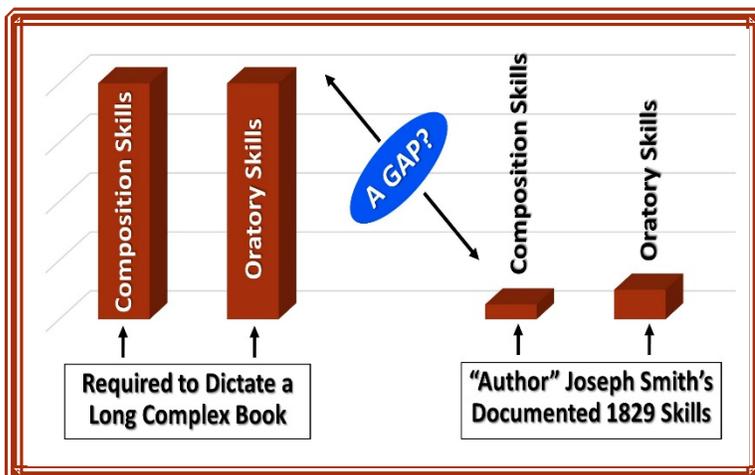


# The Book of Mormon “Author” GAP



## Book of Mormon is a Complex Book

- **Word count:** 269,320
- **Number of sentences:** 6,852
- **Average sentence length:** 39.3 words
- **Reading level:** eighth grade
- **Dialect:** Early English
- **Punctuation:** none
- **Unique words:** 5,903
- **College level vocabulary words (not in Bible):** dozens
- **Invented proper nouns:** 170
- **Parallel phraseology—chiasms:** 367
- **Parallel phraseology—alternates:** 400
- **Poetic literary forms (other):** 911
- **Stylometric consistencies:** at least 4 different authors
- **Bible intertextuality:** 100s of phrases and integrations
- **Named characters:** 208
- **Socio-geographic groups:** 45
- **Genealogies greater than twenty generations:** 2
- **Names for primary protagonist:** over 100
- **Geographical references (Old World):** at least 15
- **Geographical locations (Promised Land):** over 150
- **Geographical references (Promised Land):** over 400
- **Ecological references:** 2,065
- **Monetary system weights:** 12 distinct values
- **Chronological references:** over 100
- **Storylines:** 77 major plus more minor
- **Flashbacks and embedded storylines:** 5
- **Sermons:** 68 major, more minor.
- **Sermon topics:** dozens
- **Sermon commentary:** often intricate and multifaceted
- **Formal headings to chapters and books:** 21
- **Editorial promises:** at least 121
- **Internal historical sources quoted:** at least 24
- **Subjects discussed with precision:** at least 3 (e.g. biblical law, olive tree husbandry, and warfare tactics)

## Joseph Smith's *Composition* Skills in 1829

Joseph Smith was intelligent, but no acquaintances reported that he had pursued or possessed any remarkable skills in composition or oratory in 1829.

- Joseph Smith wrote that he was “deprived of the benefit of an education. . . I was merely instructed in reading, writing and the ground rules of arithmetic,” which his family corroborated.
- District schools in rural New York in the 1820s did not teach creative writing or composition, in part due to the limited availability and cost of paper and ink.
- Isaac Hale, Emma Hale Smith’s father, recounted in 1834: “I first became acquainted with Joseph Smith Jr. in November, 1825 . . . His appearance at this time, was that of a careless young man—not very well educated.”
- John H. Gilbert, who typeset the Book of Mormon in 1830, remembered: “We had a great deal of trouble with it [the Book of Mormon manuscript]. It was not punctuated at all. They [Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery] did not know anything about punctuation.” When asked, “Was he [Joseph Smith] educated?” he responded, “Oh, not at all then.”
- Palmyra acquaintance Pomeroy Tucker recalled that Joseph Smith read “dime novels,” but Tucker also describes Joseph as “uneducated and ignorant” in the 1820s.
- In 1830, the *Palmyra Reflector* reported that Joseph Smith’s “mental powers appear to be extremely limited, and from the small opportunity he has had at school, he made little or no proficiency.”
- Joseph’s mother, Lucy, noted that he “seemed much less inclined to the perusal of books than any of the rest of our children.”
- Younger brother William Smith, reported that Joseph “was illiterate [illiterate] to some extent is admitted but that he was enterly [entirely] unlettered is a mistake.”

## Joseph Smith's *Oratory* Skills in 1829

- Lucy Mack Smith’s autobiography reported that in 1823, “Joseph would occasionally give us some of the most amusing recitals that could be imagined.” If these storytelling events were frequent, it is strange that no other family member or acquaintance (friend or foe) recalled them.
- Orsamus Turner, who knew the Smith family in the 1820s, referred to Joseph’s involvement with the “juvenile debating club” and as a Methodist “exhorter.” Apparently unimpressed overall, Turner also described Joseph as “possessed of less than ordinary intellect.”
- Biographer Richard Bushman reports that Joseph Smith “is not known to have preached a sermon before the Church is organized in 1830. He had no reputation as a preacher.”

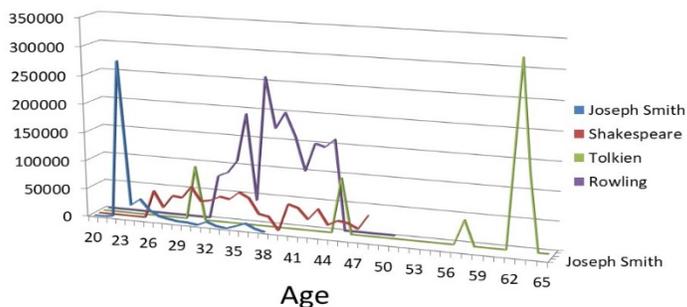
# The Translation Process

According to multiple eyewitness accounts, Joseph Smith dictated the entire Book of Mormon text while viewing a seer stone that had been placed in hat to occlude outside light. Other details provide a fuller picture:

- The entire dictation required less than 85 days and possibly as few as 57.
- The number of words produced per day would have varied between about 2700 and 4700.
- The number of words in the dictated blocks typically involved at least twenty to thirty.
- Joseph Smith and his scribes checked the accuracy of the recorded text.
- Some names and difficult words were spelled out.
- According to eyewitnesses, no preexisting manuscripts or books were used.
- Many onlookers (followers and skeptics) were permitted to view Joseph Smith as he dictated to his scribes.
- After breaks, Joseph would start where he left off without reading back the previous portion.
- Multiple scribes (followers and skeptics) participated.
- No phrases were re-sequenced after first being spoken.

## Most Accomplished Authors are Older and More Experienced When They Produce Their Greatest Works

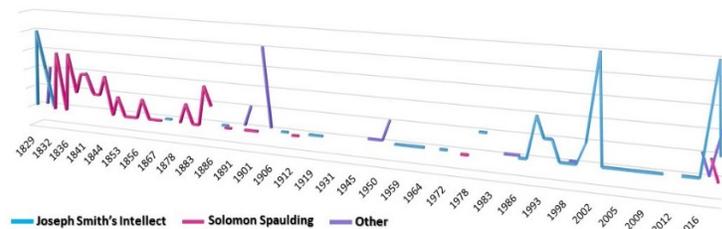
Comparing Word Counts per Year



## Try to duplicate Joseph Smith's efforts!

With the advent of smartphones, virtually anyone can attempt to replicate Joseph Smith's book-dictating efforts. By using voice-to-text apps, the need for a dedicated scribe is eliminated. Instead, an author could dictate a series of text messages of 20–30 words each to a recipient who would then compile them in order to create a manuscript. Before hitting "send," spelling and grammar could be corrected. Once sent, the sequence and meaning of the phrases and sentences would not be altered. After repeating this process around 10,000 times to create a continuous string of words of about 270,000, the combined narrative would be delivered directly to a publisher for typesetting and printing.

Charting Naturalistic Explanations for the Book of Mormon



## Skeptics Theorize How Joseph Created All the Words

**Solomon Spaulding Manuscript Theory:** Joseph Smith borrowed from a manuscript written by Solomon Spaulding in 1812. **Problem:** While it was the most popular theory for over fifty years after it was first mentioned in 1834, the manuscript was discovered in 1884 and found to contain only 50,840 words and exhibit a very different style from the Book of Mormon.

**Collaborator Theory:** Joseph Smith was helped by a co-author. **Problem:** Oliver Cowdery and Sidney Rigdon are often mentioned, but their historically well-documented introductions to Joseph preclude any prior conspiracy. No other plausible candidates have been promoted.

**Mental Illness Theory:** Joseph Smith was mentally ill, which sickness gave him the ability to dictate the Book of Mormon. **Problem:** Mental illness does not bestow higher levels of memory or cognitive function compared to a wellness state.

**Automatic Writing Theory:** Joseph Smith produced the Book of Mormon through trance-writing or unconscious writing. **Problem:** Entering a trance does not enhance a person's memory or intellectual abilities.

**Storytelling Theory:** Joseph Smith used the same techniques as professional storytellers. **Problem:** Accomplished storytellers memorize formulaic words and recite them as formula systems. The Book of Mormon contains no formula systems.

**Oral Performance Theory:** Joseph Smith used the skills of an accomplished orator, like a revivalist preacher. **Problem:** Historically, successful orators don't dictate book-length orations. Preachers gain their skills by immersing themselves in the materials. They also practice for years. Little or no evidence supports Joseph trained to acquire these abilities.

**Creative Writing Theory:** Joseph Smith employed the methods of successful creative writers to prepare a manuscript he later memorized. **Problem:** Creative writing involves pre-writing, writing, and re-writing. Joseph had no training in composition and there is no historical evidence of a pre-existing manuscript.

**Intellect Theory:** Joseph Smith prepared for years prior to 1829 and possessed all the genius needed to generate the text. **Problem:** The historical record describes no remarkable intellectual or compositions skills to Joseph Smith. Human performance studies fail to identify even one genius who has dictated a first-oral-draft that is also the final-draft of a complex book of even 50,000 words.