Document A: Textbook (Excerpt)

During the early Middle Ages much of Europe passed through a time of turmoil and confusion, of ignorance and lawlessness . . . The early Middle Ages may justly be called the Dark Age . . .

During the early Middle Ages, from 476 to about 1100, European civilization slipped back into semi-barbarism. The chief cause of this decline was lack of a government which could keep order. The Germanic Kingdoms which had been set up by 476 were unable to suppress violence. There were so many highway robbers that travel became dangerous. Europe suffered a decline in commerce and manufacturing, in education, in literature and the arts, and in almost all that makes possible a high civilization. Cities grew smaller and in some cases practically disappeared, and Western Europe became a region of poverty-stricken farming communities, each virtually isolated from the rest of the world.

Source: Roehm, A., Buske, M., Webster, H. & Wesley, E,. (1954). The Record of Mankind. Heath and Company.

Guiding Questions:

1. What type of document is this?
2. When was it written?
3. How long does the textbook suggest the “Dark Ages” lasted?
4. Why, according to the textbook, were the “early Middle Ages” a “Dark Age”?
5. What is similar and different about this account and the *American Cyclopaedia* entry?

Document B: Textbook B (Excerpt)

From 1000 to 1300, the economy of Europe developed and prospered. Available farmland tripled, and the food supply increased notably, bringing up the population. Europeans re-settled lands that had been depopulated by the ninth- and tenth-century invasions and also opened new lands for farming . . . Technological improvements like the heavy plow, the shoulder collar for horses, metal horseshoes, and more efficient water and windmills contributed to the jump in food supply. Between 500 and 1300 Europe’s population grew from 25 million to more than 70 million.

Source: Cassar, G.H., Goff, R.D., Holoka, J.P., Terry, J.J., Upshur, Jiu-Hwa (Eds.). (2002). World History Before 1600: The Development of Early Civilization. Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning.

Guiding Questions:

1. What type of document is this?
2. When was it written?
3. What two periods of time does this excerpt describe? How does the textbook describe them?
4. How does this textbook compare to *Document A* and to the *American Cyclopaedia*?
5. Which do you find more reliable? Why?