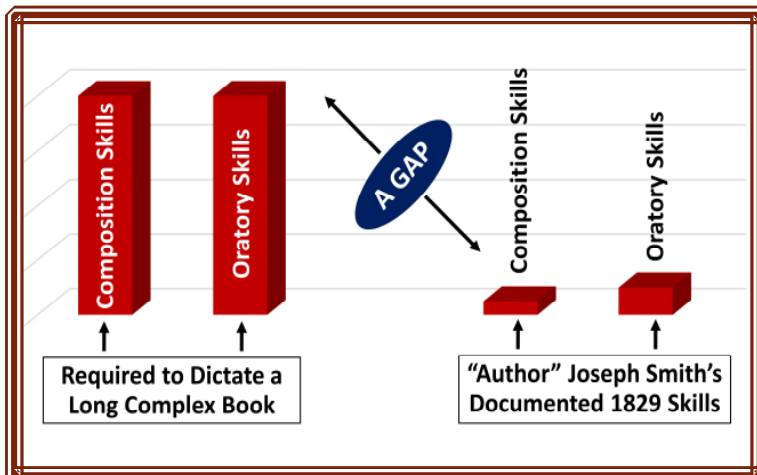


“Where did all the words come from?” Investigating the Origin of the Book of Mormon



Book of Mormon Literary Characteristics

- **Word count:** 269,320
- **Sentences:** 6,852
- **Average sentence length:** 39.3 words
- **Reading level:** eighth grade
- **Dialect:** Early Modern English
- **Punctuation:** none (original dictation)
- **Unique words:** about 5,600
- **College-level vocabulary words (not in Bible):** dozens
- **Original proper nouns:** 170
- **Distinct name titles for God:** over 100
- **Named characters:** 207
 - mentioned 3,780 times with two mistakes
- **Socio-geographic groups:** 45
 - mentioned 1,674 times with no mistakes
- **Chronological systems:** 3
 - mentioned over 180 times with one mistake
- **Geographical locations (Promised Land):** 149
 - mentioned 670 times with two mistakes
- **Geographical Locations (Old World):** at least 15
- **Storylines:** 77 major plus more minor
- **Genealogies greater than twenty generations:** 2
- **Flashbacks and embedded storylines:** 5
- **Ecological references:** 2,065
- **Sermons:** 63 major comprising over 87,000 words
- **Sermon topics:** dozens
- **Sermon commentary:** often intricate and multifaceted
- **Multivalency—new insights from rereading:** numerous
- **Parallel poetic devices—chiasms/alternates:** over 800
- **Stylometric consistencies:** at least 4 different authors
- **Bible intertextuality:** at least 650 allusions
- **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 4
 - biblical law, olive tree husbandry, warfare tactics, and geological details of natural disasters

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 cost and limited availability 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 then 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.” 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, Turner was unimpressed overall. He 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.”

Joseph Smith Demonstrated Natural Dictation Skills

For nearly three months, from April 7 to the end of June 1829, the 23-year-old Joseph Smith exhibited the following composition and oratory skills as he dictated:

- 1. Self-Motivation skills:** Popularity, money, power, or some other motive drove Joseph Smith to dictate nearly 270,000 words when a shorter book of perhaps 50,000 words would probably have sufficed.
- 2. English language skills:** Dictated at an 8th-grade level of reading difficulty with multiple college-level vocabulary words (not in the Bible) included.
- 3. Imagination and creativity skills:** 170 new English proper nouns, 100 different titles for God, 77 plots, 149 geographic locations, and 207 characters included.
- 4. Researching skills:** Describes precise details of biblical law, olive tree husbandry, and warfare tactics; over 650 intertextual allusions to the King James Bible.
- 5. Story composition skills:** Includes 77 storylines, 149 geographic locations, 207 characters, 3 chronological systems, and 2 genealogies greater than 20 generations.
- 6. Sermon composition skills:** The text includes 63 sermons comprising over 87,000 words with all major religious topics discussed, many in detail.
- 7. Memorization and recall skills:** 99.9% accuracy regarding over 6300 recall events of over 400 distinct references to individuals, locations, peoples, and times during the 3-month dictation with no daily reviewing or use of a previously written manuscript.
- 8. Extemporaneous speaking skills:** Dialect is Early Modern English; around 5,600 unique words; no punctuation; complex storylines and religious discussions.
- 9. Oratorical formatting skills:** over 800 parallel poetic devices, like chiasms, spoken correctly the first time during the dictation; multiple distinct author voices.
- 10. Mental redrafting skills:** No full-sentence edits have been made since Joseph Smith first spoke the word stream. No content editing, revising, or redrafting has occurred. The refinement of the content of the first oral draft is the dictation's most remarkable characteristic.

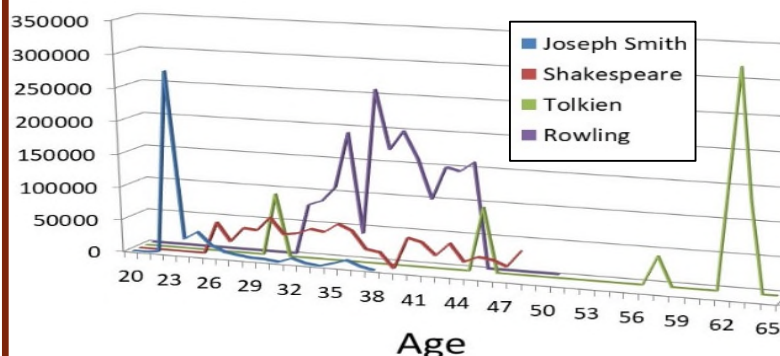


After 1830, Joseph Smith seemed minimally familiar with the Book of Mormon. Studies show he was 50 times more likely to refer to the content of the KJV Bible than the content of the Book of Mormon in his communications.

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 dictates a series of text messages of 20–30 words each to a recipient, who compiles them to create a manuscript. Before hitting "send," spelling and grammar may be corrected. Once sent, the sequence and content of the received sentences cannot be altered. Next, repeat this process around 10,000 times to create a continuous string of about 270,000 words. Without redrafting, the narrative is delivered to the publisher for typesetting and printing.

Comparing Word Counts per Year



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.