

CHOOSING A BIBLE FOR THE ENGLISH 12AP SUMMER READING

Reading the millennia-old stories in the Bible can be fascinating, awe-inspiring, profound, and even fun. This Q&A was designed to make all of that more likely.

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 have a more flowing, less awkward style than others.

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 great work of literature—majestic and powerful and beautiful (great original material, great translation!). Also, it's a linguistic landmark: the King James Bible and the works of Shakespeare are the two thundering cascades of language whose confluent course begins the era of “Modern English.” And no book in our language has so broadly or deeply influenced later 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” and “ye”—then read the King James Version.

Q Which are the best modern versions of the Bible?

The Contemporary English Version (CEV) and the New Living Translation (NLT) are both excellent. (The translation's initials often appear on the spine. The King James Version is **KJV**.) Click the following links to compare how two modern translations and the King James Version tell a familiar story: [KJV](#) [CEV](#) [NLT](#)

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 them. The Bible is too long to fit into one easy-to-carry book, so publishers resort to tiny fonts, crowded lines, narrow

margins, and super-thin pages. But the internet's infinite space allows for crisp, luscious fonts surrounded by acres of creamy white.

Go to BibleGateway.com;

Click [Available Versions](#) from the dark menu at the left; and then

Choose an [English version](#) from the long list.

In the [Bible-Book List](#) find the **book** you want (e.g., Genesis, Matthew) and

Click the first **chapter** number you were assigned in that book.

Once you're in a chapter, you can move to the next chapter by clicking arrows.

Q What do all the names and number mean?—They're a little confusing.

The names in the lists, like Genesis and Matthew, are the **books** of the bible. Sometimes they refer to the content or the protagonist—"Genesis" means "origin" or "the way something comes to be" and the book of "Ruth" is about a woman named Ruth. Sometimes the title names the author, like "Matthew," or sometimes the reader (in the New Testament, many books written by Paul are named for the group he was writing to, like the "Romans").

There are two sets of numbers. The numbers in your summer reading list and in the Bible-Book List on-line are the **chapter** numbers of each book. A chapter is typically a couple of pages long. Some books have just a few chapters, some have lots.

In most Bibles you'll also notice that *every sentence* seems to be numbered. Each of those very short numbered bits is called a **verse**. Using book, chapter, and verse, you can identify any sentence in the Bible, like Genesis 6:19.

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.*