

# THE BIBLE AND ITS INFLUENCE

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## *Introduction to the Teacher's Edition*

You cannot fully understand something if you are missing a big piece of it. Take Flannery O'Connor, who knew the Bible so well and whose references to it are just so built in that you really have to know the Bible well to catch it all. If you can, you are going to read her better. You are going to understand more of where she is coming from than if you do not know the Bible well. Or take Faulkner. He is one of those people who just draw on their own biblical reading and knowledge so completely that they don't even know when they are making an allusion. It just comes out. Students who know the Bible will pick up on the allusions that other students would miss.

*Bible Literacy Report II*  
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## WELCOME TO *THE BIBLE AND ITS INFLUENCE—TEACHER'S EDITION*

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Congratulations! You have chosen to teach a course on the Bible and its place in history, literature, and culture. This decision of yours and of your school or district is an important one for academic excellence. Academic knowledge of the Bible is a valuable intellectual asset. Such knowledge has given its possessors language for self-expression, metaphor to help in understanding human nature, a mirror to hold up to culture, and stories to stimulate the imagination. People without such knowledge are handicapped in the study of over two thousand years of Western culture, art, music, literature, history, and public debate.

The textbook *The Bible and Its Influence* is an opportunity to share the contents of the Bible with your students in an appropriate, honest, and direct way. Used in combination with the Bible, this textbook follows a safe constitutional path for the presentation of biblical content—the narratives, characters, plots, poetry, letters, events, parables, prophecies, and proverbs in the Bible.

The course you are about to teach acknowledges just how sacred the Bible is to so many people. There is no attempt to veil the sacredness of the text. Nevertheless, this course is designed to provide academic access to this important work as literature in itself as well as its influence in literature. The textbook steers a path between two extreme approaches to the Bible—neither of which is constitutionally or educationally valid.

*The Bible and Its Influence* acknowledges that there is a science of biblical criticism. It also acknowledges people of great biblical faith and evangelical spirit. Nonetheless, the focus of the textbook is found in its very title—to give a basic knowledge of this great sourcebook and to demonstrate its influence on other works of culture, on the development of language, and on historical perspective.

In order to steer an academic course, the textbook was developed through a collaborative effort involving scholars and teachers. The textbook was developed over almost five years. It was written and rewritten under scholarly guidance from all areas of the academic community and of the believing community. All worked together to accomplish an overview of the entire Bible—both the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament—that is fair to all believers and to nonbelievers as well. The result is an academic course on the Bible with unique claims and distinctions:

- 1. First Amendment Standards:** The course fulfills the standards of *The Bible Public Schools: A First Amendment Guide*. This guide is a consensus statement about how the Bible can be taught in public schools. Twenty-one educational and religious organizations, ranging from the teachers' unions to the National Association of Evangelicals to the American Jewish congress, endorsed the guide.
- 2. Rigorous Review:** The course was reviewed by more than forty prominent literature academics, high school teachers, theologians, and scholars, both secular and religious. The religious reviewers represented Roman Catholic, Protestant Evangelical, Mainline Protestant, Eastern Orthodox, and Jewish traditions. General Editor Cullen Schippe is the retired publisher for Music, Religion, and Social Studies at Macmillan/McGraw-Hill.

- 3. Student Textbook Used Along with the Bible:** The Bible is the primary text for this course. Nevertheless, the course is based not only on teacher's materials but also on a complete student edition that guides and focuses the learning process. The forty chapters in the textbook comprise fourteen units, seven for Hebrew Scriptures and seven for the New Testament. For all direct reading from the Bible, students are encouraged to use a translation of the Bible with which they are comfortable.
- 4. Cultural Context:** *The Bible and Its Influence* broadly covers the cultural contexts and influences of the Bible, with examples of art, literature, rhetoric, and music. The textbook contains a host of engaging features (described in detail later in this introduction) to illustrate and reinforce both the literature of the Bible itself and its context within history and contemporary culture.
- 5. Respect for Faith Perspectives:** The course presents biblical material academically, without prejudice to a particular view, canon, or doctrine. It preserves the ability of parents to teach their view of the Bible's *religious* significance.
- 6. Teacher's Edition:** This teacher's edition is designed to be a thorough and complete teaching plan that provides background, talking points, lesson plans, and other help for the classroom teacher. Note that this teacher's edition contains reduced pages of the student edition with lesson plans that wrap the pages.
- 7. Online Support:** The first source of online support is the Bible Literacy Project Web site, which has additional resources for the classroom teacher. (See [www.bibleliteracy.org/teachers](http://www.bibleliteracy.org/teachers). Log in using the code [REDACTED].) The second is a university-based, online teacher-training program available through the College of Education of Concordia University, Portland, Oregon. (See [www.bibleliteracy.org/training](http://www.bibleliteracy.org/training).)
- 8. Nationwide Use:** In the first eighteen months of publication, over 130 schools in thirty-one states and three foreign countries successfully adopted *The Bible and Its Influence*. At that time, more than two thousand educators were evaluating the course for adoption.

*The Bible and Its Influence* is the work of a broad coalition of people who understand the importance of academic knowledge of the Bible. As in any coalition, not every member is in perfect agreement, but each has decided to set aside differences for a greater purpose. In this case, that purpose is providing a place for academic study of the Bible in the public school curriculum. *The Bible and Its Influence* teaches about religion, about literature, about culture, about art, about music, and even a bit about history. It does not, however, seek to teach that everyone needs to have faith—whether broadly or narrowly defined—to benefit from knowledge of the Bible.

It is the sincere hope of all the people involved in the Bible Literacy Project that you and your students have a rich and academically rewarding journey through *The Bible and Its Influence*.

## THE CASE FOR BIBLE LITERACY IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS<sup>1</sup>

What would you say is the single most important book an educated person needs to know? When the heads of college English departments were asked what book "at a minimum, every incoming freshman should have read," their number one answer was: The Bible.<sup>2</sup>

Yes, the Bible.

Yet today relatively few students receive high-quality, academic instruction about the Hebrew Scriptures and/or the New Testament. For example: While 81 percent of English teachers in one local survey said that teaching about the Bible was important in literature classes, just 10 percent said they actually do so.<sup>3</sup> Scholarly reviews of textbooks in public schools confirm that virtually all religious references, including the Bible's role in our history, art, and literature, have been excised from the curriculum.<sup>4</sup> One survey of high school textbooks showed that just one quarter of one percent of literature readings was from the Bible.<sup>5</sup>



### **Why Does Bible Literacy Matter?**

There are many important rationales for bringing high-quality, academic instruction about the Bible to all American schoolchildren. Students of all faiths (and none) need to know about the Bible to engage their American heritage in key areas of language, arts, and literature, as well as history, law, and politics. Why should any student, regardless of faith tradition, be denied the tools to understand some of the most inspiring rhetoric in American history? Or contemplate just a few of the achievements of Western culture that have been inspired, in part, by biblical language and narratives: Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Handel's *Messiah*, Michelangelo's *David*. The list is endless.

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<sup>1</sup> This article is reprinted from the Bible Literacy Project Web site, [www.bibleliteracy.org](http://www.bibleliteracy.org), © 2005.

<sup>2</sup> A. M. Juhasz and L. R. Wilson, 1986. Should Students Be Well Read or Should They Read Well? *NASSP Bulletin* 70(488): 78-83.

<sup>3</sup> Marie Goughnour Wachlin, 1997. The Place of Bible Literature in Public High School English Classes, *Research in the Teaching of English* 31(1): 7-49.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Warren A. Nord, 1995. *Religion and American Education: Rethinking a National Dilemma* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press).

<sup>5</sup> Marie Goughnour Wachlin, 1993. *The Place of Bible Literature in Public High School English Classes*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Oregon. Available from University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, MI.



### Language and Literature

Without Bible literacy, students are denied full access to their own linguistic, literary, and artistic heritage. The goal is not simply to study the Bible as literature, but to understand the Bible's unparalleled influence on the whole Western tradition. The Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament were not crafted for artistic purposes; they have been (and continue to be) regarded as sacred texts by millions of people of faith. As such, they have exercised great influence on novelists, poets, artists, and composers, as well as ordinary speakers. "It's hard to teach American literature without Bible references," points out one English teacher.<sup>6</sup> Here is how another high school English teacher put it:

Today we discussed *The Old Man and the Sea*... when he carries the mast, he falls, he lies spread out on the mast, it's just like Christ crucified.... Most of the class didn't have any idea.... *A Tale of Two Cities*—one man is sacrificing himself for another, just as Christ sacrificed himself for mankind. Sidney Carton walks through the garden before he decides just as Christ walked through the garden. I tell the students, I'm not any particular religious persuasion at all. I'm not a Christian. You just have to know the Bible.<sup>7</sup>

### History, Law, and Politics

On April 3, 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said:

We've got some difficult days ahead. But it doesn't matter with me now. Because I've been to the mountaintop.... And I've looked over. And I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land.

The next day he was assassinated. It was one of the great, tragic, and truly gripping moments in American history. To grasp its full significance, students born twenty-five years or more after King's death must know more than that Dr. King was a great civil rights leader. To understand Martin Luther King, Jr.'s last public words, we have to know about the text that inspired him. Without any knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures, King's freighted references, "mountaintop" and "promised land," become at best vague rhetorical flourishes, at worst mere gibberish to 21st-century American students.

The civil rights movement is but one example of the importance of a background in the Bible. The Mayflower Compact; Abraham Lincoln's "House Divided" speech; the temperance and the abolitionist movements; Harry Truman's 1949 inaugural statement that "all men are created equal because they are created in the image

<sup>6</sup> Wachlin, 1997.

<sup>7</sup> Marie Goughnour Wachlin, 1998. "The Bible: Why We Need to Teach It; How Some Do," *English Journal*, March: 31–36.

of God," to give just a few examples—little of America's historic public rhetoric or great reform movements can be fully comprehended by those who do not know the Bible.

European history, too, from the legacy of the Roman Empire up through the Crusades, the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, and the rise of the nation-state, to the Pilgrim wanderings that led to America's founding, is literally unintelligible without at least a basic working knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament.

To understand is not always to endorse. The history of the public use of the Bible in political rhetoric and reform movements poses important intellectual questions about the relationship of church and state, an ongoing debate in which the next generation of American citizens and leaders will surely participate. We do not urge the study of the Bible as a simple source of political legitimacy, but as one of the key texts whose publicly debated meanings have shaped our past and reshape the present.

### The Crisis of Biblical Illiteracy

Until recently the importance of the Bible in a good education was widely acknowledged and uncontroversial. Now, however, heritage, roots, and the culture knowledge that the Bible represents are needlessly being lost. Why?

Too many Americans believe that it is illegal to teach about the Bible in public schools.

One reason for this misconception has been confusion about a series of Supreme Court decisions in the 1960s. In 1963, the Supreme Court ruled that public schools may not require devotional use of the Bible. In that same decision, however, the Supreme Court explicitly acknowledged that academic study of the Bible in public schools is constitutional, as part of a good education. In his majority opinion to the court in *Abington v. Schempp*, Justice Thomas Clark wrote:

It might well be said that one's education is not complete without a study of...the history of religion and its relationship to the advancement of civilization. Nothing we have said here indicates that such study of the Bible or of religion, when presented objectively as part of a secular program of education, may not be effected consistently with the First Amendment.

This decision banned devotional use of the Bible in the curriculum, but not academic teaching about the Bible. Many educators failed to recognize this distinction, however, and simply ceased teaching about the Bible altogether. Those who did recognize the distinction could find few curricula that presented the Bible in an academic manner.

The current public school curriculum, with its highly visible absence of instruction about these core texts, assumes one of two things: either that all American children are already well educated in Christian and Jewish texts, or that knowledge of these books is unimportant to a good liberal arts education. Neither assumption is true. To the first point, religious instruction in and academic instruction about the Bible are not the same things. Religious study



## INTRODUCING THE UNIT

- Have the students skim this unit in their textbooks, noting chapter heads and artwork. Explain that this unit provides an introduction to the entire textbook and course.
- Ask a student to read aloud the quotation from *The Bible and Public Schools: A First Amendment Guide*. Point out the distinction between studying the Bible "as literature and studying the Bible "in" literature.
- Ask a volunteer to read the first statement. You might ask the class for preliminary thoughts on the importance of Bible literacy.
- Ask a volunteer to read the second statement. What are the "two major traditions" cited in this objective? (*Judaism and Christianity*)

**Bibliography**

To enrich your understanding and teaching of the material covered in this unit, you may wish to consult the following works:

**Chapter One**

- *The Bible and Literature: A Reader*, edited by David Jasper and Stephen Prickett (Blackwell Publishers, 1999)
- *The Bible and Public Schools: A First Amendment Guide* by the Bible Literacy Project and the First Amendment Center (First Amendment Center, 1999)
- *The Bible As "In Literature"*, edited by James S. Ackerman and Thayer S. Warshaw (Scott Foresman, 1995)
- *The Bible in American Thought in Cultural History*, edited by Nathan Hatch and Mark Noll (Oxford University Press, 1992)
- *The Bible in American Law, Politics, and Political Rhetoric*, edited by James Turner Johnson (Bible in American Culture series, Fortress Press, 1985)
- *The Bible in English* by David Daniell (Oxford University Press, 2003)
- *The Bible Literacy Report* (Bible Literacy Project, 2005)
- *Finding Common Ground: A First Amendment Guide to Religion and Public Education* by Charles C. Haynes and Oliver Thomas (First Amendment Center, 2002)
- *Scripture in the Jewish and Christian Traditions: Authority, Interpretation, Religion*, edited by Frederick E. Greenspahn (Abingdon, 1982)
- *A Teacher's Guide to Religion in the Public Schools* (First Amendment Center, 1999)

6 UNIT 1 Introductions

Academic study of the Bible in a public secondary school may appropriately take place in literature courses. Students might study the Bible as literature. They would examine the Bible as they would other literature in terms of aesthetic categories, as an anthology of narratives and poetry, exploring its language, symbolism, and motifs. Students might also study the Bible as literature, the ways in which later writers have used Bible literature, language, and symbols. Much drama, poetry, and fiction contains material from the Bible.

The Bible & Public Schools: A First Amendment Guide, First Amendment Center, 10

**INTRODUCTION**

There was some years ago a popular quiz. It consisted of a list of quotations. The participants were to identify whether the quote came from Shakespeare or from the Bible. The purpose of the quiz was to lay bare the ignorance of the participants. In point of fact, however, in over thirteen hundred instances the correct answer to such a question would be "both" in language and in content, Shakespeare owed a great deal to the Bible. First of all, the early translations of the Bible into English provided the hard work the language he needed to craft such powerful and beautiful plays and poetry. Secondly, the characters, narratives, and events of the Bible provided Shakespeare and his audiences a wealth of dramatic material. This feature is designed to demonstrate the profound influence of the Bible on the works of Shakespeare.

**BIBLICAL INFORMATION**

Although he was quite obviously an avid Bible reader, Shakespeare was not a biblical scholar. Nor do his plays and poems reflect any particular religious agenda—quite the contrary. The frequent use of the Bible in his work is eclectic and episodic rather than systematic or scientific. Shakespeare used the Bible as a source because it was a common narrative that was shared by his audience. He had a gift for dipping into that common narrative to use characters, language, and conventional wisdom that would be immediately recognizable to his audience and would delineate characters or define plot points. One does not study Shakespeare to learn more about the Bible. However, knowledge of the Bible can help anyone get more meaning out of Shakespeare.

**DISCUSSION STARTERS**

- Assign the reading of this feature well in advance. Set a specific time limit for the conversation on the feature.
- Why are there so many Bible references in the works of Shakespeare? (Note for context of the almost universal knowledge of the Bible in his day. The contents of the Bible, therefore, were a ready source for language and material.)
- Review the types of biblical references in Shakespeare's plays.
- Be sure to discuss the Ackermann quote about the pervasive presence of the Bible in Shakespeare's plays.

- It may help to have some copies of Shakespeare's plays handy and have at least part of the discussion time be in small groups.
- Be sure to save enough time in the discussion to go over the common issues.
- Do you think a reader can appreciate Shakespeare without an understanding of the Bible? (Accept any reasonable answer. Our look for a perception that without a knowledge of the Bible, a reader would still find Shakespeare intelligible but would fail to understand many allusions and themes.)

→ Bible Bishop Wordsworth

**UNIT 7 Writings and Wisdom**

**Unit Features**

**The Bible and Shakespeare**

William Shakespeare (1564-1616) is perhaps the most recognized figure in English literature. His plays and poetry are as alive today as they were in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries when they were first performed. He was first and foremost a secular writer who explored the spirit and condition of kings and of chivalry, of tragic heroes, and of mortals alike.

What about the Bible and the faith of Shakespeare? You have heard comedies, by Mark Twain, or his age, but you have heard nothing at all to do with the Bible's faith. They do. Shakespeare used over 1,000 documented biblical references in his characters, plots, and scenes. He used the Bible in his plays and poems. The answer is really quite simple: Shakespeare was a man of his time and the Bible was the common narrative that was shared by his audience. He had a gift for dipping into that common narrative to use characters, language, and conventional wisdom that would be immediately recognizable to his audience and would delineate characters or define plot points. One does not study Shakespeare to learn more about the Bible. However, knowledge of the Bible can help anyone get more meaning out of Shakespeare.

**BIBLICAL REFERENCES**

A few scholars, beginning with Walter White in 1976, have examined the biblical references in the works of Shakespeare in detail. Some devoted much time and energy to the subject. For example, Bishop Charles Wordsworth wrote *Shakespeare's Knowledge of the Bible* in 1964. Much more recently, Nancy Chelmon of the University of Memphis and perhaps the world's foremost authority on Shakespeare and the Bible, documented an average of biblical references per dramatic scene in Shakespeare's plays. The answer, she says, is that the majority of such references are to the contents of the parables, the Psalms, Genesis, David, Solomon, and many other figures in the Bible and contents of Shakespeare's plays. The scholar Carl Ackermann, author of *The Bible in Shakespearean Drama*, notes that Shakespeare and his audience were so familiar with the Bible that they could refer to it in their conversations. "The following is one example of allusions collected by Carl Ackermann."

**CREATION**

Thus far we have seen the bigger light, and how the less, This less by day and this more by night. The Tempest (1.2)

And God made me first greater the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. Genesis 1:16 (NIV)

**ABELLARD**

Which blood, like overflowing rivers, runs from the tongue's cavern of the earth, To me to justice and truth throughout. Hamlet (3.3)

And the Lord said, "What have you done?" Lamentations 4:13 (NIV)

**ABRAHAM**

Sweet peace conduct his sweet soul to the bosom Of good old Abraham. Richard II (4.1)

The sons of Edward sleep in Abraham's bosom. Richard II (3.3)

And it came to pass, that the bigger died, and was carried by the single into Abraham's bosom. Luke 16:22 (NIV)

**JOB**

I am as poor as Job, my herd, but not so patient. Henry IV, Part 2 (1.2)

'Tis hard to bear the patience of Job. James 5:11 (NIV)

**DAVID**

A Daniel come to judgment? No, a traitor O'er whose judge how I do better than? The Merchant of Venice (4.1)

... for Daniel had saved three of his friends because he was in the sight of the people from that day and thenceforth. Daniel 1:16, 19 (Jehovah's Witnesses)

**HARABAS**

Would any of the stock of Harabab Had been but husband rather than a Christian? The Merchant of Venice (4.1)

There standeth all again, yet not the same, but Harabab, Now Harabab was a coluber. John Donne (poet)

of the Bible, for example, does not examine the role and influence of these texts in American and European history, art, literature, law, and politics. Furthermore, many American teens do not receive religious instruction of any kind.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, as religious diversity in America increases, the rationale for high-quality, academic instruction about the Bible becomes stronger, not weaker. Students from non-Christian or non-Jewish backgrounds are less likely to have the basic literacy about the Bible they need and deserve to fully engage American history, arts, and letters.

The exclusion of the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament from the public school curriculum has unfortunate consequences, direct and indirect. What we exclude from our children's education, the so-called "null curriculum," communicates an active message: either that the study of religious texts and history is so dangerous and disruptive that a tolerant society cannot include it, or that the Bible is not something educated adults think is very important to know.

The Bible Literacy Project aims to change the frame of reference in the public square by forcing the foes of teaching about the Bible to recognize their argument for

what it is: not a case for tolerance, neutrality, or good scholarship, but the advocacy of ignorance and cultural illiteracy. However, our story begins not with confrontation but with an amazingly successful new effort at peacemaking. Working with the Freedom Forum's First Amendment Center, the Project produced *The Bible and Public Schools: A First Amendment Guide*, in which a highly diverse group of organizations managed to agree on what the issues were—both with regard to the issues of legality and basic fairness—for a school that chooses to include the Bible in its curriculum. The National Education Association and the American Jewish Congress endorsed the *Guide*, along with the National Association of Evangelicals, the Christian Legal Society, and other religious, educational, and civil liberties groups.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> In any given week, 49 percent of teens attend religious services (church, synagogue, mosque, etc.). Twenty-four percent of American teens say they never read the Bible. George H. Gallup, Jr., *The Spiritual Life of Young Americans: Approaching the Year 2000* (Princeton, NJ: The George H. Gallup International Institute): 8–15.

<sup>9</sup> *The Bible and Public Schools: A First Amendment Guide*, 1999 (New York: The Bible Literacy Project and the First Amendment Center). The *Guide* has been endorsed by the American Association of School Administrators, the American Federation of Teachers, the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, the Anti-Defamation League, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, the Christian Educators Association International, the Christian Legal Society, the Council on Islamic Education, the National Association of Evangelicals, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., the National Council for Social Studies, the National Education Association, the National School Boards Association, the People for the American Way Foundation, the National Bible Association, and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

The primary task now is to move beyond words, to action: To muster support for a Bible literacy curriculum for public schools that is fair, balanced, rigorous, and constitutional, accompanied by a textbook which will harm no child's faith while leaving every teen knowledgeable about the Bible. This Bible course has been reviewed by leading Bible literature scholars, faith leaders, and educators to ensure its fairness and accuracy. The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty has agreed to defend, free of charge, any school district sued for using our Bible curriculum in a manner consistent with *The Bible and Public Schools: A First Amendment Guide*. This applies to districts in which the teacher has taken one of the online training courses found at [www.bibleliteracy.org/training](http://www.bibleliteracy.org/training).

## RESEARCH: THE BIBLE LITERACY REPORTS

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The development of this course and its textbook began with research. Along with the ordinary research that goes into any textbook development, the Bible Literacy Project produced two research documents to confirm the importance of academic knowledge of the Bible as a component of excellence in education. The first of these studies, *The Bible Literacy Report*, was released prior to the publication of the *The Bible and Its Influence* in April of 2005. This study featured the responses of high school teachers and high school students. The second study, *Bible Literacy Report II*, was released in June of 2006. It featured the responses of university professors.

The executive summaries of the two reports are reproduced here for your convenience. The full text of both studies is available at [www.bibleliteracy.org](http://www.bibleliteracy.org).

### ***Bible Literacy Report***

***What do American students know about the Bible, and what do they need to know in order to get a good education?*** This research project consists of two parts: (a) a **qualitative research study** of what the best high school English teachers think their students need to know about the Bible, and (b) **the only recent nationally representative survey** of American teens' religious knowledge to uncover what American students currently know about the Bible (and other religious texts).

### ***The Qualitative Research Findings***

In a diverse sample of high school English teachers in 10 states, 40 out of 41 teachers said Bible knowledge confers a distinct educational advantage on students. Ninety percent of high school English teachers said it was important for both college-bound and "regular" students to be biblically literate. An Illinois teacher stated, "I think from the standpoint of academic success, it is imperative that college-bound students be literate. For the others, I think it's important for them to understand their own culture, just to be well-grounded



# Bible Literacy Report

What do American teens **need** to know and what **do** they know?

Commissioned by Bible Literacy Project, Inc. under a grant from the John Templeton Foundation.

citizens of the United States—to know where the institutions and ideas come from.”

Conversely, many teachers reported that students in their English classes who were not familiar with the Bible were disadvantaged. One California teacher said, “Students who don’t know the Bible are certainly at a disadvantage. It’s harder for them. They’re not as familiar with it, and it takes more time for them to understand what it is.” Teachers reported students without Bible knowledge take more time to teach, appearing “confused,” “stumped,” “clueless.”

These English teachers reported that among their students, Bible illiteracy is common. The majority of high school English teachers in this sample estimated that less than a fourth of their current students were Bible literate. Only four of the thirty public schools in the study (compared to all four private schools) offered a unit or course about the Bible. Economically advantaged school districts in this sample were far more likely to offer academic study of the Bible than less advantaged school districts.

### The Nationally Representative Gallup Survey: Bible Literacy Project Analysis

This Gallup Survey is based on a nationally representative sample of 1,002 teenagers between the ages of 13 and 18, who were interviewed between May 20 and June 27, 2004. It represents the first extensive, nationally representative survey of the Bible and religious knowledge among American teens in recent years.

The good news is that strong majorities of American teens recognize the basic meaning of widely used Judeo-Christian terms such as “Easter,” “Adam and Eve,” “Moses,” “The Golden Rule,” and “The Good Samaritan.”

However, substantial minorities lack even the most basic working knowledge of the Bible. Almost one out of ten teens believes that Moses is one of the twelve Apostles. About the same proportion, when asked what Easter commemorates, or to identify Adam and Eve, respond “don’t know.”

However, only a minority of American teens appears to be “Bible literate,” reaching the level of knowledge similar to that defined by high school English teachers as necessary to a good education. For example:

- Fewer than half of teens (49 percent) knew what happened at the wedding at Cana (Jesus turned water into wine). Nearly one out of four refused even to guess.
- Given a choice of four quotations from the Bible, almost two-thirds of teens could not correctly identify a quotation from the Sermon on the Mount.
- Similarly, less than a third of teens could correctly identify which statement about David was true. (David tried to kill King Saul.) One-quarter of teens believed that the statement “David was king of the Jews” was false.



- Only 8 percent of teens in public schools in this sample reported that their school offered an elective course on the Bible, and just one out of four public school students (26 percent) said that a unit or section on the Bible was offered in an English or social studies class.

The Bible Literacy Project analysis of the Gallup data concludes, "No controversy among adults, however heated, should be considered an excuse for leaving the next generation ignorant about a body of knowledge crucial to understanding American art, literature, history, language, and culture."

### ***Bible Literacy Report II***

***What do today's college students need to know about the Bible to participate fully and equally in the courses taught in America's elite colleges and universities?*** This study surveyed 39 English professors at 34 top U.S. colleges and universities to learn their assessment of how important Bible literacy is to college-level study of English and American literature. What do incoming freshmen in college-level English courses need to know about the Bible?

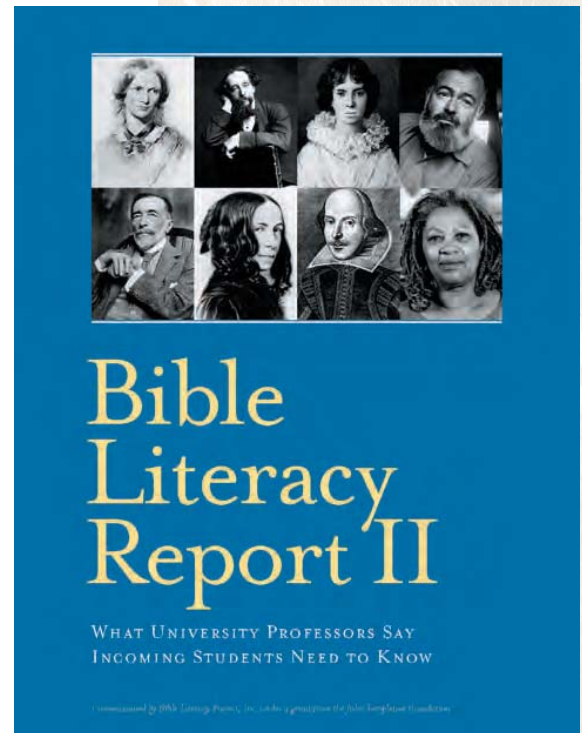
Almost without exception, the English professors who were surveyed at major American colleges and universities see knowledge of the Bible as a deeply important part of a good education. The virtual unanimity and depth of their responses on this question are striking. The Bible is not only a sacred scripture to millions of Americans, it is also arguably (as one Northwestern professor stated) the "most influential text in all of Western culture."

For example, when asked to respond to the statement, "Regardless of a person's faith, an educated person needs to know about the Bible," no professor disagreed; nine provided additional explanation. When asked, "Some scholars say Western literature is steeped in references to the Bible. How would you respond to that?" 38 of 39 English professors agreed—24 of them strongly. When asked, "In your opinion, how important is it for students who take your courses to be familiar with the Bible?" 38 of 39 professors said it was important.

Overwhelmingly, professors in this survey indicated that a lack of basic Bible literacy hampers students' ability to understand both classics and contemporary work. Arduously "decoding" scripture references detracts from absorbing and responding to great works of art, both ancient and modern.

At the same time, a number of professors expressed discomfort or reservations with appearing to "take sides" in favor of the Bible in the contemporary context. They did not wish to associate themselves with a political movement around the Bible, or to seem to detract from the importance of other aspects of a good education, including the value of becoming knowledgeable about other world religions.

This report concludes that high schools should make basic Bible knowledge part of their curriculum, especially for college preparatory students. Doing so requires developing a variety of educational materials and curricula that simultaneously (a) acknowledge the

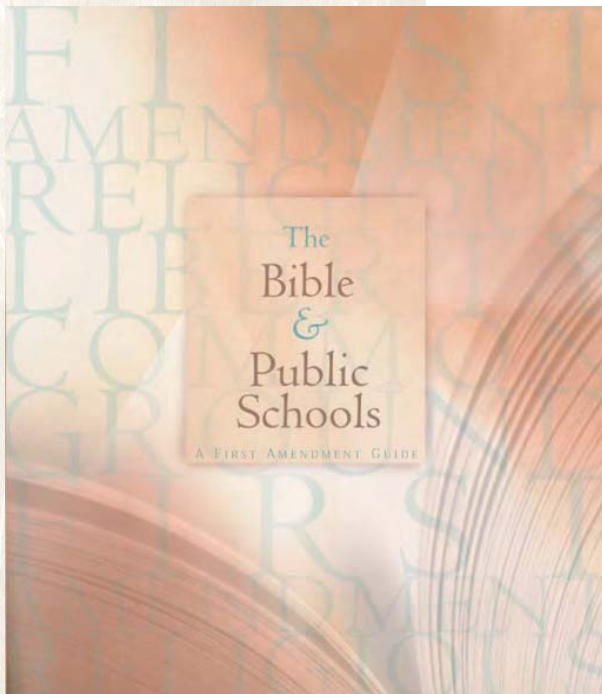


Bible's status as sacred scripture to millions of Americans, (b) are fair to students of all faith traditions, and (c) are of high academic quality.

Doing so will be an important part of meeting the next generation's educational needs in an increasingly diverse population.

## THE FIRST AMENDMENT

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Although educators widely agree that study *about* religion is an important part of a complete education and that learning about the Bible in courses in literature or social studies is part of that study, there are wide-ranging differences as to what approach should be taken. Knowledge of biblical narratives and concepts contributes to the understanding of literature, history, law, art, and contemporary society.

The courts—including the United States Supreme Court—have held that public schools may teach students about the Bible as long as such teaching is “presented objectively as part of a secular program of education” (*School District of Abington Township v. Schempp*, 1963). So before the development of a high school course began, the Bible Literacy Project worked with the First Amendment Center to create a comprehensive guide that could be used both for the creation and the evaluation of Bible curriculum resources for the public schools. The result of that work was *The Bible in Public Schools: A First Amendment Guide*.

The *Guide* offers the following principles to help distinguish between teaching about the Bible in public schools and religious indoctrination. These statements should be accepted by anyone who would institute a Bible course in the public school curriculum or by anyone who would want to teach such a course. You can access the entire guide at [www.bibleliteracy.org/Secure/Documents/BibleAndPublicSchools.pdf](http://www.bibleliteracy.org/Secure/Documents/BibleAndPublicSchools.pdf).

1. The school's approach to religion is *academic*, not *devotional*.
2. The school may strive for student *awareness* of religions, but should not press for student *acceptance* of any religion.
3. The school may sponsor *study* about religion, but may not sponsor the *practice* of any religion.
4. The school may *expose* students to a diversity of religious views, but may not *impose*, *discourage*, or *encourage* any particular view.
5. The school may *educate* about all religions, but may not *promote* or *denigrate* any religion.
6. The school may *inform* the student about various beliefs, but should not seek to *conform* him or her to any particular belief.

When teaching about the Bible in public schools, teachers must understand the important distinction between advocacy, indoctrination, proselytizing, and the practice of religion—which is unconstitutional—and teaching about religion that is objective, nonjudgmental, academic, neutral, balanced, and fair—which is constitutional.

## TEACHER ATTITUDE

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Teachers who are selected to teach Bible courses should be certified to teach the subject matter in the public school system, and they should receive training from qualified scholars before teaching the course. Bible electives ought only to be offered when there are qualified teachers available. *The Bible and Its Influence* is supported, therefore, by an online teacher training program. (See [www.bibleliteracy.org/training](http://www.bibleliteracy.org/training).)

But training is only one component of teacher readiness for Bible courses. At least as important is the fundamental attitude of such a teacher. The essential attitude for you as a teacher of a Bible course is undoubtedly an attitude of *respect*. That respect has to extend in several directions:

- 1. The Law of the Land:** The teacher needs to respect the Constitution and the interpretation of that Constitution down through generations. Today's society is diverse and complex, and so to follow the spirit and the letter of the law that has separated church and state is critical if the course is to be successful.
- 2. Divergent Opinion:** The teacher needs an attitude of respect for diversity. Not everyone sees the teaching of the Bible in public schools as a good. That viewpoint deserves respect as well. Respect will lead the teacher never to belittle or take lightly the different viewpoints and divergence of opinion that may be shown during the course. The teacher with a respect for differences of opinion will be able to give evenhanded access to an important book.
- 3. Faith Traditions:** It is quite likely that represented in your classroom will be a diversity of faith traditions that also deserves the attitude of respect. The Bible is, after all, a sacred text for many. It is the lesson of history that a lack of respect for differing faith traditions and approaches to the Bible helped remove the Bible from the classroom in the first place. The teacher needs to manifest respect for the various faith traditions—Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical, Orthodox, other world religions, or no formal faith tradition at all.
- 4. The Text:** It is of great importance that the teacher of this course show respect for the text itself. On the one hand, one with such respect would not disparage the Bible or treat its content lightly. On the other hand, that same respect will help the teacher avoid uncritical adulation that can be an obstacle to objectivity about the text.
- 5. Biblical Scholarship:** The teacher of this course needs to show respect for the discipline of biblical scholarship and biblical criticism, for the intensive efforts of archaeologists, linguists, historians, and theologians. It is important for the teacher to show appreciation for scholarly tradition.
- 6. Students:** Most of all, the teacher in this course needs to have respect for the students themselves in order to give them a challenging, basic, and complete course on the Bible that will be of help to them in their academic lives.



## PROGRAM COMPONENTS

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*The Bible and Its Influence* is composed of six basic components. The first three are essential for teaching the course. The other three offer support, assessment, and enrichment. Here is a brief snapshot of each component in the program.

### **The Bible**

The primary resource for this course is the Bible itself. To offer an academic course on the Bible without using the text itself would be like offering a course on Shakespeare or Melville or Hawthorne without letting the students confront the full range of the plays or novels. Each student in the course should have his or her own Bible to use. As far as version or translation is concerned, the students should be able to use a translation that is part of their family or faith tradition. Jewish students who use the Hebrew Bible, or Tanakh, will also need a copy of the New Testament.

### **The Student Edition**

Even though the Bible is the primary text, the vehicle for conveying the content of the course is the student edition. The text covers the entire Bible and conveys the biblical information and guides the biblical reading. The student edition also frames the classroom discussions in constitutionally acceptable ways. The student edition is rich in illustration and filled with features that show the Bible's influence in all the various aspects of life and culture. Each student in the course needs free access to the student edition. The student edition is not optional.

### **The Teacher's Edition**

The third essential component of the course is the teacher's edition. This edition contains all the information, lesson plans, background, and classroom scripts needed to effectively and successfully teach the course. It is designed to provide everything you need in one convenient volume. At the same time, the teacher's edition is designed with ease of use in mind.

### **The Web Site**

*The Bible and Its Influence* is supported by the Web site of the Bible Literacy Project ([www.bibleliteracy.org/teachers](http://www.bibleliteracy.org/teachers)). At this site, the teacher will find the full text of both Bible literacy reports and the *First Amendment Guide*. In the future, the Web site will post ideas, additional lesson strategies, and other resources that will enhance and supplement the teaching of the course.

### **Online Tests**

The Web site also provides online tests for *The Bible and Its Influence*. To access these tests, go to [www.bibleliteracy.org/teachers](http://www.bibleliteracy.org/teachers) and log in with the code word *shibboleth*.

### **Online Teacher Training**

One unique offering of *The Bible and Its Influence* is online teacher training. These courses for credit and for continuing education units



have been developed jointly with the Bible Literacy Project and the College of Education of Concordia University in Portland, Oregon. Online courses will be available several times a year. Three price and content structures are available: a modestly priced course that gives a certificate of completion, a mid-price course for continuing education units, and a full-price course for graduate-level credit. It was developed around *The Bible and Its Influence* under the direction of Dr. Marie Wachlin, and it features the direct instruction of nine of the finest scholars in the field of English literature, including Robert Alter, Ph.D., Professor of Hebrew and Comparative Literature at U.C. Berkeley; Leland Ryken, Ph.D., Clyde S. Kilby Professor of English at Wheaton College, IL; and Tremper Longman, Ph.D. (Yale), Professor of English at Westmont College, CA.



## STUDENT EDITION FEATURES

The first thing you notice about the student edition is the lavishness of its presentation. A central feature of the text is a program of illustration that provides the visual learner with almost instant recognition of the impact the Bible has had on all aspects of Western culture. The art and illustration program is taken almost exclusively from examples of fine art, folk art, and some photography. All the illustration is captioned to make even the illustration program a learning opportunity.

The student edition is divided into two discrete sections. The first section covers the Hebrew Scriptures and is set up in the order of the Jewish Bible rather than in the traditional sequence of books found in Christian Bibles. The textbook is constructed on a strong linear and narrative base that provides a guided reading of virtually the entire Bible—Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament. One of the more difficult aspects of studying the Bible is learning how the Bible is structured—basically, how the Bible works. The basic content of the student edition is also designed to give the students a strong, challenging, and coherent reading experience along with their reading of the actual Bible.

**A Word about Translations:** One of the more important decisions in the development of the student edition was which translations to use. Not every translation is looked upon favorably by all traditions. To use only one translation of the Bible throughout the student edition would be to exclude many segments of the public school community. A major priority in the development of the student edition was not to exclude anyone. After careful consultation, three translations were chosen for reproduction in the student edition: The King James Version, the New Revised Standard Version, and the Jewish Bible—the Tanakh. The King James Version is used for those familiar passages that are most recognizable in that translation. The New Revised Standard Version was chosen for its readability and for its broad interdenominational acceptance. The Tanakh was chosen for the majesty of its prose and its poetry and to provide a point of reference and identification for the Jewish participants in the course.

## The Structure of the Student Edition

The following list will provide you with a guided tour of the structural elements of the student edition.



- 1. Unit Openers:** The unit openers set the tone for the units. There are fourteen units in all. The openers consist of a scene-setting passage and a set of unit learning objectives.
- 2. Chapter Openers:** Each chapter is opened with four devices:
  - a. Key Biblical Texts:** Most chapters begin by listing Bible passages that may be assigned to the students beforehand.
  - b. Discover:** What students can expect to learn from the chapter.
  - c. Get to Know:** Biblical characters or events that will be covered in the chapter.
  - d. Consider:** A thoughtful discussion question to link the content of the chapter with the experiences of the students.
- 3. Discussion Questions:** Scattered throughout the text are thought questions that help the students exercise higher level thinking skills.
- 4. Projects:** At the end of each chapter are projects that will help provide active learning opportunities for the class. These projects may be worked on by individuals, with a partner, or in small groups.
- 5. Unit Features:** At the end of each unit is a special longer feature. These features highlight some special areas of high interest or important content. They are meant to provide punctuation to the regular routine of the chapters. The features include material on the Bible and Shakespeare, the formation of modern Israel, biblical allusions, literary genres, and much more.
- 6. Glossary:** The development of vocabulary is a strong strand throughout the text. Important and technical words first appear in boldface. The words are defined in context, and they appear again in the glossary.
- 7. Index:** There is also a complete and comprehensive index to the student edition.

## Special Features

The student edition also provides a wide array of special features to enhance the learning experience. These features appear throughout the textbook. Each of them provides connections to dramatize the influence the Bible has had over the centuries.



**In Your Journal** This feature guides the students in personalizing their learning experience by keeping a record of their reactions and discoveries.



**The Bible in Literature**

This feature demonstrates the influence the Bible has had in the form and content of great literature down through the centuries and right up to contemporary times.



**The Bible as Literature**

This feature examines the literary elements in the Bible itself.

**The Bible in History**

This feature demonstrates specific historical events, trends, developments, and movements that affected the use of the Bible or were affected by the Bible.



**Cultural Connections**

This feature explores how the Bible has influenced different elements of culture—music, art, theater, architecture, history, public policy, ceremonies and rituals, and the like.

**Into Everyday Language**

This feature highlights the effect that translations of the Bible have had on the formation of the language and upon common speech.



**Look It Up**

Occasionally, the students are given some specific research and reading assignments that entail looking up and studying several related passages.

**Maps, Charts, and Graphs**

Throughout the student edition, there is extensive use of text and graphic devices to communicate the content and to organize the learning.

The illustration, structure, organization, and text features in the student edition are all designed to provide an optimum learning opportunity. They provide a richness that will engage the students, challenge them, and leave a lasting impression.

**TEACHER'S EDITION FEATURES**

The entire structure of the teacher's edition of *The Bible and Its Influence* is designed for maximizing the learning experience, for engaging the students in a constant dialogue throughout the class period, and to challenge and stretch the students as well. The teacher's edition is also designed to minimize the need for extensive teacher preparation by providing sufficient and even extensive background information. There is scant need for outside resources.

**Working with the Text**

- Discuss Hagar. Help students understand that both slavery (in most cases a form of unpaid servitude with a specific time limit) and the kind of concubine arrangement Sarah proposed to Abraham and Hagar were common in the culture of the time.
- Ask a student to summarize the covenant God made with Adam and Eve and with Noah, or have students reread Genesis 2:16–17 and Genesis 9:1–17.
- Introduce God's covenant with Abraham, asking a volunteer to read from the text the questions from Genesis on these pages.
- Invite students to identify the differences they see between the covenant with Abraham and the earlier biblical covenants.
- Emphasize to students that the sign of the covenant of God with Abraham was circumcision—an outward sign of inner change.
- Discuss God's covenant with Abraham. Why does Abraham receive a new name? (It signifies a change in relationship.) Discuss the reasons people today might change their names.

**Cultural Connections**

Have students read the boxed feature. Why might early settlers have identified with Abraham? (They were moving to a new land; no members of religious movements they believed they had been called by God to start a new society.) Ask students for other examples of the use of the term covenant in governmental or social settings. If students have difficulty generating examples, use the Internet to search for the use of this term in your local or state laws. Note that the excerpt from the compact retains the 17th-century grammar and spelling.

**VOCABULARY**

**Circumcision** is the removal of the foreskin, the membrane that covers the head of the penis. The circumcision of male children is a religious ritual for Jews and Muslims, and in Western hospitals is often performed for secular reasons of hygiene or societal preference.

**Look It Up**

Have students work alone or in small groups to answer the questions.

Answers: (1) God requires that Abraham make a sacrifice of several animals. Then, in a dream, God tells Abraham of the 400 years of slavery the Jewish people will experience in Egypt and their eventual release, as well as Abraham's peaceful death. (2) Abraham promises to circumcise himself and all the males of his household as a sign of his acceptance of the covenant. (3) Isaac's conception is foretold by three angelic visitors; he is born when his father is extremely elderly and his mother, who has been barren throughout her childbearing years, is long past menopause. This birth, which apparently transcends the rules of nature, assures that Abraham and Sarah will have an heir to carry on their line as God promised.

**Look It Up**

Choose at least one of the questions below. Find the answers in the student text.

- What Hittite does God use to make known the covenant with Abraham? What does God use to support Abraham's descendants? (Read Genesis 15:9–21.)
- What signs did God ask of Abraham and Sarah's descendants to show that they accepted God's promise? (Read Genesis 17:9–13.)
- What were the circumstances of the birth of Isaac? How was his birth a sign of God's part of the covenant? (Read Genesis 18:1–15 and 21:1–2.)

**Signs of Promise**

In addition to the theme of calling and of prayer, the account of Abraham's life is marked by an emphasis on God's promises. The biblical text sees the ongoing relationship between God and humans, generally brought into being by God's promise and the response of humans, as a sequence of broken, renewed, and fulfilled promises. The account of Abraham and Sarah is the first example of God making a covenant with one particular family, which links Abraham and his descendants to the rest of the people of the Jewish people. In the ongoing and calling theme, God sets in motion the process by which the descendants of Abraham and Sarah (according to Genesis) become a chosen people, with special responsibilities to God.

When Abraham was 99 years old, God gave him a new name and a new covenant.

**UNIT 3 Genesis—Call and Promise**

**CULTURAL CONNECTIONS**

**American History**

The language of covenant is an integral part of American legal and governmental tradition, partly because English (British and American) identified themselves with Abraham and his descendants as they sought to set up a new government for a land of promise.

The Baylors Compact, an agreement among the members of the Plymouth Colony, set the tone for future governmental covenants in the United States. They were quite unlike the Plymouth Compact in form.

In the name of God, Amen, We, whose names are hereunto subscribed, do hereby solemnly and mutually bind ourselves to the Lord God Almighty, to the one another, and to the whole world, that we shall never separate from each other, nor shall we ever be divided, as long as we shall live in this world, unto the end of time.

John Smith, among the first, promised his settlement to make a covenant, or contract, around 1607. He was a Puritan and a member of the Virginia Company. Some had a lot of faith. They were glad to read into his words, and when the time that he had covenanted, I was drowned in her care." Some complained to her husband: "What! she would do us by hand, do us her as a piece of her!" Others replied: "Gods words that it pleased him to bestow." Finally, "diving Hagar to the sea the wilderness and an angel appeared her to enter, promising that her son Ishmael would also found a great nation." (Read Genesis 16:7–11.)

The Baylors Compact was not without its own history of protest. Great faithfulness to God is shown side by side with very human feelings and change: fear, doubt, anger, jealousy, grief, and death. Finally, readers of these accounts are reminded by what truly are not biblical narratives. It is always good to remember not to try to apply current standards to the biblical accounts. Recognize that the flawed humanity of all characters in our stories. Genesis continues to engage readers and inspire action.



Your teacher's edition is both a guide and a script. You may use the lesson plans as suggestions or you may follow them exactly as they are written. The advantage of following the plan closely is a sense of security—knowledge that the material as presented has been reviewed both for its constitutionality and for its effectiveness. The teacher's edition is yours to customize and adapt. Wherever possible some "white space" remains on the pages so that you can record your adaptations right in your book.



Because the student text is narrative and linear in structure, the lessons in the teacher's edition are also linear. There are devices to begin the lessons and devices to close them, but between these two bookends, the lesson plan is driven by the student text. In general, the teacher's content is presented page by page and in the sequence that elements are presented on the student page.

Your teacher's edition contains *the entire student edition*. The teaching pages are presented in reduced form with a wraparound lesson plan. The glossary and the index to the student edition are presented full-size. Care has been taken in the design to make the reduced student pages clear and readable.

### **The Structure of the Teacher's Edition**

The architecture of the teacher's edition follows that of the student edition. The following list will provide you with a guided tour of the structural elements of the teacher's edition:

- 1. The Unit Opener:** The unit opening spread can be used as a brief introduction to each unit. It provides a brief script for setting up the unit content. In addition, the unit opener provides several resources for you:
  - a. Bibliography:** A list of readings for the unit in general and for each chapter in the unit
  - b. Cultural Connections:** A quick reference to the connections in each unit to literature, art, music, theater, history, popular culture, and the like
  - c. Vocabulary Preview:** A list of the words or terms to be introduced in the unit
- 2. The Chapters:** Each chapter is a self-contained lesson designed to be covered in a single class period, and the lesson plans contain the following consistent elements:
  - a. Lesson Objectives:** These are usually linked to the "Discover" statements in the student edition and are stated in terms of learning outcomes.
  - b. Biblical Information:** Throughout the chapters there is background on the biblical material being presented. It is presented only when needed, and it is always the first element on the teacher page even when the background refers to elements later on the page.
  - c. Working with the Text:** This element in the chapter structure is the propeller for the lesson. It guides the reading of the text,

provides comprehension dialogue, suggests courses for discussion, and prioritizes the content as you go through the lesson. Within this element there are three types of text: Directions, notes, and general information are in Roman type. Direct scripting is presented in boldface type. Possible student responses and answer keys are presented in italics in color.

- d. Visual Learning:** Because the illustration program is an essential component of the book's impact, the visuals are integrated into the lesson by means of this device. This element focuses on the pictures themselves and provides suggestions for discussion and observation.
- e. Vocabulary:** Throughout the chapters there is a vocabulary development strand. In most cases this element expands simple definitions into items of interest.
- f. Features:** Each feature in the student edition has a corresponding script in the teacher's edition—every map, chart, Cultural Connection, The Bible in Literature, Into Everyday Language, In Your Journal, etc., is highlighted and handled in the lesson plan.
- g. Links:** Throughout the lesson plans you will discover links to the background pages described below.
- h. Across the Curriculum:** When dictated by the content, there are extension activities that connect the material in the chapter to other subjects in the curriculum—math, science, music, art, social studies, language arts, and so forth.
- i. Projects:** There are minimal and simple suggestions for the projects at the end of the chapter.
- j. Recall:** At the end of each chapter there is a review of content that is divided into two parts. The first part provides content questions, and the second part provides suggested responses.

**3. Unit Features:** As mentioned in the structure of the student edition, the features at the end of each unit are treated as special high-interest lessons. Within the teacher's edition, these features have a different structure:

- a. Introduction:** A setup for the discussion of the feature
- b. Biblical Information:** Background essential to the discussion (Note: When this background is not specifically biblical, it is labeled simply "Information.")
- c. Discussion Starters:** Helps and hints for initiating and sustaining a classroom discussion of the material
- d. Further Study:** Suggestions for activities, research, or projects that extend the experience of the feature

**4. Background Pages:** A unique teacher tool in *The Bible and Its Influence—Teacher's Edition* is the Background Page. For each chapter and unit feature in the course, there is a single corresponding page (located after the glossary). On each Background Page you will find supporting information on literature, culture, history, art, music, and the like. You will find biographical information on artists and authors. These pages are a rich resource that will help you respond to student questions and to add



interesting elements to your introduction of topics as they occur in the chapters. For ease of use, each chapter has no more than a single Background Page. It is a good idea to keep a “traveling” marker in the B-page section so that you are always just one flip away from your background material.

### Summary

Although there is a wealth of material in your teacher’s edition—possibly more than you will ever need—there is one element missing. That element is you. There is no way to substitute for your skill, your sense of respect, your fairness, and your ability to provide a strong academic focus on the Bible and on its cultural impact.

## TEACHING THE COURSE

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*The Bible and Its Influence* is designed to cover the entire Bible in either a full-year or one-semester course. Each chapter is considered a full lesson. The projects and features provide opportunities for special sessions and discussions. However, there is a great deal of flexibility for teaching the course. First of all, it is not necessary that every chapter be covered in class or that each chapter be given equal weight. However, for the most effective use of this textbook, some attempt ought to be made to show the entire arc of the Bible—both Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament.

### Planning and Pacing

There are forty chapters and fourteen features in the course. If all the material is used, this amounts to a total of fifty-four sessions without factoring in the presentation of research and artwork that results from the various projects. This wealth of material demands a good planning calendar for the course—one that can be maintained—in order to avoid the frustration for both you and your students of ending the course with loose ends dangling.

- 1. Text Driven:** The individual chapters are driven by the text and by the clock. Most of the lessons are eight pages in length, a few are six pages, and two run longer. As far as lesson pacing is concerned, it is not necessary to read every word of every chapter in class.
- 2. Assign the Reading:** One of the greatest aids to successful lesson pacing will be the assigning of reading in advance of the class. The reading assignments should include both the Key Biblical Texts and the chapter itself. If the students have read the material in advance, pacing will be a breeze. However, in the real world, it will be necessary to handle a certain amount of the reading load within the teaching session. Even though you will be given suggestions, it will be up to you to choose how best to cover the extensive reading material.
- 3. Follow the Path:** The Working with the Text notes in your lesson plan provide you with a path through the lesson and will help

with the pacing. Start with the path, and as you develop your own style and materials, you can feel free to wander away from the path.

- 4. Student Interest and Engagement:** Along the path you will discover that some of the features command more student attention and enthusiasm. Student engagement trumps covering every inch of the text. For a successful and dynamic experience in presenting the Bible, be ready to follow student interest. This is a survey course, not a mastery course. The end product of your planning, pacing, and teaching will be for your class to have a solid background in the Bible that will be of assistance to them in their other studies, that will enhance their own writing and communication, and that will help them understand and interpret the use of the Bible in society in general. You are looking for biblical literacy and not biblical scholarship or proficiency.
- 5. Suggested Timing:** Although there is no pacing clock or assigned minutes for each section in a chapter, you can create your own pacing by keeping the setup of the chapter to ten minutes or less. You can keep the Recall section of the chapter to five to seven minutes (or it can be skipped altogether—especially if you use the testing program). Then, create for yourself a forty-minute arc to cover the material in the chapter.
- 6. No Lectures:** *Avoid the lecture approach.* Although your own training, familiarity, and comfort with the material are important, stick closely to the text. As much as possible make each session a dialogue that includes the material, you, and your students. Be aware that it is quite easy to slip into “Sunday school mode” with biblical material. In a lecture approach, it is also easy to deviate into a critical or analytical mode that parses and delineates rather than discovers, connects, and reacts.
- 7. Dialogue and Exchange:** Each chapter should provide ample opportunity for you and your students to talk about the text and its implications. In that dialogue, you can demand adherence to certain rules from the class. Although most of the rules of dialogue have their source in best practices and common sense, because of the nature of the book you are studying, such rules need to be discussed and in place when the class begins:
  - a. Respect:** Each student should be willing to respect the opinions and positions of every other student.
  - b. Openness:** Most students will be in this class because they have chosen to be there. Nonetheless, the rule of openness applies. The students should exhibit an open mind to this academic study of the Bible. The study is a demanding one, and intellectual openness will help everyone succeed.
  - c. Participation:** Because of the density of the text and the far-reaching influences of the



Bible, the course touches upon most of the students' previous learning experience. The best way for all to share in that experience is for everyone to participate actively.

**d. No Filibustering:** The flip side of participation is the filibuster—one student dominating the discussion without regard for the ideas and sensitivities of the others. You can enforce the rule against filibustering at any time.

**e. Preparation:** The more prepared the students are, the more easily the material will be covered. All students should understand the importance of preparation for the classes. This preparation involves doing the assigned reading from the Bible and from the text, marshalling questions and responses to questions, and completing assignments and projects on time.

**f. Honesty:** A correlative to respect and openness is honesty. Every student has the right to expect honesty of the others and the obligation to be honest with the others as well.

**Remember** that you will have in your class students with different religious backgrounds, or perhaps no religious background at all. All should feel welcome, safe, and secure in this course. You cannot supply those feelings all by yourself. You and your students need to work together on this atmosphere.

**8. Small-Group Discussions:** Whenever possible, work in small groups for discussions, conversations, readings, and the like. Small-group discussions can allow for greater participation. These small-group activities can also be a way of parceling out material and reviewing assignments. Remind the students that all the rules that apply to the class as a whole will apply in small-group learning opportunities.

## Scheduling

### Full-Year Course

The full-year course is the model on which *The Bible and Its Influence* was developed. The course as designed spans fifty-four sessions. Some sessions can be expanded and some contracted. There are an equal number of chapters for each of two semesters—twenty-seven sessions per semester. In most cases, this scheduling will allow for splitting the longer or more complicated chapters, for testing sessions, for some active learning sessions (projects and reports), and the like. In short, a full-year course provides few scheduling challenges.

### One-Semester Course

If *The Bible and Its Influence* is offered only as a one-semester course, some advanced planning is necessary. It is *not* recommended that only the Hebrew Scriptures be taught. To give an overview of the Bible, it is important that both the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament be covered. However, as can be seen in the sample scheduling chart, the New Testament material can be abridged. The sample chart presumes a twelve-week semester with three class periods per week. The material is assigned to the week, and the division among the three classes during that week is somewhat flexible.



<b>Sample Semester Course</b>	
<i>Week</i>	<i>Material to Be Covered</i>
<b>1</b>	Units One and Two: Cover the Unit One feature on Biblical Allusions as part of one class and assign the Milton feature as homework.
<b>2</b>	Unit Three, including the Abraham and Isaac feature.
<b>3</b>	Unit Four, including the Emancipation feature.
<b>4</b>	Units Five and Six: Collapse Chapters 10 and 11 into one session and assign the feature. Give a full class to the major prophets (Chapter 12). Combine the minor prophets with the unit feature, Thirst for Justice.
<b>5</b>	Unit Seven: Chapters 14–17—give an entire class to Job (Chapter 17).
<b>6</b>	Unit Seven: Chapters 18–20 and the Shakespeare feature.
<b>7</b>	Unit Eight and its feature, which reviews the literary genres of the Bible.
<b>8</b>	Unit Nine on the Gospels: Concentrate on Chapters 24 and 25 and the feature on the two parables.
<b>9</b>	Unit Ten and its feature, A Death with Meaning.
<b>10</b>	Unit Eleven: Concentrate on Chapters 31 and 32—and choose either the feature on Augustine or the feature on the legacy of the Reformation at the end of Unit Twelve. (Note: Skip Unit Twelve or assign its reading as homework.)
<b>11</b>	Unit Thirteen and its feature. (Note: Revelation usually engenders a great deal of student interest.)
<b>12</b>	Use Unit Fourteen (Epilogue) as an opportunity for review, project reports, testing, and the like. Use the last class for the unit feature and for student evaluation of the class.

### Block Scheduling

Many schools may offer their electives and advance placement courses as part of block scheduling. Such scheduling is a challenge for teaching *The Bible and Its Influence*. If you are faced with block scheduling, much of the success of your course will be based on the assignment of reading and on efficient use of classroom time. The sample block schedule presumes that there are fourteen ninety-minute sessions. Obviously, no two block scheduling situations are exactly the same, but the sample will give you an idea on how to choose material.



### Block Scheduling Sample

<i>Block</i>	<i>Description</i>
<b>1</b>	Unit One: Set up the parameters of the class with the students, cover the material in the unit, and use the Unit One feature as the last 15–20 minutes of the class. <i>Assign:</i> Projects and Units Two and Three.
<b>2</b>	Units Two and Three: Concentrate on Chapters 3 and 5. Use the Unit Three feature as a small-group activity. <i>Assign:</i> Projects and Unit Four.
<b>3</b>	Unit Four: Concentrate on Chapters 7 and 8 and the Unit Four feature on Emancipation. <i>Assign:</i> Projects and Unit Five.
<b>4</b>	Unit Five: Use the feature Exile and Return to bring the material into the students' current experiences. <i>Assign:</i> Projects and Unit Six.
<b>5</b>	Unit Six: Chapter 12 is a longer chapter. If necessary, focus on that chapter alone. The feature is important and makes a good small-group discussion. <i>Assign:</i> Projects and Unit Seven, Chapters 14–17.
<b>6</b>	Unit Seven, Chapters 14–17: Concentrate on Chapters 14 and 17. <i>Assign:</i> Unit Seven, Chapters 18–20, and the Shakespeare feature.
<b>7</b>	Unit Seven, Chapters 18–20: Concentrate on either Chapter 18 or Chapter 19. Be sure to save sufficient time for the Shakespeare feature. <i>Assign:</i> Unit Eight and its feature.
<b>8</b>	Unit Eight: Concentrate on Chapters 21 and 23. The feature provides a very good review of literary genres and should not be skipped. <i>Assign:</i> Unit Nine and its feature.
<b>9</b>	Unit Nine: Concentrate on Chapters 24 and 25. The feature is good as a small-group activity with the visual component discussed by the whole class together. <i>Assign:</i> Unit Ten and its feature.
<b>10</b>	Unit Ten: Concentrate on Chapters 28 and 30. The feature is a good whole-class activity—especially with its potential for dramatization. <i>Assign:</i> Unit Eleven and its feature.
<b>11</b>	Unit Eleven: Concentrate on Chapters 31 and 32. <i>Assign:</i> Unit Twelve and its feature. <i>Block 12 is also a good time to collect projects and written assignments.</i>
<b>12</b>	Unit Twelve: This is a fairly short unit, but be sure to collect outstanding assignments. Elements of the projects and assignments can be used in block 14. <i>Assign:</i> Unit Thirteen and its feature.
<b>13</b>	Unit Thirteen: Concentrate on Chapter 37 and the feature on Dante. <i>Assign:</i> Unit Fourteen and its feature.
<b>14</b>	Use this block as a general review (much of Chapter 40 is a review), time for testing, and the sharing of project results. Be sure to give the students an opportunity to evaluate the course.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

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To summarize the value of *The Bible and Its Influence*, here are just a few of many personal endorsements and comments the textbook has received from scholars around the country. As you teach this course, realize that you are providing intellectual and academic access to a book that is foundational for almost all of Western civilization. Enjoy the experience of sharing this exciting book with your students. Take pride as well in the fact that you are not only providing them with the knowledge of an important work, but also that you are providing them with a distinct educational advantage.

*The Bible and Its Influence* is an undisputed triumph of scholarship and presentation. The achievement is breathtaking. The Hebrew Scriptures unit raised the bar very high, and I was a priori a little skeptical about whether you could make the New Testament genuinely literary in nature. I actually ended up liking the NT unit better than the OT one. If virtue is its own reward, so is excellence. The material is excellent.

**Leland Ryken, Ph.D.**

*Clyde S. Kilby Professor of English  
Wheaton College, IL*

The volume is well done. I was quite taken with the abundance of supplementary materials included in the text—the artwork (highly variegated and well-chosen), the insets about the Bible in subsequent literature, the Bible in political life, etc. All this I think is likely to help students see concretely how the Bible is not just a set of ancient documents or something confined to pulpit and Sunday school, but a series of powerful writings that have had, and continue to have, profound effects on a whole range of our cultural institutions and on the way we think about the world.

**Robert Alter, Ph.D.**

*Professor of Hebrew and Comparative Literature  
University of California at Berkeley*

*The Bible and Its Influence* is an extraordinarily unique textbook that walks students through the entire content of the Bible and reveals how it has impacted all of Western civilization. It is an outstanding curriculum for any young person interested in discovering the relevance of biblical literacy for today.

**Ted Haggard**

*President  
National Association of Evangelicals*

It is, on the whole, an excellent job. It will serve as an excellent and evenhanded introduction to the Bible. Without question, it can serve as the basis for a constitutional course about the Bible in the nation's public schools. It is therefore a signal achievement.

**Marc D. Stern**

*General Counsel  
American Jewish Congress*

Familiarity with the literary allusions of the Jewish and Christian scriptures has been the classical mark of a well-educated person in Western society. The Bible Literacy Project's textbook, solidly researched and professionally written, enables those enrolled in our nation's public schools to savor that heritage in a way which respects religious freedom and prepares for the rigors of the very best of university education in the arts and sciences. I am pleased to endorse this effort wholeheartedly.

**Richard Sklba, S.S.L., S.T.D.**

*Auxiliary Bishop of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Milwaukee  
Chair of the Board of Trustees for the Catholic Biblical Association*

It is a pleasure to recommend the textbook produced by the Bible Literacy Project. This book splendidly illustrates the importance of the Bible for understanding Western culture. It does so in a way that is respectful towards Jewish and Christian tradition and that also appreciates the light shed on the Bible by modern historical study. It takes an ecumenical approach that avoids confessionalism but is appreciative of the positive role that the Bible can play in our society. It is an excellent illustration of the way the Bible can and should be taught in American public schools.

**John Collins, Ph.D.**

*Holmes Professor of Old Testament Criticism and Interpretation  
Yale Divinity School*

Let me say how impressed I am by this. It is clear that much hard work and good scholarship have gone into the text. The instructional design is excellent. This promises to be an outstanding resource for public schools.

**Charles C. Haynes, Ph.D.**

*Senior Scholar  
First Amendment Center  
Arlington, Virginia*

To be considered fully literate in the arts and letters of Western culture, one needs to know the Hebrew Bible, one of the cornerstones of this culture. This volume provides students with the necessary tools to attain such literacy.

**Ellen Frankel, Ph.D.**

*CEO and Editor-in-Chief  
The Jewish Publication Society*

This text is a feast for the mind, the eye, and the heart. Instructive, beautiful, and engaging, it promises to keep the seminal works of the Western tradition alive for generations of young people.

**Amy A. Kass, Ph.D.**

*Senior Lecturer in the Humanities at the University of Chicago  
Senior Fellow at the Hudson Institute*

The influence of the Bible on Western culture in every respect—arts and literature, politics and justice—is immeasurable. Thanks to this volume, students can begin to get some sense of the range of that influence. Despite the sensitivity of the subject matter, this volume succeeds in being admirably balanced and fair, and yet accords full respect to sincere religious faith. Too long the Bible has been selectively ignored by educators afraid of giving offense. This volume makes it possible to once again bring into the classroom the book that has had the single greatest impact on Western civilization.

**Frederica Mathewes-Green, M.A.**

*Author and Commentator*

No piece of Western literature has had the culture-shaping impact of the Bible. Knowledge of its genres, metaphors, and content is fundamental to understanding literature, music, art, and politics. The pleasing format, the engaging style, and the compelling and accurate content of this textbook will provide students with the necessary information to become competent and insightful readers of culture and society.

**Tremper Longman III, Ph.D.**

*Robert H. Gundry Professor of Biblical Studies  
Westmont College*

The informational content, accuracy, exposition, illustrations, and tone are all extremely well done, and I congratulate you on a highly accurate and readable presentation.

**Peter Lillback, Ph.D.**

*President  
Westminster Theological Seminary*