

A Template for Exploring the Worlds of Scripture Texts

The World Behind the Text

WHO authored/edited/translated this text? Is there more than one author? Is it the work of an individual, or a community? Is it possible to establish authorship at all?

WHAT cultural contexts are present and affect an understanding of the text- e.g. the Land; values, customs, beliefs, reference to festivals or heroes; status of individuals; demography; social hierarchy and relationships between characters and peoples; purity codes; moral codes; understanding of God; relationship with other cultures/peoples?

WHEN was this text first compiled? Where is it on the timeline of Revelation History? What is happening at this time in history to the community for which it was written? Is the text about what is happening now, or is it referring to the past or the future?

WHERE does this text originate? Does it have features (images, format, events) similar to the texts of other cultures/belief systems? Does it refer to characters/events/beliefs from a previous time or place?

HOW has this text been communicated across time: is there an oral tradition evident? When was it first put into written form? In what language was it first set down? Do these things affect the meaning of the text-for its original audience, audiences since, audiences now?

WHY was this text written, or important enough to be kept across time? What message did it have for its original and subsequent audiences? Why was it written in the way it was?

The World of the Text

Code Breaker: Are there key words or phrases which need further exploration? Are there subtleties or nuances of language (original or English translation) which need to be considered? Do Biblical Commentaries identify key words?

Meaning Maker: Can the original language in which the text was written help with meaning? Do other English translations give a clue to this? Can concordances and online homilies on the text help?

Text Analyst: What sort of text type is this? How does it affect meaning? Does it give a clue as to the perspective one should take on the text in terms of interpreting it? of Biblical Criticism best help elicit meaning from this text? What text types and text features can I identify in this text? What meaning can I make from text features such as characterisation, sequence of events, imagery, metaphor, simile, repetition, contrast, symbol, vocabulary, voice, treatment of sources, repetition, grammar and/or style? What meaning can I make from text types such as narrative, parable, proverb, miracle story, psalm, wise saying, mythological story and/or artistic representation?

Text User: Why has the author chosen this style or form of writing to convey his message? How does this impact on how we interpret the text and its message? What are my options for interpreting it?

The World in Front of the Text

WHO might be an audience for this text to today? Is it possible that this text will be challenged, re-evaluated or even re-written by modern readers because of their gender, race, or life experience, including their experiences with religion or religious groups?

WHAT does the modern reader bring to this text that might affect its interpretation? What is happening in the world that means the reader can bring a different attitude or interpretation than in the past? Is it possible that some modern audiences might bring to this text interpretations not intended by the author? What in this text is open to challenge or questioning by a modern reader?

WHEN might this text be used in a modern context? E.g. in liturgy; for personal spiritual reflection (Lectio) to inspire action for justice; to reassure; to console; to challenge the status quo; to invite to belief. When might it be acceptable to re-write this text for modern audiences?

HOW might this text be made relevant by different modern audiences - e.g. use of translation/s? Substitute alternate images/metaphors? Knowledge of background or contexts? Two thousand years of reflection on continuity and change in society and belief - e.g. about God/Jesus/ the purpose of life? How might it be dangerous to rely too much on the experience of the reader in deciding the importance of this text?

WHERE can information be found in order to interpret this text for modern audiences? Can a line be drawn between appropriate and inappropriate modern interpretations of the text?

WHY is this text still relevant, or not relevant to a modern reader? Why does the experience of the reader add to the richness of interpretation?

The Text
Old Testament
or
New Testament

The World Behind the Text

Fill in the spaces. It may be beneficial to use hyperlinks for things like maps and timelines.

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WHY was this text written, or important enough to be kept across time? What message did it have for its original and subsequent audiences? Why was it written in the way it was?

Links to further reading on this text:

Now create a single statement out of these answers and paste it into the blank Template.

The World of the Text

Complete the sections below. A Biblical Commentary and Biblical Lexicons will be of help here.

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Meaning Maker: Can the original language in which the text was written help with meaning? Do other English translations give a clue to this? Can concordances and online homilies on the text help?

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Text User: Why might have the author/s chosen this style or form of writing to convey the message? How does this impact on how we interpret the text and its message? What are our options for interpreting it?

Now create a single statement out of these answers and paste it into the blank Template.

Resources and References for this Text

Record here texts, websites and links which help in the interpretation of this text

The World Behind the Text:

The World of the Text:

The World in Front of the Text

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