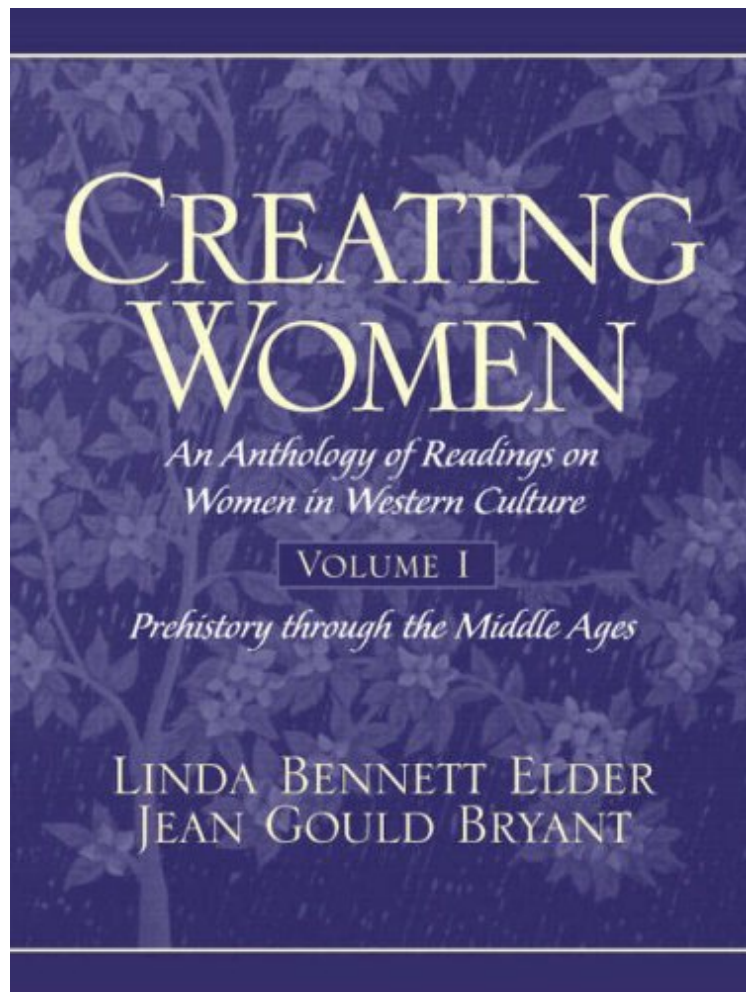


[Free] Creating Women: An Anthology of Readings on Women in Western Culture, Volume 1 (Prehistory Through the Middle Ages)

## Creating Women: An Anthology of Readings on Women in Western Culture, Volume 1 (Prehistory Through the Middle Ages)

*Jean Gould Bryant, Linda Bennett Elder*  
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**Jean Gould Bryant, Linda Bennett Elder : Creating Women: An Anthology of Readings on Women in Western Culture, Volume 1 (Prehistory Through the Middle Ages)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Creating Women: An Anthology of Readings on Women in Western Culture, Volume 1 (Prehistory Through the Middle Ages):

Creating Women is a rich, interdisciplinary, two-volume anthology of primary source material examining women's participation in and contributions to western culture over the centuries. It documents prevalent concepts of the nature

of women and women's roles and status in diverse cultures, geographic locations, and periods of western civilization. Narrative framework, biographical vignettes, and introductions to documents carefully place women and their achievements within the social context in which they lived and worked.

From the Back Cover Creating Women is an invaluable resource for students and teachers in a broad range of courses. Its primary sources facilitate researching women's diverse contributions to Western culture. Exploration of women's creative endeavors from the Upper Paleolithic era to the present invites a powerful rethinking of the making of Western civilization. This expansive scope makes a compelling argument that women have been key in the development of culture from its very beginnings. It also reveals the centrality of gender as a crucial element of social organization and human experiences. Documents are well situated within more familiar time frames and movements; yet clarify the often-restrictive nature of these categories relative to women's experiences. Clear and concise introductions frame selections with pertinent details for contextualizing specific texts and images. While some individuals and selections will be familiar to many readers, others will represent new discoveries in the ongoing task of recovering forgotten women and their contributions. Both Volumes I and II are sensitive to the diversity of women's voices and experiences in Western culture, and celebrate tire accomplishments of women from a broad range of backgrounds as well as the ingenuity of many whose circumstances worked against their talents and ambitions. The selections are lively and engaging, and often give very personal glimpses into both the societal creation of women and women's creativity. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Our goal in writing this two-volume work is to provide students and instructors with a more comprehensive understanding of the history of humankind than has previously been available to the non-specialist. As the title suggests, these volumes document the significant part women have played in the development of Western civilization, from the Upper Paleolithic era (we begin ca. 35,000 B.C.E.) to the present. We have brought together a varied collection of primary source materials including archeological artifacts, images, and texts that reveal women's participation in all aspects of human culture, religion, the visual and performing arts, literature, philosophy, and public affairs. We deliberately chose our title, Creating Women, because, in addition to its obvious reference to creative women, it reflects another important dimension of Western civilization: The ways in which societal notions of gender (masculine/feminine) and gender roles have in essence "created" and/or "constructed" women. A significant consequence of this social construction is that women's experiences and opportunities have often differed in significant ways from those of men. Together, the documents tell much about Western notions of sex differences and how and why "the woman question" continues to be among the most persistent controversies in Western thought and discourse. Creating Women, like many other new texts, evolved from the need for reading materials for a new course. In 1985, a team of Florida State University faculty and graduate students from history, dance, theater, music, English, classics, religion, humanities, and art history received a university grant to develop an introductory course for women's studies that would also fulfill part of the university's liberal studies requirements. Jean Gould Bryant, director of the women's studies program, led that project and Linda Bennett Elder was a member of the development team from its inception. The decision to develop an interdisciplinary humanities course was prompted by several considerations. We wanted a course to complement an existing humanities sequence that introduced students to the traditional canon of cultural developments of Western civilization but made few references to women's contributions. We also sought to fill curriculum gaps in classics, music, art history, theater, and European history and to provide a catalyst for the creation of courses on women and gender across the arts and sciences. We hoped as well to create incentives for faculty to include information related to women's accomplishments and experiences within existing courses. The course, Women in Western Culture: Images and Realities, was a vital addition to our women's studies curriculum that had previously focused almost exclusively on the Western world since the seventeenth century, with heavy emphasis on contemporary American society. In 1986, as now, there were a few discipline-specific texts and anthologies of secondary articles and primary source readings, but no interdisciplinary text or anthology concerning women existed and no anthology spanned the entire history of Western civilization. As we proceeded to refine Women in Western Culture, we recognized not only the need for an interdisciplinary reader, but also a unique situation for developing such a text. Since 1986, we have used a variety of readings, audio-visual resources, and lecture material in our respective courses on women in Western humanities. We have also explored different configurations of chronology and course themes suggested by the critiques, questions and responses of our students, and our mutual assessments. We discovered, for example, that although many contemporary feminist scholars ignore religion, religion is one of the most prevalent markers of women's participation in culture from prehistory through the medieval period, and it remained a critical factor through the nineteenth century. Over time we integrated the discrete multidisciplinary pieces of our examination of women into a coherent truly interdisciplinary course that highlighted major themes and patterns that emerged across disciplines and centuries. The results have been exciting for us and for our students. We discovered that examining women's cultural achievements and struggles provides an innovative framework for discussing women's legal, socioeconomic, religious, and/or political status in different times and places. We found that the multidisciplinary approach ensures that each student will discover some individuals whose life/work matches her or his personal interests or career aspirations and may indeed discover new

role models or cultural icons for inspiration. We also learned that bringing women and their voices to the forefront sometimes radically changed our understanding of certain periods of Western civilization and often introduced provocative new cultural forms, alternative visions of society and its institutions, and challenging critiques of values, ideas, and societal arrangements that many have regarded as "fixed" Western cultural traditions. *Creating Women* is the product of an extended period of living with the material, adding to it and reconfiguring it in response to input from our students and colleagues. Both volumes integrate insights from an abundance of new scholarship that has enriched women's history in all fields over the last three decades. We believe that the interdisciplinary approach we have taken in these volumes and the expansive time-span that we have elected to cover will generate spirited discussion. Our approach will also add significantly to the reader's understanding of women and gender in Western civilization, thereby providing a more complete and realistic picture of the history of humankind.

**CREATING WOMEN: STRUCTURE** Each volume consists of three parts with five chapters in each. Volume one encompasses women and culture from prehistory through the middle ages: Part I: Women in Prehistory and the Ancient Near East Part II: Women in the Mediterranean and Greco-Roman World Part III: Women in the Roman Empire, Christian Origins, Late Antiquity, and the Middle Ages Volume Two encompasses women and culture from the Renaissance to the present: Part I: Women in Early Modern Europe Part II: Women and Culture, 1750-1920 Part III: Women and Culture in the Twentieth Century

**CREATING WOMEN: FEATURES** The narrative, biographical vignettes, and document introductions place women and their achievements within the broader social-political context in which they lived and worked. Introductory narrative helps guide students' analysis of material and facilitates class discussion. Maps, charts, and narrative link women and their achievements with more familiar events and personages in Western civilization and also illustrate significant clusters of female creativity. Selected bibliographies facilitate student projects and enable instructors to enrich classes with audiovisual material.