

## **CHOOSING A BIBLE FOR ENGLISH 12AP SUMMER READING**

Reading the millennia-old stories of the Bible can be fascinating, awe-inspiring, profound, and even fun. This Q-and-A will guide you through some potential confusion and help you with a couple of key decisions.

***Q Does it matter which Bible I read? Are they all the same?***

No, they're not all the same, and it'll definitely matter to *you* which one you read. The Bible was written in ancient languages, so you'll be reading a translation, and translations differ. One sounds like Shakespeare, with many archaic words, while others use quite modern language. Some versions have a smoother, easier-to-read style.

***Q Wouldn't the Shakespeare-sounding Bible be more authentic, even though it's harder to read?***

No. Our understanding of the ancient languages has improved in the four centuries since Shakespeare, so modern translations often capture the ancient meanings *better* than the **King James Version** (1611) contemporary with Shakespeare.

***Q If the King James Version of 1611 is harder to read and not as accurate, why should I even consider it?***

Because it's a truly great work of literature—majestic and powerful and beautiful (a translation can be great, even though the translators didn't write the original). Also, it's a landmark in the history of our language: the King James Bible and the works of Shakespeare are the two oceans of language that mark the beginning of what we call Modern English. Also the King James Bible is the most quoted and influential of all works of English literature.

***Q So I have to read it?—the King James Version?***

No, you do not! It's definitely not for everybody, and the choice is entirely yours. Ask yourself if you'd be excited about reading 100 pages of Shakespeare over the summer, without the help

of a teacher. If the answer's no, then *don't* choose the King James Version. If the answer's yes, however—if you welcome the challenge of “whence” and “naught” and “lest”—then read the King James Version. (Just so you know, we don't expect more than 1/3 of you to choose it, and it earns you no extra credit.) If you're looking for the King James Version, do not get the “New King James Version”—it's quite different. The “21<sup>st</sup> Century King James,” though, is OK—it's very close to the King James. The King James is sometimes called “The Authorized Version” or “The Authorized King James Version.”

***Q Which are the best modern versions of the Bible?***

Two excellent ones are the **Contemporary English Version** (C E V) and the **New Living Translation** (N L T). (Bibles nowadays have on their spines the initials of the translation. The **King James Version** is K J V.)

***Q So I should go to a bookstore and get one of those three?***

Actually, we advise you to go **on line** and read one of those three. The Bible has too many words to fit into one easily portable volume, so publishers resort to tiny fonts, crowded lines, narrow margins, and super-thin pages. The Internet has become the place to read the Bible comfortably. At [biblegateway.com](http://biblegateway.com), click Available Versions, and choose an English version. Then click on Bible-Book List and you can easily find all the selections assigned. Read on the screen or print out the pages—in a layout designed for reader comfort

***Q I'm Jewish, and at home we have the Jewish “Holy Scriptures.” Is that the same Bible you want us to read?***

Mostly, but not completely. The Jewish Bible or Scriptures is the same as the first 2/3 of the Christian\* Bible, called the Old Testament. (Christianity\* began as an offshoot of Judaism, so the sacred Jewish texts were, and still are, sacred to Christians as well to Jews.) All but the last three assigned selections are from the Jewish Bible, or Old Testament. For the last three selections—from Matthew, John, and Revelation—you'll need the New Testament, which is about Jesus, his teachings, and his followers, and which would not be in a Jewish Bible.

\* *Christian* and *Christianity* refer to any religion in which Jesus is considered divine.