

Book of Job

- I. Overview and historical context
- II. Structure
- III. Poet of Job
- IV. What kind of book is this?
 - a. wisdom literature
 - b. existentialist narrative
 - c. tragedy
 - d. drama
 - e. theodicy

Structure of the Book of Job

Prologue [Prose]

--along with the epilogue, considered the remains of a folktale.

Shift to poetry

(3) Job's Complaint

Begin first cycle of speeches

(4-5) Eliphaz

- (6) Job's response
- (8) Bildad
- (9) Job's response
- (11) Zophar
- (12) Job's response

Begin second cycle of speeches

- (15) Eliphaz
- (16) Job's response
- (18) Bildad
- (19) Job's response
- (20) Zophar
- (21) Job's response

Begin third cycle of speeches

- (22) Eliphaz
- (23) Job's response
- (25) Bildad
- (26-32) Job's response

Elihu's speeches---probably added later, by a different poet
(32-37)—Elihu admonishes Job and the others

God's Answer
(38-41)—God speaks to Job

Job Responds
(42) —short chapter--

Shift to prose

Epilogue—[Prose]

The Book of Job

Dramatic Structure

Characters:

God
Satan
Job
Eliphaz
Bildad
Zophar
Elihu

Setting: Prose sections—Land of Uz—Job's household

Poetry sections—Ash heap

Act I, Scene 1 Prologue—Court of Heaven
Scene 2 Job's Soliloquy

Act II 1st cycle of speeches

Act III 2nd cycle of speeches

Act IV 3rd cycle of speeches and Elihu

Act V Job's big speech
God's speech
Job repents

Act VI Epilogue

And the drama tells three stories, about:

First—God and Satan and the challenge—echos here of the Homeric gods.

Second—the nature of justice—so many references to courts, witness, scales of justice, speech as integrity, truth

Third—the relationship between God and human beings (what is the human condition?)

Existentialism:

The existentialist assumes that existence precedes essence, that the significant fact is that we and things in general exist, but that these things have no meaning for us except as we can create meaning through acting upon them. Sarte claims that the fundamental truth of existentialism is in Descartes' formula, "I think, therefore, I exist."

The existentialist's point of departure is human beings' immediate awareness of their situation. A part of this is a sense of meaninglessness in the outer world; this meaninglessness produces in them a discomfort, an anxiety, a loneliness in the face of human limitations and a desire to invest experience with meaning."

From A Handbook to Literature

Job's Choices

When everything is taken from him, and covered with running sores he sits on the ash heap, he has three choices—

He can

- 1) follow his wife's advice—"Curse God and die."
- 2) Accept his fate as deserved and come to terms with it—his friends' advice.
- 3) Strike back in some way—state his case and take it where he can. For him, the only way he can strike back is with words.

Theodicy

An attempt to justify the ways of God to man.

Tragedy—

Refers to a body of work recounting the fall of persons of high degree. In poetry and fiction, especially the novel, it refers to the effort of the work to exemplify what has been called “the tragic sense of life”; that is, the sense that human beings are inevitably doomed, through their own failures or errors or even the action of their virtues, or through the nature of fate, destiny, or the human condition to suffer, fail, and die, and that the measure of a person’s life is to be taken by how he or she faces that inevitable failure.

A Handbook to Literature

Work and the Human Condition *Translations*

Part I

In your group, read the chapter from the Bible aloud. Then, read the chapter from Rosenberg’s *Job Speaks: a Poet’s Bible*.

You should all take notes, but appoint a note-taker who can report out at the end of the workshop.

Choose at least 7 images/metaphors from the biblical *Job*.

- What does each image evoke, connote?
- How is each related to the others?
- What does it convey about Job’s character?
- About the questions he asks?

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- What does each image evoke, connote?
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Look at the images you’ve chosen from each text and make a quick chart that shows their relationship.

How are they connected? If you have pairs, how are the images similar/ how different?

How does that change your reading of the texts?

Part II

- Go back and read the first 10 stanzas from Rosenberg, and the first ten verses from the Bible's *Job*.
- What can you say about the way the poetry in Rosenberg sounds? Notice the rhythm of sentences and phrases. Does it move quickly, slowly, evenly, abruptly? How does that affect the way you make meaning from it?
- What can you say about the way the poetry in the Book of Job sounds? Notice the rhythm of sentences and phrases. Does it move quickly, slowly, evenly, abruptly? Again, how does that affect the way you make meaning from it?
- Describe the differences between the two texts—and the similarities.
- What does the biblical chapter mean? Does that meaning change in Rosenberg's translation? Is there a shift in emphasis or tone? How does that change the meaning—if it does?
- Does reading Rosenberg shape your understanding of the biblical text? Does reading the biblical version shape your understanding of Rosenberg?

Together-- We'll start by hearing from at least one group's analysis of each of the chapters. Then, some reactions from other groups who worked on it—and from the rest.

Chapter 3

Chapter 12

Chapter 16

Chapters 26-27

