

# Chronicling the Life of King Alfred: A Comparative Analysis of Asser's Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources

King Alfred the Great, the legendary ruler of Wessex from 871 to 899 AD, is renowned for his military prowess, his political reforms, and his patronage of learning. Our understanding of Alfred's life and reign is largely derived from Asser's Life of King Alfred, a biography written by a Welsh monk who served as Alfred's close advisor. However, Asser's account is not the only source of information about Alfred; other contemporary sources, such as the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and the works of the chronicler Athelweard, provide valuable insights into Alfred's life and times.

This comparative analysis will examine the Life of King Alfred and other contemporary sources to provide a comprehensive overview of Alfred's life and reign. By comparing and contrasting the different accounts, we can gain a more nuanced and accurate understanding of this remarkable figure.

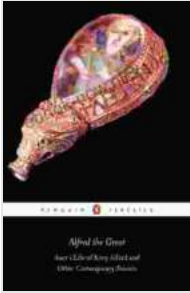
Asser's Life of King Alfred, written around 893 AD, is the most detailed and comprehensive account of Alfred's life. Asser, a Welsh monk who came to Wessex in 885 AD, became Alfred's close advisor and friend. His biography paints a vivid picture of Alfred's character, his military and political achievements, and his patronage of learning.

## Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources (Classics) by Helen Epstein

★★★★☆ 4.7 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 3104 KB



Text-to-Speech : Enabled  
Screen Reader : Supported  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 372 pages



Asser's account is particularly valuable for its insights into Alfred's personal life. He describes Alfred as a pious and humble man, who was devoted to his family and his people. He also highlights Alfred's intellectual curiosity and his love of learning. Asser's biography provides a unique glimpse into the mind and heart of one of England's greatest kings.

While Asser's *Life of King Alfred* is the most comprehensive account of Alfred's life, other contemporary sources provide valuable insights into his reign. These sources include:

- **The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle:** This collection of annals, written by various scribes over several centuries, provides a detailed chronological account of Alfred's reign. It records his military campaigns, his political reforms, and his patronage of learning.
- **Athelweard's Chronicle:** Written in the early 10th century by the chronicler Athelweard, this work provides a concise but valuable account of Alfred's life and reign. Athelweard's account is particularly notable for its focus on Alfred's military achievements.

A comparative analysis of Asser's *Life of King Alfred* and other contemporary sources reveals both similarities and differences in their

accounts of Alfred's life and reign.

### **Similarities:**

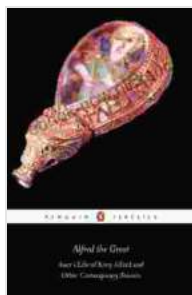
- All of the sources agree on the basic facts of Alfred's life, such as his birth, his accession to the throne, and his death.
- They all portray Alfred as a pious and just ruler, who was devoted to his people and his kingdom.
- They all emphasize Alfred's military and political achievements, such as his victory over the Vikings at the Battle of Edington and his establishment of a unified kingdom of England.

### **Differences:**

- Asser's Life of King Alfred provides the most detailed and comprehensive account of Alfred's life, including his personal life, his intellectual pursuits, and his patronage of learning. The other sources provide a more limited account of these aspects of Alfred's life.
- Asser's account is more favorable to Alfred than the other sources. This is likely due to Asser's close relationship with Alfred and his desire to present his patron in the best possible light.

By comparing and contrasting Asser's Life of King Alfred and other contemporary sources, we can gain a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of Alfred's life and reign. While Asser's account is the most detailed and rich, the other sources provide valuable insights that complement and supplement Asser's work.

Together, these sources provide a vivid and compelling portrait of Alfred the Great, one of England's most beloved and legendary kings.



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