

The Book of Mormon Challenge

If one scoffs at the missionary's explanation of the Book of Mormon, he is in so many words claiming it to be false: That it is a deceiving fraud formulated through the efforts and talents of a common man. What one man produces can always be duplicated by another. The challenge that the Book of Mormon makes to the world is that of duplication. Because the book complies with every one of the following conditions, in order to produce a similar record, one must comply with the same conditions.

Here is the challenge: Can you accept it?

1. Write a history of ancient Tibet covering a period from 600 BC to 450 AD Why ancient Tibet? Because you know no more about Tibet than Joseph Smith (or anyone else) knew about ancient America.
2. You are 23 years of age.
3. You have had no more than three years of formal school education, and have spent your life in backwoods farming communities.
4. Your history must be written on the basis of what you now know. There was no library that held information for Joseph Smith. You must use none. There is to be no research of any kind.
5. Your history must be 531 pages and over 300,000 words in length.
6. Other than a few grammatical corrections, you must have no changes in the text. The first editions as you dictate it to your secretary must stand forever.
7. This record is to contain the history of two distinct and separate nations, along with histories of different contemporary nations or groups of people.
8. You must describe their religious, economic, political, and social cultures and institutions. Cover every phase of their society, including the names of their coins.
9. Change your style of writing many times. Many ancient authors contributed to the Book of Mormon, each with his own style.
10. Weave into your history the religion of Jesus Christ and the pattern of Christian living.
11. You must claim that your smooth narrative is not fiction with moral value, but true and sacred history.
12. You must include in your book fifty-four chapters dealing with wars, twenty-one historical chapters, fifty-five chapters on visions and prophecies. Remember, when you begin to write visions and prophecies, you must have your record agree meticulously with the Bible. You must write seventy-one chapters on doctrine and exhortation, and you must check every statement with the scriptures or you will be proven a fraud. You must write twenty-one chapters on the ministry of Christ, and every thing you claim he said and every testimony you write in your book about Him must agree absolutely with the New Testament.
13. Many of the facts, claims, ideas, and statements given as absolute truth in your writing must be entirely inconsistent with the prevailing beliefs of the world. Some of these worldly beliefs must be the direct opposite of your claims.
14. Included in your narration will be authentic modes of travel; whether or not those ancient people used fire; description of their clothing, crops, mourning customs, and types of government. You must invent about 280 new names that will stand up under scrutiny through the years as to their proper application and derivation.
15. You will have to properly use figures of speech, similes, metaphors, narration, exposition, descriptions, oratory, epic lyric, and parables.
16. You must invite the ablest scholars and experts to examine the text with care, and you must strive diligently to see that your book gets into the hands of those eager to prove it a forgery, and who are most competent to expose every flaw in it.
17. Thorough investigation, scientific and historical evidence, and archeological discovery for the next 125 years must verify its claims and prove detail after detail to be true, for many of the details you put in your history are still buried beneath the soil of Tibet.
18. You must publish it to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people declaring it to be the word of God and another witness for the Lord Jesus Christ.
19. The book must not contain any absurd, impossible, or contradictory statements. Your history must not contain any statement that will contradict any other statement elsewhere in the volume.

20. Many theories and ideas as to its origin must arise, and after discovering and examining the facts, they must fail. You have claimed that your knowledge had come from divine origin, and this claim continues to stand as the only possible explanation. The strength of this explanation must not decrease as time passes, but actually increases to the point where it becomes the only logical explanation.
21. Your record is to fulfill many Bible prophecies, even in the exact manner in which it shall come forth, to whom delivered, its purposes, and its accomplishments.
22. Call down an angel from heaven in the middle of the day and have him bear testimony to four honest, dignified citizens of your community that the record is the word of God. These witnesses must bear the angel's testimony to the world, not for profit or gain, but under great sacrifice and severe persecution, even to their death beds. You must put that testimony to the test by becoming an enemy to these men.
23. Thousands of great men, intellectual giants, national and international personalities, and scholars for 165 years must accept your history and its teachings even to the point of laying down their life rather than deny their testimony of it.
24. You must include within the record this promise: "And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, He will manifest the truth of it unto you by the power of the Holy Ghost."
25. Missionaries must bear record to the world for the next 165 years that they know the record to be true because they put the promise to the test and found it to be true. The truth of it was manifested to them by the power of the Holy Ghost.
26. Over 60,000 competent salesman must be so sold on your book that they gladly give up two or more years of their lives to take it to all parts of the world for distribution. They not only pay their own way during these years, but return bearing testimony that the time spent will remain as one of the highlights of their lives. They receive nothing in return for their efforts but the joy of having shared your book with others.
27. Your book must not only raise the standards of millions of people but do it in such a way that they become one of the great moral, ethical, and dynamic marvels of the day. They must become world renowned for this.
28. For the next 20 years you must watch those that follow and you, your family, and the dearest of your loved ones persecuted, driven time after time from their homes, beaten, tortured, starved, frozen and killed. Tens of thousands must undergo the most extreme hardships in your presence just because they believe your claims concerning the origin and content of what you have written on ancient Tibet.
29. You must gain no wealth from your work, but many times lose all that you have. Like those that believe you, you must submit yourself to the vilest persecution. And finally after 20 years of this, give your own life in a very savage and brutal manner, for your testimony concerning your history book. This must be done willingly on your part.
30. Start right now and produce this record which covers 1,000 years of history, doing it, not in the peaceful atmosphere of your community, but under the most trying of circumstances which include being driven from your home several times, and receiving constant threats upon your life. Please have your book completed, talk a friend into mortgaging his farm to raise money to have it printed - all in 60 days.

There is only one answer: The Book of Mormon is a divine record. If not, its origin must be stated and the critic must explain its claims. It isn't enough to merely discard it as false and forget about it!

The first thing to do in examining any ancient text is to consider it in the light of the origin and background there is no need to look farther, since historical forgery is virtually impossible.