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## Teaching the Book of Mormon

Author(s): Naomi Bailey

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## Teaching the Book of Mormon

*By Naomi Bailey, Nephi, Utah*

To be a teacher in a Sunday School of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is one of the most wonderful privileges that can come to anyone. Then to be able to teach the Book of Mormon is a special privilege. The book itself is an inspiration and when we consider the beautiful promise it contains to those who read it as it should be read a teacher has all the incentive needed to go forward and do his or her best to create a real love in the hearts of the boys and girls for this book brought forth by the hand of the Lord.

The Book of Mormon has never passed out of the hands of men of God. They knew the Gospel and appreciated the sacred nature of the writings. Of course no teacher will attempt to begin the year's work without having first read the book through. In this way he will better know just when to introduce into his lessons supplementary material that directly connects up with each particular lesson.

A teacher cannot teach what he does not know. Teaching invites constant growth and improvement. It is work that stimulates ambition and enhances personal worth. Teaching presumes concern, a painstaking effort to be richly prepared. Such preparation involves adequate collection of data. Four outstanding sources available to all teachers should be regularly capitalized.

It is surprising what ideas come crowding in when once we really set about to think a problem through. The law of association of ideas will always function if we but give it a chance. One thought suggests another until a whole train crowds into consciousness. Of course it calls for steam to start the train.

Great men of all time have been able to generate new thoughts. Outstand-

ing teachers must cultivate the same ability. Try thinking through any question that touches your experience. Your best ideas for your teaching will be your own; they represent you and make your teaching distinctive.

A second great source of ideas is good books. There is practically no subject upon which excellent material is not available. Through good books the teacher enriches his own ideas. Every teacher ought to read regularly and liberally. Thirty minutes a day will soon build up a generous background.

A third aid to teaching is the ability to see what goes on about us. Try checking any twenty minutes of your day to determine how many interesting items you can note. Note how Jesus drew upon His experiences and His environment for forceful illustrations. From beginning to end His teachings are full of rich concrete suggestions. Suggestions lie all about us every day. What have you noticed today of real interest?

The humblest man living has ideas which have never occurred to you. Everybody else is a little different from you. Conversation may always enrich one's point of view. And your great advantage is that you may select persons known through experience or training to have ideas. The wise teacher, like Socrates of old, goes about gleaning truths from others. Have you cultivated the art of tapping the rich resources of the minds of your associates?

There are many sources of supplementary material from which we can draw. Taking notes and keeping memoranda of helpful material can be brought into good use. Every so often articles of great interest on the subject of archæological discoveries in South, Central and North America appear in the newspapers and magazines. The

story of Col. Lindbergh's discoveries on his trip south, could be made a very valuable addition to Book of Mormon lessons. Interesting information is found in the March (1931) Improvement Era on the discoveries in southern Utah. The story is told of the findings in one cave indicating that the crude dwellings had been inhabited by three distinct peoples of different periods. The cloth, pottery and implements of war of each race differed from the others.

In one cave the wall was covered with hieroglyphics showing that a record-keeping people once dwelt there. With careful study and preparation these facts can be added to the lesson in such a way as to be very impressive on the minds of the pupils.

One of the most interesting sources of material about the Indian as we know the Lamanite of today, is his religious legends. In the manual used for the course of study in the adult class of the Mutual Improvement Association there is one chapter devoted to Indian lore.

The religious legends of the Indian people hold a peculiar interest for all who have studied them. Indications pointing to a knowledge of Hebrew history and Old Testament teachings have challenged the attention and curiosity of many students who have made it their business to sift out if possible the solution of the problem of the origin of the Indian.

To the Latter-day Saints these myths and traditions have a significance deep and powerful, for in them may be new verification of the truth of the Book of Mormon and its coming forth.

The legends are very interesting. In all the Aztec and Toltec histories there are four characters who appear: the Tupis of Brazil claim descent from four brothers; the Nohuas of Mexico descend from four original families; the Sacs of the Upper Mississippi sprang from four men; the Navajoes believe that all Indians and white people lived together at one time, all speak-

ing the same language; the Queches speak of a country in the east to reach which, immense tracts of land and water must be crossed. There they say they lived in a quiet life and spoke a common language. Afterwards, continue the traditions, they left their primitive country under the leadership of certain chiefs and finally after a long journey they reached a place called Tula—across the sea. The Algonquins preserve a tradition of a foreign origin and a sea voyage. They offered an annual thank offering for a long time in honor of their safe arrival in America.

The Chilians assert their ancestors came from the west. The Mokee believed that we have a great father and mother who originated the race. The Cherokee Indians relate that a number of beings were employed in constructing the sun, which planet was made first. It was the intention of the Creator that men should live always, but the sun having surveyed the land and finding an insufficiency for their support changed this design and arranged that they should die. The daughter of the sun was the first to suffer under this law. She was bitten by a serpent and died. Immortality fled, men must die.

There are also interesting traditions of the Great Deluge and the Tower of Babel and the confusion of tongues and of a lost record. All this evidence brought forth by Latter-day investigators of the traditions of these Lamanites today can be used as an added proof that the Book of Mormon is true. The suggestion that the members of the class during the year collect all articles to be found on the subject of discoveries of the former inhabitants of these western continents will add to the interest of the lessons.

A prayerful, studious approach to this subject on the part of the teacher should result in fortifying the boys and girls of this department in their faith in the divinity of the Book of Mormon and in the restoration of the Gospel in these the last days.