

How did Joseph Smith translate the Book of Mormon?

Before hiding the gold plates, Moroni, the last prophet of the Book of Mormon, wrote on the book's title page that the book would be translated "by the gift and power of God." This remains the best description of the translation of the Book of Mormon.

Joseph Smith dictated the words of the translation to scribes, mostly Oliver Cowdery. Because Joseph was translating a completely unknown language, he needed to rely on the Lord. One way the Lord helped was to provide physical instruments to aid Joseph in translating. Witnesses said Joseph looked into the instruments and that words appeared to him in English. The translation instruments included the "interpreters" or "Urim and Thummim"—two clear stones fastened in a metal rim so that Joseph could look through them. These had been given to Joseph along with the plates. Another instrument Joseph used was a "seer stone" that he would look into, often by placing it in a hat. Joseph had found this stone earlier and had used it to find hidden or lost things. He used both the interpreters and the seer stone as he translated, always relying on the inspiration of heaven.

The translation of the Book of Mormon was truly miraculous and was done "by the gift and power of God."

For more on the translation of the Book of Mormon, see "Book of Mormon Translation" at topics.ChurchofJesusChrist.org or in Gospel Topics in the Gospel Library app.