One cannot understand why Erasmus’ humanism was such a break from Scholasticism without knowing something about Cicero’s letters. One really cannot read any European and American philosopher of the last four hundred years without knowing Plato and Aristotle, the Pre-Socratics, and the Stoics. In his memoirs, literary polymath Garry Wills wrote:

In ... law and politics, philosophy, oratory, history, lyric poetry, epic poetry, drama, there will be constant references back to the founders of these forms in our civilization. ... It helps, in all these cases, to know something about the originals.⁴⁶

As one of the members of the “Postclassicisms Collective”⁴⁷ said in an interview with Morgan Hunter, “Classics is important because it gives us a sense of historical depth, like seeing in three dimensions instead of just a flat picture.” If the humanities are to continue in college, the classical world must be taught in high-level courses at American high schools. These classical foundations are just as important to the humanities as algebra and analytic geometry or high school chemistry and physics are to STEM.

But why teach the Greeks and the Romans in particular in high school as the foundations for later study of the humanities? Why not begin with Middle Eastern civilization, or Indian or Chinese civilization of the same era? All of these ancient civilizations were comparable in extent to the Greco-Roman world, and all had comparable influence on later civilizations in their regions that the Greco-Roman world has had on Europe. Are we not giving European antiquity too much of a privileged status in today’s multicultural world?

The Greeks and the Romans were by no means the only early peoples to confront the fundamental problems of human existence. As Karl Jaspers noted, all four civilizations of the Old World—European, Middle Eastern, Indian, and Chinese—had their beginnings in the “Axial Age,” the period of time from roughly 700 BC to 10 BC, from Homer to Augustus.⁴⁸ This period produced the

Greek philosophers and tragedians, the Hebrew prophets and Zoroaster, Buddha and Mahavira and the Upanishads, and also Confucius and Lao Tzu. Just as in our own era, in that earlier time, old ideas about religion, morality, and the purpose of life were being intensely scrutinized, and new belief systems and institutions were struggling to be born. It is surely important, if we are to navigate through our times, that the Axial Age should be widely understood. Of the four Axial Age cultures, the Greco-Roman one is by far the best documented, the most accessible in English translation, and of course the most directly ancestral to our own civilization. For those reasons, it must surely be the subject of the most general interest and study.⁴⁹

Recommendations

Currently the classical world is taught quite poorly in American schools. In California it is confined to the sixth grade and squeezed into a single course with early Chinese, Indian, Middle Eastern, and Mesoamerican civilizations. Since this is the only such course students will receive during their seven years of middle and high school, the textbooks have been made high school-like, instead of interesting for these young students. Despite the plethora of electives, schools are failing at producing adults who are prepared for American citizenship, since they are not taught a “common core” of content about the history, biographies, metaphors, and exemplars that motivated the Founders and their nineteenth-century successors to create and sustain the republic.⁵⁰ Similarly, by failing to teach the ancient world at an actual high school level—for example, as an AP course—schools are undermining the humanities, since college level reading in the humanities almost always requires a good understanding of ancient history and its authors.

The experience of the Common Core standards effort has taught us the wrong way to reform education. We should not overly emphasize reading skills; instead, we need to focus on content. We should continue teaching the classical world in K-8 (where it is confined in the current curriculum),

but make it more interesting and anecdotal, and tie it more directly to the American Republican experiment. To paraphrase Milton, we need “to justify the ways of America to our children.” To do this, we need to focus much more directly on the Greco-Roman classical world. There is simply not enough time to cover four other ancient civilizations as well. More importantly, we need to improve the content. By making the content more interesting and “old fashioned,” we help students retain the examples important for citizenship, but we also motivate them to learn more in later grades. Compare, for example, the sixth-grade textbooks covered in Part II, with a series such as *The World in Ancient Times*, an Oxford University Press publication edited by Ronald Mellor and Marni McGee. Two books from that series, one on ancient Greece, the other on ancient Rome, are both excellent and could serve as the foundation for a two-semester course in the sixth grade.⁵¹ The contrast between Mellor and McGee’s book and the current textbook in their coverage of Antony and Cleopatra (Chapter 12, “Power-Mad or Madly in Love? Cleopatra Queen of Egypt”) is stunning. Genevieve Forster’s 1947 book, *Augustus Caesar’s World*, is also still an excellent text.⁵²

Besides teaching the classical world in the sixth grade in more interesting ways, we need to add the classical world back into high school as the foundations of the humanities. But it should be divorced from the necessity of also teaching ancient Greek and Latin, which can remain the subject for people who want to major in the classics. The logical way to do this is to import the British GCSE and A-level courses in classical civilization, which are quite comprehensive but taught in English.

The education system in Britain is rather different from the US version. In the United States, students are only required to select a specialization (their “major”) for the last two years of college, although many students enter college with some idea of what subject they intend to major in. In Britain, students are admitted to college in order to “read” a particular course of study, e.g.,

mathematics or history or classics. Thus, college in Britain corresponds to the last two years of American colleges (and perhaps also the first year of graduate school). Consequently, the last two years of British high schools are when students take the “introductory” courses that Americans typically take in their college freshman or sophomore years. These precollege courses culminate in tests called “Advanced Levels” or “A-levels.” College-bound students typically take three of these A-level courses in subjects preparatory to the course they intend to study in college.

The percentage of students who attend college in Britain is approximately one-half that of the United States, so most British students do not take the A-levels, which are taught in the final two years of schooling (also called the GCSE Advanced Level, Key Stage 5, or the “sixth form”). Instead most students only complete the two years before that (called Key Stage 4). All students, both those intending to go on to the sixth form and take A-levels, and those intending to graduate immediately, are required to take, at the end of Key Stage 4, tests called GCSEs (General Certificate of Secondary Education) in the subjects they studied. A good noncollegiate education, the so-called “English Baccalaureate,” currently requires passing scores on five GCSE exams: English literature, mathematics, science, history, and an ancient or modern language.

Over the last several decades, Advanced Placement courses and exams have sprouted in American high schools, intended for academically inclined students who are prepared to take in high school the equivalent of the introductory college courses normally taught in the freshman and sophomore years. These courses, taught in the final two years of high school, tend to cater to students who, like their British counterparts, already know their intended college major by grade eleven and want to take upper-division courses as soon as they get to college. So there is a rough equation: A-level courses equal AP courses. Likewise, again roughly: GCSE courses equal non-AP courses. We propose

importing the British GCSE and A-level classical civilization courses⁵³ into American high schools for the eleventh and twelfth grades. As Edith Hall, Gaisford Lecturer at Oxford, writes, “[The] excellent GCSE and A-level courses in classical civilization have been a success whenever introduced, and can be taught cost-effectively across the state-school sector.”⁵⁴ The GCSE version would be the standard class, with the A-level version as the AP class.⁵⁵ From our examination of Palo Alto high schools, there is unquestionably room in most students’ schedule for such a class.

This recent passionate argument by Hall, for making this class available to all students in Britain, is equally true for the United States:

The failure to include classical civilization among the subjects taught in every secondary deprives us and our future citizens of access to educational treasures which can not only enthrall, but also fulfill what Jefferson argued ... was the main goal of education in a democracy: to enable us to defend our liberty. History, he proposed, is the subject that equips citizens for this. To stay free also requires comparison of constitutions, utopian thinking, fearlessness about innovation, critical, lateral, and relativist thinking, advanced epistemological skills in source criticism, and the ability to argue cogently. All these skills can be learned from their succinct, entertaining, original formulations and applications in the works of the Greeks.⁵⁶

It is time for American education to live up to this goal.

APPENDIX: ERRORS IN ANOTHER COMMON CORE-INSPIRED TEXTBOOK

World History: Ancient Civilizations by Jon Heggie, National Geographic, 2018.

Although McGraw-Hill and National Geographic collaborated on the 2006 Jackson Spielvogel book, they published separate post-Common Core

versions. Spielvogel stayed with McGraw-Hill, and National Geographic got a new writing team. Mr. Heggie is only credited as “program writer,” along with six “program consultants” and three “reviewers of religious content.” Despite the ten minds contributing to the content, like the McGraw-Hill post-Common Core text, it contains numerous errors.

Chapter 9, Ancient Greece

Pages 222–23: The timeline should include Greek Dark Ages and Athenian Golden Age (terms that are used on pages 231 and 250).

Page 232: “Homer’s stories inspired archaeologists to explore Greece. In the 1820s, they discovered the remains of a great city in Turkey.”

Error: Heinrich Schliemann excavated Hisarlik, which he correctly determined to be ancient Troy, beginning in 1870.

Page 232: The two-paragraph discussion of the *Odyssey* focuses almost entirely on the Trojan Horse episode, which occupies a very short section of the epic. It is a very fun story and has captured the imagination for millennia. However, the *Iliad* is barely mentioned, and it was far more influential in antiquity. Western knowledge of the Trojan Horse story itself owes more to Vergil’s much later *Aeneid*, which is more detailed.

Page 234, based on 224: “... city-states remained independent ...” “Citizens identified themselves as Athenians or Spartans, not as Greeks.” This implies that it would be better if there had been a single, unified Greek state.

Misleading statement: There is always a tension between freedom and unified collective military action, and resolving that tension requires sophisticated political structures, which the Greeks developed. In fact, they invented the *koinonia*, or federal league, such as the Delian League, formed to resist Persia, and later the Achaean League and the Aetolian League, both of which were militarily formidable. The Greeks were eventually conquered,

but so were the “unified” Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, and later Romans.

Page 242: In the main text, the author writes, “Leonidas’s small army fought off the Persians, giving the Greeks time to assemble further south.” No intimation is given that the Spartan force was defeated in the main text. Not until page 245, in a special box, is the defeat finally mentioned. This is, at best, misleading.

Page 243: “Greek triremes were smaller, faster, and more maneuverable than larger ships.”

Error: This is exactly backwards. According to Herodotus, the Greek ships were heavier and less maneuverable than the Persian ships, which is why they preferred to fight in the constricted waters of the Salamis channel. The Greeks won by using hoplites as marines to board and seize the Persian vessels.

Chapter 10, Classical Greece

Page 249: “Cape Tainaron, located at the southernmost point of Greece, was known in ancient times as ‘the Gate to Hades,’ or what the Greeks thought of as hell.”

Error: Hades was very far from the later Christian idea of hell. The disembodied spirits of the dead lived a kind of shadowy wraithlike existence, but there was no punishment involved.

Page 259: “Spartan soldiers raise their weapons for battle. What does the illustration suggest about how Spartan soldiers fought?” A truthful answer to this caption would be “they seem to have fought just like Roman legionaries.” Except for his Corinthian helmet and round shield, the “Spartan” soldier is completely Roman: he carries a *gladius* short sword, he has no cuirass—instead Roman armor, and he carries no spear. No phalanx in Greece would have welcomed him.

Page 261: A fairly long discussion of ostracism misses a great opportunity to tell the story of Aristides the Just, who filled in his own name on

an ostrakon for an illiterate farmer. When asked by Aristides why that name, the farmer said, “I’m tired of everyone calling him ‘The Just.’” This story illustrates that ostracism could be used to settle political or personal grievances.

Page 262: “Philip built a powerful professional army and used new warfare methods. For example, he placed large groups of soldiers close together, forming an almost unstoppable battle formation called a phalanx.”

Error: This is a really, really bad error. Philip II did not by any means invent the phalanx, which was at least three hundred years old in his day. He made changes to weapons, especially by lengthening the spear and reducing the size of the shield, and he emphasized the cavalry much more, and added auxiliary formations, especially for sieges. (The book is accurate about his inventions, but the phalanx statement is ludicrous.)

Page 267: Under “Hellenistic Culture,” he writes, “The library [of Alexandria] drew scientists from around the world, including the Greek scholar Euclid and the Egyptian scholar Hypatia.”

Error: Hypatia lived from roughly 360 to 415 AD, approximately 450 years after Pompey conquered the last of the Hellenistic kingdoms and thereby put an end to the “Hellenistic Age.” She lived 700 years after Euclid, or as far from him as we are from Edward III and the Black Death. Why not put her in the Byzantine Empire chapter, which goes from 330 to 1453?

Page 270: “Tragedy was serious, with characters suffering before an unhappy ending.”

Error: All the major tragedians—Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides—wrote some tragedies with happy endings, e.g., Aeschylus’s *Oresteia*, Sophocles’s *Philoctetes*, and Euripides’s *Iphigeneia in Taurus*. Admittedly, Euripides’s best plays end unhappily, but he wrote happy endings, and the *Oresteia* is Aeschylus’s best.

Page 274: Section 4.4, “Democracy and Law” is

very poorly thought out. (1) The author attributes to “the Greeks” practices that are often unique to (Periclean) Athens, for example, payment of officials. (2) He says that “Greek colonies in Italy spread democracy to the Romans,” which is nonsense. There were few Greek democracies in Italy, and Roman republican institutions were quite independent of Greeks and instead owed much to the Etruscans. (3) He writes, “They ... separated the three key branches of government—lawmaking, executive, and judicial. ...” This is a silly analysis that owes more to Montesquieu than any Greek. At Athens all citizens were members of the Assembly, and any of them could be selected by lot to be jurors or officials, without giving up their right to attend the Assembly. (4) He writes, “The representative democracy of the United States is based on the Greek system.” This is false; Greek direct democracy was explicitly rejected by the American Founders. Trying to understand the origins of modern American institutions is a worthy goal, but this isn’t it.

Chapter 11, The Roman Republic

Page 294: The description of the “struggle of the orders” is completely credulous of Livy’s account, which is clearly modeled on the struggle of the *optimates* and the *populares* of his own day. Modern scholarship regards much of this as mythical. The patricians were likely priestly families similar to the priestly families of ancient Greece. Some may have been wealthy landowners but many were not. Their supposed opponents, the plebeians, were in fact participants in a different controversy, about too-frequent compulsory military service. “Plebs” likely meant “civilian” originally.

Page 298: Section 2.1, “Men and Women,” accurately explains that Roman women had more rights than most Greek women, but they are described at great length as oppressed because Rome was “a patriarchy.” It’s odd to single out Rome for this criticism—there is only a small paragraph about women in Athens and no mention of patriarchy—when Rome was exceptional precisely because Roman women had more rights than was usual.

Page 300: “At the top of society was the aristocracy, the small group of wealthy patricians who owned most of the land and dominated the government.”

Error: This confusion of patricians with *optimates* is all too typical and very annoying.

Page 317: “According to legend, as Caesar died, he cried out to a man who he had thought was his friend, ‘*et tu, Brute*’ (‘and you Brutus?’).”

Error: According to Plutarch, Caesar said “*kai su, teknon?*” (Greek for “you too, child”; literally, “and you, child”). The somewhat later Suetonius wrote that Caesar said nothing. Shakespeare is responsible for our current use of “*et tu, Brute.*”

Chapter 12, The Roman Empire and Christianity

Page 326: The discussion of Octavian’s rise states only, “Octavian defeated his rivals,” but doesn’t mention Anthony or Cleopatra at all. In fact, in the section on the assassination of Caesar, page 317, Brutus and Cassius aren’t mentioned either, only “a group of Senators.” This is terrible. Sixth-grade students should be exposed precisely to exciting stories about real people, not bloodless facts.

Page 332: “The gladiators ... fought each other to the death.”

Error: Gladiators were very expensively trained professionals and almost never fought to the death. Yet another exposition of this myth. Blame *Spartacus* and *Gladiator*.

Page 338: “In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus declared that love for God and charity toward all people were more important than following Jewish law.”

Error: In the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew, Jesus argues that love of God and charity toward all people *are* “the Law and the Prophets.” He basically reinterprets the Jewish law as requiring a certain mental attitude and intentional behavior as opposed to mere ritual.

But he denies that he is *challenging* the law. “I have not come to abolish [the laws] but to fulfill them.” “Not a jot or tittle, etc.” It is not hard to find denunciation of the Jewish law in Paul’s letters, but they are not found in Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount.

Page 341: “[Paul] ... was a Roman citizen.”

Possible error: Paul is described as a Roman citizen in the *Acts of Apostles*, but not in any of the authentically Pauline letters. Moreover, *Acts* uses Paul’s alleged Roman citizenship to explain his imprisonment in Rome, allegedly after an appeal by him to the emperor, from an arrest in Judea. Christians at the time of *Acts*, in the wake of the devastating Jewish War, had much more reason to demonstrate their Roman *bona fides* than Paul himself did. We simply do not know.

Page 346: Section 3.1, “The Third-Century Crisis,” covers the facts of the Roman decline in this century, but it neglects to cover the effects of the Antonine Plague (165–180) and the Plague of Cyprian (249–262). Both of these epidemics seriously weakened Rome and contributed to the crisis.

Page 352: Romanian is also descended from Latin and is the national language of about twenty-five million people. It should be included in the list.

Page 355: “The ideas of ... presumption of innocence, and equality under the law also come from the Romans.”

Error: The Romans gave us a lot directly, but equality under the law came only indirectly. It is true that after 300 BC, all citizens were equal under the law, but under the post–150 BC Republic and early Empire, citizens were a tiny minority. The idea of equality under the law is an early republican one, and is not found in the later Empire and Code of Justinian, which distinguished legally between *honestiores* and *humiliores*. As we noted for page 333 of the other book, the presumption of innocence at Rome dated from the mid-second century, precisely when the legal distinctions between *honestiores* and *humiliores* were introduced. So there was never a time in Rome when both ideas were present. It is true, however, that when the idea of equality under the law was reintroduced into the West, the inspiration was the early Roman Republic. So Rome indirectly gave us equality under the law. But unlike the presumption of innocence, which was revived with the rediscovery of the Code of Justinian, it came much later. It was more of a political idea associated with republicanism than a legal idea.

NOTES

- 1 Nicholas Lemann, “The Reading Wars,” *The Atlantic*, November 1997, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1997/11/the-reading-wars/376990>.
- 2 Nicholas Lemann, “The Reading Wars,” *The Atlantic*, November 1997, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1997/11/the-reading-wars/376990>.
- 3 Fernand Braudel, one of the luminaries of the French *Annales* school of historians and best known for his 1949 book *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, de-emphasized the role of individuals and events, and emphasized geography in predetermining historical events.
- 4 Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 23.
- 5 Carl J. Richard, *The Founders and the Classics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994).
- 6 For example, the largely forgotten speech by Edward Everett at Gettysburg, introducing Lincoln, described ancient Athenian funeral customs and invoked Pericles’s oration. See Daniel Walker Howe, “Classical Education in America,” *Wilson Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (Spring 2011): 31–36.
- 7 Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins*.
- 8 Gordon Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1969).
- 9 J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975).
- 10 The literature on “republicanism” has grown so much that “even the world itself could not contain the books which would be written.” For a recent overview, consult a special issue of the *American Quarterly* (vol. 37, no. 4, 1985) dedicated to “Republicanism in the History and Historiography of the United States.” The introduction by Joyce Appleby is a good summary of the issues.
- 11 See Joyce Appleby, *Capitalism and a New Social Order: The Republican Vision of the 1790s* (New York: New York University Press, 1984).
- 12 Isaac Kramnick, *Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism: Political Ideology in Late Eighteenth-Century England and America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990).
- 13 Caroline Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism: Ancient Greece and Rome in American Intellectual Life, 1780–1910* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 2. Winterer’s account of the evolution of classical education in America during this period is the best to date. Much of our account in this section owes a debt to her.
- 14 The Hollis Chair of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy at Harvard—now in the physics department—was established in 1727.
- 15 See Jon Roberts and James Turner, *The Sacred and the Secular University* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).
- 16 Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism*, 2.
- 17 Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism*, 2.
- 18 “More human writings”—that is nontheological literature in Greek and Latin, e.g., Homer, the tragedies, history, poetry, philosophy. This course is informally still known as “the Greats.”
- 19 Roberts and Turner, *The Sacred and the Secular University*, Chapter 5, “The Triumph of the Humanities,” 75–82.
- 20 At Oxford itself, a new course of study established in the 1920s—called Philosophy, Politics, and Economics (PPE)—exemplified this trend. It came to be known informally as the “Modern Greats.”
- 21 Roberts and Turner, *The Sacred and the Secular University*, 78.
- 22 Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism*, 133–42.
- 23 Ralph Ketcham, Anders Lewis, and Sandra Stotsky, “Imperiling the Republic: The Fate of US History Instruction Under Common Core,” White Paper 121 (Pioneer Institute, September 2014), 12, referencing Diane Ravich, “A Brief

- History of Social Studies,” in *Where Did Social Studies Go Wrong?*, eds., James Leming, Lucien Ellington, and Kathleen Porter (Washington, DC: Thomas Fordham Foundation, 2003), 2–3.
- 24 Ketcham, Lewis, and Stotsky, “Imperiling the Republic,” 12.
- 25 Ketcham, Lewis, and Stotsky, “Imperiling the Republic,” 13.
- 26 Ketcham, Lewis, and Stotsky, “Imperiling the Republic,” 13–16.
- 27 See endnotes 37 and 38 in Part II.
- 28 Along with five for the ancient Hebrews, seven for early India, eight for early China, nine for “Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Kush,” and three for the Paleolithic and Neolithic periods.
- 29 We also examined one post–Common Core textbook and compared it with the pre–Common Core version of the same text. The results of our comparison are in Part II.
- 30 The state did release a sample set of questions from the tests for 2003–2008. See <https://www.washingtonusd.org/cms/lib/CA01001065/Centricity/Domain/60/cstrtqhss8.pdf>.
- 31 See Victor Davis Hanson and John Heath, *Who Killed Homer? The Demise of Classical Education and the Recovery of Greek Wisdom* (New York: Encounter, 2001).
- 32 A vast literature exists on the Common Core, from many perspectives. Consult Williamson M. Evers, “No Exit, No Voice: The Design of Common Core,” Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder*, no. 3019 (June 16, 2015), and the literature cited therein, for a useful reference.
- 33 For the Common Core’s neglect of teaching content, especially in history and literature, see Ketcham, Lewis, and Stotsky, “Imperiling the Republic.”
- 34 Leaders of “social studies” teaching have long downplayed the importance of history content knowledge. See Erich Martel, “Can ‘Social Studies’ Standards Prepare History Teachers?,” *Perspectives on History* (October 1999), <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/october-1999/can-social-studies-standards-prepare-history-teachers>.
- 35 See <https://theweek.com/articles/781034/ancient-history-belongs-schools>.
- 36 See <https://www.usnews.com/education/blogs/college-admissions-playbook/articles/2019-08-26/what-to-know-about-ap-world-history-changes>.
- 37 Officially titled the *California Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects*. Accessible at https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&url=https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/documents/finaelaccsstandards.pdf&ved=2ahUKEwi_0r2ylvbqAhWTKn0KHZrhDIY-QFjAAegQIBBAC&usg=AOvVaw0m6lU-j89_4ZCHkgT-rFrIO.
- 38 Officially, the *History-Social Science Framework for California Public Schools: Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve*. See the website: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/hs/cf/hssframework.asp>.
- 39 *History-Science Framework for California Public Schools, 2005 Edition*, to be found at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/documents/histsocsciframe.pdf>.
- 40 Officially, the *History-Social Science Content Standards for California Public Schools: Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve*. See the website: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/documents/histsocscistnd.pdf>.
- 41 See the next section for the error comparison, page by matching page.
- 42 Jackson J. Spielvogel, *Ancient Civilizations*, Glencoe California Series: *Discovering Our Past* (McGraw-Hill Glencoe and National Geographic, Columbus, OH, 2006).
- 43 J. Spielvogel, *World History*, (Mc Graw-Hill Glencoe and National Geographic, New York, 2003).
- 44 Jackson J. Spielvogel, *Ancient Civilizations, Impact California Social Studies Series: World History and Geography* (McGraw-Hill Education, Columbus, OH, 2019)

- 45 Martin L. West, *The Making of the Iliad* (Oxford UP, 2011) pp.15-19.
- 46 Garry Wills, *Outside Looking In* (Penguin, New York City, 2010), 13–14
- 47 See The Postclassicisms Collective, *Postclassicisms* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020).
- 48 Karl Jaspers, *Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte* (1949), trans. Michael Bullock, *The Origin and Goal of History* (Routledge, New York City, 2011).
- 49 That is not to say that the other civilizations should not be the subject of more specialized scholarship.
- 50 E. D. Hirsch and his followers have been making this point for decades, ever since his groundbreaking book *Cultural Literacy* (Houghton Mifflin, New York City, 1987). As Prof. John Heath deadpanned in an interview with Morgan Hunter, “There’s something to be said for knowing stuff.”
- 51 Jennifer T. Roberts and Tracy Barnett, *The Ancient Greek World* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2004) and Ronald Mellor and Marni McGee, *The Ancient Roman World* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2005). The sourcebook is also very useful: Ronald Mellor and Amanda H. Podany, *The World in Ancient Times: Primary Sources and Reference Volume* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2005).
- 52 Genevieve Foster, *Augustus Caesar’s World: 44 BC to AD 14* (Beautiful Feet Books, San Luis Obispo, CA, 1947)
- 53 See <https://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/315133-specification-accredited-a-level-classical-civilisation-h408.pdf> and <https://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/315240-specification-accredited-gcse-classical-civilisation-j199.pdf>.
- 54 Edith Hall, “Classics for the People—why we should all learn from the Greeks,” *The Guardian*, June 15, 2015.
- 55 As a first step, we might encourage high schools at least to teach the International Baccalaureate course on classical Greek and Roman studies.
- 56 Hall, “Classics for the People.”

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