

INTRODUCTION

What you're about to read is a book that attempts to deconstruct the "Book of Mormon".

Whenever a person feels the urge, or calling, to dive into the study of something like the "Book of Mormon," it's hard to get an objective perspective. It seems as if every book, website, or expert is mired in apologetics for their side. As biased as the "anti-Mormon" side is, the "pro-Mormon" side of research can be just as guilty of presenting, or interpreting, facts with a heavy bias, or sometimes, even ignoring facts.

The problem that arises with a "pro-" or "anti-" presentation, is the fact that bias can be a very frustrating thing to try and navigate around, especially when studying things like scripture. Sometimes the researcher's bias is presented very clearly, and can be easily parsed out from the facts that said researcher is presenting. However, other times, the bias is very subtle, hidden as a single phrase, in a single sentence, or placed near the end of the researcher's presentation of their case.

When it comes to topics that are much more controversial than the Book of Mormon, sometimes the "pro", and "anti" side of said topic are so busy arguing, that the facts get lost among the noise of the incessant bickering. This does a disservice to anybody that's really trying to attain the facts, or at least, a somewhat objective understanding of the facts.

That's what we are going to try and examine when it comes to the Book of Mormon. We want the facts! It may be useful to understand both the "Pro-Mormon" and "Anti-Mormon" arguments of some finer points of the Book of Mormon, so, as a whole, we're in an endless pursuit of the facts.

In an effort to clear up some misconceptions about the Book of Mormon, we're going to try our very hardest to get an objective understanding about the book. Whatever bias I may or may not have about the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or its history, I will try to keep completely separate from this analysis. That doesn't mean my own bias won't be presented when some topics come up, however, I will try my best to separate it from the facts being presented, by offering it as opinion or speculation. I don't want to color the reader's opinion of the LDS Church and the Book of Mormon, because it may handicap the reader from coming to their own objective conclusions about the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith, and the LDS church as a whole.

This book exists primarily to understand the Book of Mormon, standalone. We'll occasionally be discussing small portions of Mormon history concerning Joseph Smith, and others, when they become relevant, but the entire story of Joseph Smith is one to be told at a later time, in a later book. The first few chapters of this book will set the historical scene of Joseph Smith and the burned-over district, but the main purpose of this book is simply to deconstruct the Book of Mormon.

The format of this book, for the sake of readability, will be broken down into 3 main "acts," and we'll exhaustively examine the facts in each category. These three categories will break down as follows: "**Historical Context**", "**Authorship/Translation**", and "**Content/Claims**".

To get into more depth, we'll lightly discuss the pro, and anti-Mormon arguments for some of the more controversial points within each category. If we're going to take an objective look at the Book of Mormon, we need to see what both sides of the research are saying about it, and come to our own conclusions about the Book of Mormon.

Watching debates are a wonderful pastime, because it's an opportunity to watch two or four people that are diametrically opposed on a topic, bring their best arguments, that support their respective side, to the table and present them in an understandable format. That's essentially what we're going to attempt to do in this book. We'll attempt to hash out the arguments over some of the more challenging topics within the Book of Mormon, for the purpose of deciding which argument makes the most sense, and best aligns with the facts.

There are many books available from Mormon historians and scholars that present a very deep analysis of the Book of Mormon, or Mormon history, but often times an issue with these books is accessibility. The majority of these books are written for people that are rather steeped in Mormon history, or are on a quest to become steeped in topics of Mormonism in general. Books like "The Joseph Smith Papers," or "Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon," by Millet and McConkie, Truman G. Madsen's "Joseph Smith the Prophet," H. Michael Marquardt's "The Rise of Mormonism," Davis and Cowdery's "The Spalding Enigma," "An Insider's View of Mormon Origins," by Grant Palmer, or the fantastic 5 Volume "Early Mormon Documents," by Dan Vogel, are all great examples of in-depth books written by Mormon historians and scholars, that aren't always accessible to readers who are just beginning the journey down the Mormon history rabbit hole. Many of them are hard to fully understand, or utilize, without a large background knowledge on multiple Mormon topics.

While the avid researcher may find much useful knowledge contained in the pages of such books, it leaves those completely ignorant of Mormonism trying to comprehend major historical or scholarly topics, which can become problematic and challenging. It becomes even harder to parse out "pro" or "anti" biases when the subject matter is presented in such raw and convoluted form.

It almost seems that these books, when presented this way, contain a blind spot in readership, and this book shouldn't have that same blind spot. This book needs to be accessible enough that any person without prior knowledge of Mormonism can read it and fully understand the concepts presented. Additionally, it will hopefully present enough of an "in-depth" look into some topics of the Book of Mormon, that even the most knowledgeable Mormon scholars and historians can either learn something, or attempt to refute any facts presented, or arguments made.

My hopes are that this book will be just as accessible and useful to avid students of Book of Mormon studies, as it is to the everyday layman of such studies. This book is NOT produced in an attempt to destroy or build up Mormonism, it is only a presentation of what I've found in studying the Book of Mormon.

This book will be released piecemeal every two weeks. Every other Tuesday, one to three chapters will be released on RealBookofMormon.org, for a couple of reasons. When released this way, it allows time for avid internet readers to critique and constructively criticize the content. The internet has spawned a new age of peer review, and internet-review is essentially the quickest and most functional way to verify material like what's in this book. Also, this is being done to fulfill a "gofundme" project that became fully funded through the generosity of the Naked Mormonism Podcast listening audience. Putting out the information in this book is essentially fulfilling the first portion of the campaign promise. Find it here: <https://www.gofundme.com/6months2books>. For ease of reference, every paragraph is numbered, and there is a comments section for discussion underneath each chapter post.

Once the entirety of the book is online, in essentially "rough-draft" form, all of the best reader critique will be added or edited, and the book will be released in its final form in paperback, pdf, and audiobook formats. Any person who donated \$5 or more to the gofundme campaign, will get a free PDF copy of the book upon its being published.

Finally, if this book presents any problems with the contents of the Book of Mormon, those problems should be addressed for the sake of intellectual honesty. If 5-15 million people world-wide believe this book to be "the most correct of any book," then we need to understand why they believe that. If the Book of Mormon is, indeed, holy scripture, and the divine word of God, it would be in everybody's best interest to believe in it, and understand it as much as possible. But, if it is not divinely inspired holy scripture, we need to understand where it came from, how it was created, and what's inside, on a naturalistic basis alone.

Regardless of the polarizing debate about the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon, my hope is that every reader will treat everything in this book with skepticism. Please don't take my word for it with anything presented here, research it for yourself. This book scratches the surface with many topics concerning the Book of Mormon, but with most of these topics, there are entire fields of scholarly study devoted to any single topic. We'll be covering each topic with one or two chapters, while the vast majority of these topics have had volumes of books written about them. Please, just don't take what's in these pages as incontrovertible truth. Seek for answers yourself, and join the ever-growing field of online Mormon historical study, and Book of Mormon scholarship.

For more information, visit www.NakedMormonismPodcast.com; this book evolved from a single 7.5-hour episode that deconstructed the Book of Mormon, titled “CC-Book of Mormon”. For ease of listening, the episode was also broken down into 3 smaller episodes titled “CC-BoM pt.1/2/3”.