

*Book of Mormon Studies: An Introduction and Guide*, by Daniel Becerra, Amy Easton-Flake, Nicholas J. Frederick, and Joseph M. Spencer (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2022)

The aptly titled *Book of Mormon Studies: An Introduction and Guide* gives readers a welcome, straightforward, and helpful overview of where the field of Book of Mormon studies has been, where it is currently, and where it may go in the future. The book is coauthored by Daniel Becerra, Amy Easton-Flake, Nicholas J. Frederick, and Joseph M. Spencer—all professors of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University.

The book begins with an introduction, explaining its premise and purpose. The first chapter, “Looking Back,” is particularly interesting in that it traces the beginnings of the Book of Mormon as a field of study. The authors take us back to the nineteenth century and Orson Pratt, then move us into the twentieth century and discuss the early contributions of George Reynolds and B. H. Roberts. Book of Mormon studies as a truly academic endeavor begins with the pioneering work of Hugh Nibley, M. Wells Jackman, and Sidney B. Sperry, whose works the authors summarize. Readers are reminded of the founding of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS, now under the umbrella of the Maxwell Institute). The authors also discuss the contributions of other scholars in the field and bring us into twenty-first-century Book of Mormon scholarship.

The second chapter, “The Field,” gives readers an overview of the broad subdisciplines scholars and interested students have been pursuing. These areas include textual production, historical origins, literary criticism, intertextuality, theological interpretation,

reception history, and ideology critique. Time is spent on each of these seven categories to provide a helpful overview. While some of these subdisciplines have been explored since the beginning, such as textual production, others, like reception history and ideology critique, have recently emerged.

Chapter 3, “Overcoming Obstacles,” outlines some of the hurdles in Book of Mormon studies. These include dealing with tensions between old and new academic techniques and having “academic charity” (76) for those with different points of view, defined as “the practice of attributing the most reasonable or most defensible argument to one’s opponent before critiquing” (76).

The next chapter, “Common Questions,” poses the seven most common questions in dealing with the Book of Mormon, namely: “How was the Book of Mormon translated?” “Why have changes been made to the text of the Book of Mormon?” “Did the Book of Mormon derive from nineteenth-century texts?” “What about anachronisms in the Book of Mormon?” “Does language from Isaiah belong in the Book of Mormon?” “Does the Book of Mormon depend on the New Testament?” and “Where did the events of the Book of Mormon take place?” (84).

Chapter 5, “New Directions,” looks “at the new questions and methods that have arisen in the twenty-first century, largely positioned beyond the questions and concerns of twentieth-century Book of Mormon studies” (109). Some of these new questions and methods include identity, politics, and meaning.

The conclusion provides a nice summary of the book and invites readers to engage in Book of Mormon studies. The authors recognize that the field has changed over the years and will continue to change. With all that is intellectually stimulating, the authors remind

their readers to not lose sight of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon itself—its “spiritual truth,” its “historical truth,” and its theological truth (128–29).

One of the most useful, and possibly enduring, aspects of this book is found in the appendix. As described in the book, “the purpose of this appendix is to serve as a guide to books, articles, and institutions relevant to students of the Book of Mormon” (131). The appendix has five sections that may interest readers and will certainly provide many with a list of books and articles for future reading. The sections are: “getting started,” “getting serious,” “getting specialized,” “getting around,” and “other sources we’ve cited along the way” (131–32). The first four parts are for those interested in progressively getting deeper into the scholarship of Book of Mormon studies. The last part is a traditional bibliography of sources that were not included in the previous four.

Each chapter of this relatively brief book (182 pages) is written in an engaging and conversational tone. Whether you are new, have been away for a little while, or are a veteran of the field of Book of Mormon studies, this book provides precisely what the title promises: “an introduction and guide.”

—Matthew B. Christensen

*Utahisms: Unique Expressions, Inventions, Place Names, and More*, by David Ellingson Eddington (Charleston, S.C.: The History Press, 2022).

This slim volume by Brigham Young University linguistics professor David Eddington should interest anyone who grew up in Utah, lived in Utah, or is curious about the linguistic, geographic, and historical curiosities of the Beehive

State. The book offers numerous surprises and debunks several common misconceptions about the origins of Utah names, places, inventions, and novelties.

Chapter 1 tackles “Utah Critters,” from the minuscule (potato bugs and water skeeters) to the massive (Pando). Chapter 2 explores Utah vocabulary and expressions, from Latter-day Saint terms such as Mutual and Primary to funeral potatoes, flipper crotches (or crutches), and “for cute” (which comes from Norwegian). Chapter 3 examines Utah pronunciation, including fish in the crick, American Fark, and Utah’s moun’uns. Eddington shows that many of these supposedly unique Utah pronunciations are actually predictable vowel shifts that turn up in other parts of the United States. Chapter 4 delves into the origins and pronunciation of Utah place names, including Duchesne, Hooper, Hurricane, Levan, Mantua, Timpanogos, and Tooele. The fifth and final chapter corrals a variety of “Other Utah Stuff.” Did you know, for instance, that the Frisbee (originally the Pluto Platter) was invented by Walter Frederick Morrison of Roosevelt, Utah, or that the traffic light was invented by Salt Lake police detective Lester Wire, or that the machine that resurfaces ice rinks was invented in California by Eureka, Utah, native Frank Zamboni?

At a mere ninety-one pages, plus notes and bibliography, *Utahisms* is a quick and entertaining read about some of the unique aspects of the state settled by the Latter-day Saints. Not surprisingly, many of the expressions and pronunciations have a connection to pioneer immigrants who uprooted from Europe and the eastern U.S. and settled in Utah.

—Roger Terry