

REPRESENTATIONS & IMAGES ESSAY

Write a 3 page essay based on ONE of the two following topics. **The essay is due on Tuesday, January 16**, after the MLK holiday. Because some planning is involved in scheduling what you are going to view before writing the paper, make sure to get started on this as early as possible!

Option 1 – Artifacts Comparison

Visit, in person, any museum exhibition or collection of art, architecture, or other artifacts of the ancient world. Choose two or three comparable artworks depicting women or female ideas from different eras, from different places, or both, and discuss the artists' intent regarding what he or she wanted to emphasize about his or her culture and values.

Your question is this: If art is an expression of cultural values, what do the differences between these works tell you about the respective cultures they come from? What do their similarities tell you about what these ancient societies have in common?

- Make sure to look for items with the similar subjects, but that come from different times or from different places. For example: a Greek statue of a young girl and a Roman statue of a young girl, or a decorated vase depicting women working from the Greek Archaic period and one from the Classical or Hellenistic period.
- Describe in detail how what you see leads you to concrete conclusions about these ancient peoples. Be bold, be provocative, and be specific.
- **Important:** On a separate “Works Discussed” page after your essay, list the title of each work, the artist, the approximate date it was created, and the name of the museum gallery where the work can be found.
- Also on the “Works Discussed” page, paste in photographs of the items. If it's permitted at the museum, take a picture of the items while you're there. If it's not, find pictures of those specific items on the museum's web site or via a Google Images search.

Possible venues for the artifacts comparison option include:

- Metropolitan Museum: Egypt Collection
<http://www.metmuseum.org/about-the-museum/museum-departments/curatorial-departments/egyptian-art>
- Metropolitan Museum: Greek and Roman Art
<http://www.metmuseum.org/about-the-museum/museum-departments/curatorial-departments/greek-and-roman-art>
- Brooklyn Museum of Art: Ancient Egyptian Art
<http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/egyptian/copy/history>
- Fordham Museum of Greek, Etruscan and Roman Art
<http://www.library.fordham.edu/resources/fordhammuseum.html>

You are, of course, not limited to these venues, and you are not limited to New York.

Option 2 – Films and Sources

Watch any feature-length film that seriously depicts women in the ancient world and compare it with a primary source—the ancient written evidence about that society or those events.

Use at least two specific events or characters to compare the filmmakers' intent and message with the intent and message of the writers of the source material. What do they want you to believe? What conclusions can you draw about how these stories were being used to shape the audience's perception of that culture and society?

- **Important:** On a separate “Works Discussed” page after your essay, list the title of film, year, director, stars and studio. Then list the book or books you drew your written evidence from, using standard citation style.
- You may also employ secondary sources to help you interpret the film, the primary source, or both.

It's absolutely crucial to remember that the ancient source material is not “fact” or “what really happened”. Both the movie AND the written source are artistic interpretations of an event. The writer of the source material wanted to shape the reader's understanding, and had opinions about the events and about the cultural values at play in those events that he or she urgently wanted to impose on the readers or listeners to his tale.

In other words, both the film and the ancient source material are distortions of what really happened. Both were designed to use those events to drive home a message about the filmmakers' or writer's deeply held beliefs about the cultures and societies involved.

Your job is to expose the agendas of the filmmakers *and* of the ancient writers, and talk about what their intent reveals to us about what these events meant to those that were affected by them.

Whichever option you choose, the purpose of this essay is NOT to describe the works in question, but to interpret the creators' agendas and discuss analytically what they tell us about *how* and *why* different kinds of artists and creators represent ancient peoples and their world.

For some suggested possibilities for both options, see next page.

Option 2 Possibilities

Make sure you have something that has important female characters and presence.

Some general possibilities for films set in the ancient world and their sources option include (this list is not exhaustive; I can give you specifics on where to look in the primary sources on request):

FILM	POSSIBLE PRIMARY SOURCES TO COMPARE
<i>Abraham</i> (1993 Mini-Series)	Old Testament, <i>Genesis</i> books 11-25
<i>Agora</i> (2009)	Socrates Scholasticus, <i>Ecclesiastical History</i> , 7.15; John of Nikiû, <i>Chronicle</i> 84.87-103; The Suda, <i>Life of Hypatia</i>
<i>Alexander</i> (2004, 1956)	Plutarch, <i>Alexander</i> ; or Arrian, <i>Anabasis</i>
<i>Barefoot in Athens</i> (1966)	Plato, <i>Phaedo</i> or <i>Apology</i>
<i>Boudica</i> (2003)	Tacitus, <i>Annals</i> 14.29-39, <i>Agricola</i> ; Cassius Dio, <i>Roman History</i> 62
<i>Caligula</i> (1980) [warning: explicit sex].....	Suetonius, <i>Caligula</i> ; Cassius Dio, <i>Roman History</i> 59
<i>The Centurion</i> (1961)	Polybius, <i>The Histories</i> book 38
<i>Clash of the Titans</i> (1981, 2010).....	Plutarch, <i>Theseus</i> ; Ps.-Apollodorus, <i>Bibliotheca</i> ; Ovid, <i>Metamorphoses</i>
<i>Cleopatra</i> (1963).....	Plutarch, <i>Caesar and Antony</i>
<i>Coriolanus</i> (1963).....	Plutarch, <i>Coriolanus</i> ; Livy 2.33-2.40
<i>The Eagle</i> (2011)	Tacitus, <i>Agricola</i>
<i>Electra</i> (1963).....	Euripides, <i>Elektra</i> ; Sophocles, <i>Elektra</i>
<i>Empire</i> (2005 Mini-Series).....	Suetonius, <i>Augustus</i> ; Nicolas of Damascus, <i>Life of Augustus</i> ; Cassius Dio, 45-56
<i>Gladiator</i> (2000)	Cassius Dio 73; Herodian 1.15; <i>Historia Augusta</i> , “Commodus”
<i>Helen of Troy</i> (1956).....	Homer, <i>Iliad</i> 3, <i>Odyssey</i> 4, 23; Euripides, <i>Helen</i> ; Ovid, <i>Heroides</i> 16; Isocrates, <i>Helen</i>
<i>I, Claudius</i> (1976) [1-2 episodes].....	Tacitus, <i>Annals</i> 11-12; Suetonius, <i>Claudius</i>
<i>Intolerance</i> (1916) [Part 1 only]	Herodotus, <i>Histories</i> 1.70-144; Josephus, <i>Antiquities</i> 10-11
<i>Iphigenia</i> (1977).....	Euripides, <i>Iphigenia at Aulis</i>
<i>Jason and the Argonauts</i> (1963).....	Ovid, <i>Metamorphoses</i> ; Apollonius Rhodius, <i>Argonautica</i>
<i>Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat</i> (1999)...	Old Testament, <i>Genesis</i> 37-50
<i>Julius Caesar</i> (1953 or 1979)	Plutarch, <i>Caesar</i> ; Suetonius, <i>The Divine Julius</i> (Julius Caesar)
<i>Masada</i> (1981 Mini-Series)	Josephus, <i>The Jewish War</i> book 1
<i>The Odyssey</i> (1997) or <i>Ulysses</i> (1955).....	Homer, <i>Odyssey</i>
<i>One Night with the King</i> (2006).....	Old Testament, <i>Esther</i>
<i>The Passion of the Christ</i> (2004).....	New Testament: <i>Matthew</i> , <i>Mark</i> , <i>Luke</i> , <i>John</i>
<i>Pompeii: The Last Day</i> (2003) [or other Pompeii films]..	Pliny the Younger’s letters to Tacitus, #65 and #66
<i>The Prince of Egypt</i> (1998).....	Old Testament, <i>Exodus</i>
<i>Quo Vadis?</i> (1951)	Tacitus, <i>Annals</i> 13-16; Suetonius, <i>Nero</i> ; Cassius Dio 61-63
<i>Rome</i> (2005-2007) [use 1-2 episodes].....	Various (see me)
<i>Fellini Satyricon</i> (1969)	Petronius, <i>Satyricon</i>
<i>Solomon and Sheba</i> (1959).....	Old Testament, <i>Kings</i> or <i>Chronicles</i> ; Josephus, <i>Antiquities</i> book 8
<i>Spartacus</i> (1960) or <i>Spartacus: Blood and Sand</i> (2010)....	Appian, <i>Roman History</i> 116-120; Plutarch, <i>Crassus</i> 8-11
<i>The Ten Commandments</i> (1956).....	Old Testament, <i>Exodus</i>
<i>The Trojan Women</i> (1971).....	Euripides, <i>The Trojan Women</i>
<i>Troy</i> (2004)	Homer, <i>Iliad</i>

These are just some of the possibilities; if there’s another film or TV series that depicts women in the ancient world that you think would work well for this assignment, just run it past me and we’ll discuss it.

Many of these primary sources are available through the list of ancient sources and translations on my website (markbwilson.com) via the “Links to Ancient Texts” link at the left of the BlackBoard page.