

Which picture best represents the true method of translation?



or



Following is a brief summary of what we know of the Book of Mormon "translation" process.

- \*Nephite interpreters often called "Urim and Thummim" were found with the plates on Hill Cumorah.
- \*The Urim and Thummim were used first in the translation of the plates.
- \*The portion translated by the use of these interpreters was copied into 116 pages and was later lost by Martin Harris.
- \*Due to the loss of the first 116 pages of translation, the interpreters (*Urim and Thummim*) were permanently taken away.
- \*The Book of Mormon that we have today was translated by use of the seer stone.
- \*Smith translated by placing the seer stone in a hat and covering his face with his hat to darken his eyes.
- \*The plates were not used in the translating process and often were not even in sight during the translation.
- \*Other persons were sometimes in the room while Smith dictated to a scribe and [almost] all witnesses agree to these facts.

**WHY DO WE PRESENT THESE FACTS?** Because we want people to know the real LDS history—as of 2014, the LDS Church has NEVER portrayed Joseph Smith translating with his face in a hat. Why not? It seems obvious to us... it would look ridiculous and the LDS Church does not want to portray Joseph Smith in that light.

[Information in this handout was primarily derived from:  
<http://mit.irr.org/translation-or-divination> ]

Questions? Comments? [GospelTruth4U@hotmail.com](mailto:GospelTruth4U@hotmail.com)

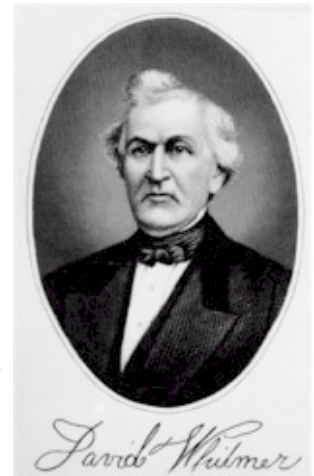
Following are the eyewitness testimonies to Joseph Smith's dictation procedure.



**Emma Hale Smith**, Joseph's wife, was the first person to serve as his scribe. Here is her testimony as recounted to her son Joseph Smith III, "In writing for your father, I frequently wrote day after day, often sitting at the table close to him, he sitting with his face buried in his hat, with the stone in it, and dictating [*the Book of Mormon*] hour after hour with nothing between us." (As quoted in *Creation of the Book of Mormon*, by LaMar Petersen, p.25)

**David Whitmer** was one of the Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon. The majority of the translation work took place in the Whitmer home.

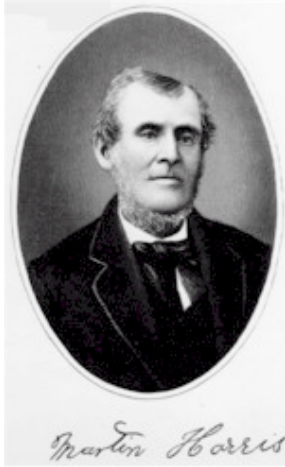
*Whitmer described the manner in which the Book of Mormon was translated. He said Joseph Smith would put the seer stone into a hat, and put his face in the hat, drawing it closely around his face to exclude the light; and "In the darkness the spiritual light would shine. A piece of something resembling parchment would appear, and under it was the interpretation in English. Brother Joseph would read off the English to Oliver Cowdery, who was his principal scribe, and when it was written down and repeated to brother Joseph to see if it was correct, then it would disappear, and another character with the interpretation would appear. Thus the Book of Mormon was translated by the gift and power of God, and not by any power of man."* (A Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, by B.H. Roberts, Published by the Church, 1965, pg. 128.)



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*"I, as well as all of my father's family, Smith's wife, Oliver Cowdery and Martin Harris, were present during the translation .... He [Joseph Smith] did not use the plates in translation" (David Whitmer interview given to Kansas City Journal, June 5, 1881, reprinted in the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Journal of History, vol. 8, (1910), pp. 299-300.)*

**Martin Harris**, also one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, provided this information to his friend Edward Stevenson, who would later become part of the LDS First Council of Seventy.



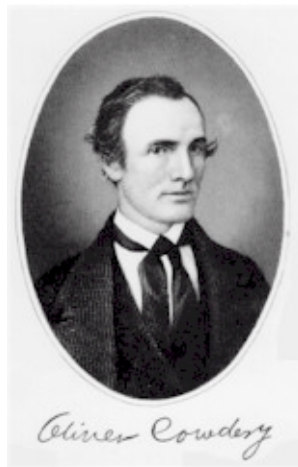
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*Martin Harris related an incident that occurred during the time that he wrote that portion of the translation of the Book of Mormon which he was favored to write direct from the mouth of the Prophet Joseph Smith. He said that the Prophet possessed a seer stone, by which he was enabled to translate as well as from the Urim and Thummim, and for convenience he then used the seer stone, Martin explained the translation as follows: "By aid of the seer stone, sentences would appear and were read by the Prophet and written by Martin and when finished he would say 'written,' and if correctly written the sentence would disappear and another appear in its place, but if not written correctly it remained until*

*corrected, so that the translation was just as it was engraven on the plates, precisely in the language then used." (A Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, by B.H. Roberts, Published by the Church, 1965, pg. 128.)*

**Oliver Cowdery** was Joseph's principal scribe for the Book of Mormon, and another of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon.

*"These were days never to be forgotten — to sit under the sound of a voice dictated by the inspiration of heaven, awakened the utmost gratitude of this bosom! Day after day I continued, uninterrupted, to write from his mouth, as he translated, with the Urim and Thummim, or, as the Nephites would have said, 'Interpreters,' the history, or record, called 'The book of Mormon.'" [spelling and emphasis preserved from original] (Oliver Cowdery, Messenger and Advocate, Kirtland, Ohio, 1834, vol. 1, no. 1, p.14).*



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## **Elder Russell M. Nelson**

It is interesting to note that in a June 25, 1992 seminar for new mission presidents, Elder Russell M. Nelson said, "The details of this miraculous method of translation are still not fully known. Yet we do have a few precious insights."

Then he quoted from David Whitmer's 1887 account in which Joseph Smith, "Would put the seer stone into a hat, and put his face in the hat, and put the seer stone into the hat, drawing it closely around his face to exclude the light; and in the darkness the spiritual light would shine..." (*Ensign*, July 1993, p. 62.)

## **Daniel Peterson (BYU Professor)**

In the recent PBS special, *The Mormons*, Daniel Peterson publicly and explicitly admitted, "We know that Joseph didn't translate the way that a scholar would translate. He didn't know Egyptian. There were a couple of means that were prepared for this. One was he used an instrument that was found with the plates that was called the Urim and Thummim. This is a kind of a divinatory device that goes back into Old Testament times. Actually most of the translation was done using something called a seer stone. He would put the stone in the bottom of a hat, presumably to exclude surrounding light. And then he would put his face into the hat. It's a kind of a strange image for us."

Peterson's statement is significant because he was a professor at BYU and is considered by many to be one of the foremost apologists of Mormonism in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## **The LDS Church**

In 2014, the LDS Church finally published an article describing how Joseph Smith 'translated' the Book of Mormon using a seer stone and a hat. This article can be read on LDS.org, under Gospel Topics, Book of Mormon Translation. It will be interesting to watch and see if the LDS Church actually pictures this translation method in future Church publications?

(<https://www.lds.org/topics/book-of-mormon-translation?lang=eng>)