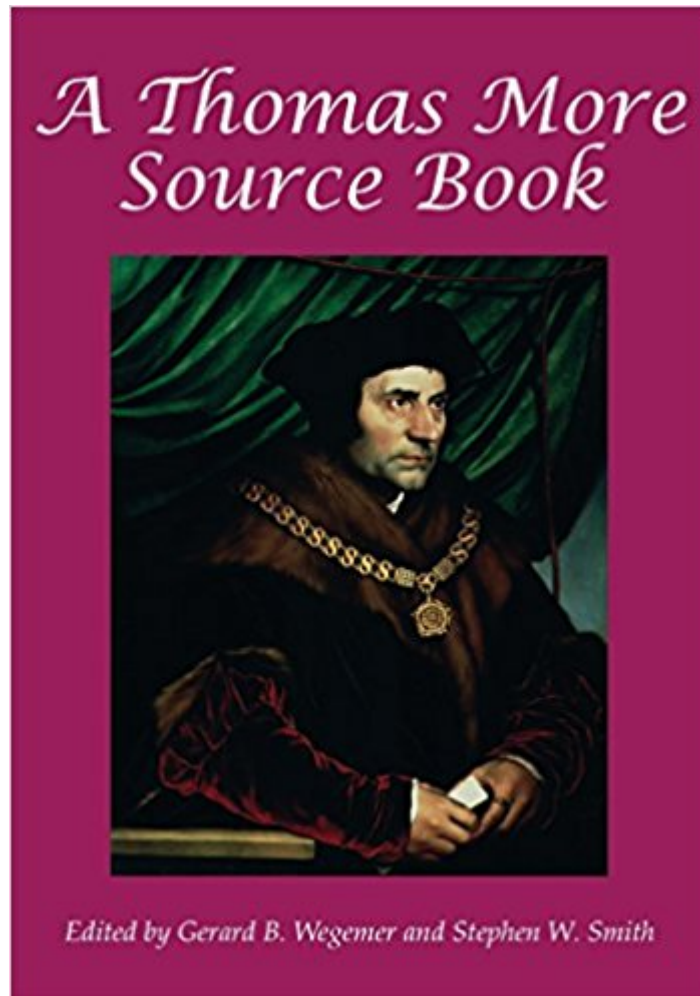




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A Thomas More Source Book



Synopsis

This Source Book brings together classic texts by and about Thomas More—a poet, scholar, statesman, family man, educational reformer, philosopher, historian, and saint. Thomas More is the first major figure of the English Renaissance, acclaimed in his own age but surprisingly unstudied in our own. In addition to serving as an introduction to More's life and writings, this collection is a helpful companion to the study of More's literary and philosophical masterwork, *Utopia*, and to the study of sixteenth-century history, literature, philosophy, or politics. The writings focus upon More's articulations of education, political theory, church-state relations, love and friendship, practical politics, and the vexing issues of conscience. They shed light on the distinctive Christian humanism that More expressed and embodied. Also included in this book are three famous sixteenth-century accounts of More's life by Erasmus, Roper, and a team of London playwrights including William Shakespeare. Gerard B. Wegemer is Professor of English at the University of Dallas. An expert on Thomas More, he is the author of numerous works including *Thomas More on Statesmanship* (1996) and *Thomas More: A Portrait of Courage* (1995). Stephen W. Smith is Assistant Professor of English at Hillsdale College and is coeditor of *Shakespeare's Last Plays: Readings in Literature and Politics* (2001).

PRAISE FOR THE BOOK: "The editors have captured powerfully and beautifully the essence of the 'man for all seasons.'"—*The Catholic Answer* "This collection (and the website accompaniment) is certainly a good place for those unfamiliar with More to begin their studies. . . ."

—*Andrew A. Chibi, Sixteenth Century Journal*

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Customer Reviews

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The Source Book is a selection of passages from Thomas More's writings and from writings by contemporaries who knew him -- like Desiderius Erasmus. The selections present a fairly well-rounded picture of one of the outstanding political, religious, and cultural figures of Renaissance England, someone who was also one of the finest examples of human character of any age. More made it look almost easy to stand by objective moral principles in the face of heavy pressure, and he did it with a grace and wit that made it very hard to dislike or attack him. But the king he had served did in fact turn on him for not sacrificing his principles to the king's impulses and fixations, and took his life for it. The king's fixations about perpetuating the dynasty came to nothing (it died out with his children), but More's life -- or rather the way he lived it -- has made him not just "a man for all seasons" but a man for all ages, and perhaps particularly for our age. The book also gives the reader first-hand accounts of the events of More's interrogation, imprisonment, trial, and execution, including, for instance, the report of the Paris Newsletter on this trial and execution. The reader should be on notice not to expect to find excerpts from either "Utopia" or "The History of King Richard III," two of More's best-known works, although there are passing references to them. The editors evidently decided it would be more valuable to introduce readers to some lesser-known writings that better illuminate the man and the subjects that absorbed his interest. Some passages in the selections are not in modern English, which can make for occasional puzzlement and a slower pace, though the editors have provided helpful footnotes for many of the more obscure terms.

Books in perfect order.

Although some scholars purchase this book as part of the class and lecture series on Thomas More, I bought it to console myself since I could not attend a class. I was impressed by Thomas More's clarity of thought and ability to decide "the right thing to do" at each turn in his life. Clearly, many of his contemporaries admired him for this characteristic of his as well, as their contributions to this book show. I enjoyed the thought-provoking depth which Thomas More shares through his

own writing.

What a great contribution these authors have made to the world of Renaissance and Thomas More studies! This comprehensive anthology provides a wealth of primary sources as well as related materials on Thomas More and his world. Due to the multi-faceted character of its subject, this book will be of interest to historians, biographers, educators, theologians, writers, politicians, and many others as well. The "Man for All Seasons" was a lawyer, judge, husband and father, scholar, counselor to the king, and martyr, and this rich source book provides the background to the inner man. The authors begin with contemporary biographies and sketches of More, then explore samples of his own works. Selections from his early poems and letters are followed by some of his writings on education (he was a trend-setter in promoting education of women), government, and religion. The closing section, "More's Last Days", includes samples of his letters, various accounts of his trial, and the Paris Newsletter report on his execution. This book provides a solid foundation for More studies and would serve as an excellent college text. Following an informative Introduction, a treasury of More-related material is provided. Even the Elizabethan play "Munday and Shakespeare's 'Sir Thomas More'" is provided in its entirety. Explanatory introductions are given to all selections, and clear glosses enrich the text throughout the book. Perhaps the only thing one might miss here is More's most famous work, "Utopia", but for study at this level, it certainly deserves to be treated separately, in its entirety. This handsome and convenient text is further enriched by a lovely collection of portraits and other related artworks, even reproductions of pages from More's prayer book (showing his own hand-written additions). Helpful material at the end of the book includes several chronologies, some original well-annotated maps, and a very thorough Index. These tools should prove most useful to More scholars. In sum, I feel that this book provides a wonderful tool for those who explore the world of Renaissance England and the person of Thomas More. We can only be grateful that Professors Wegemer and Smith foresaw the need for this book and did such a fine job in producing it.

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