

Veronica Torgerson
 Bel and the Dragon
 Written Assignment #1

First Impressions	
1 st Impressions?	<p>I know the biblical story of Daniel so at first this just seems like the story of Daniel being thrown into the lion's den but just with more backstory and detail.</p> <p>Right out of the gate, we see the story set up as the Babylonians who worship Bel against Daniel who worships his own God and may wonder who is going to come out on top.</p>
Kind of document? Clues?	This story is narrative telling us about a historical event with most of the story being told through dialogue but some pieces being added in by the narrator.
Looking More Closely	
Any unusual words, phrases, or concepts?	<p>"A great dragon" in vs 23...maybe a lizard of some sort?</p> <p>It sounds odd that the angel of the Lord carried Habakkuk by the hair and crown of his head. No explanation seems to be given for this.</p>
Date included? Date inferred from clues?	No exact date is given but the document does say that story takes place when King Astyages was laid to rest and Cyrus the Persian "succeeded to his kingdom."
Location indicated? Location inferred from clues?	The story takes place in King Cyrus' court, the temple of Bel, and a lion's den somewhere within the Babylonian kingdom.
Author? Clues to authorship?	This is an apocryphal addition to the book of Daniel which, I believe, means that it is attributed to Daniel.
Recipients? Clues to the audience?	Not made clear in the story but because of the emphasis on God's faithful character to those who love him at the end of the story I would guess that the audience is meant to be Jews who need encouragement.
Purpose? What made you think this (clues)?	To encourage the Jewish community who felt forgotten by God and that their needs weren't seen as they suffered under the oppression of the Persians. There is no direct reference to certain recipients or a particular purpose but when you see the author's emphasis on God's character as the end of the story this seems like a likely guess.
Thinking Further	

<p>What is the most important piece of info from the writer's perspective?</p>	<p>God provides for and protects His faithful people from the judgement and destruction of the wicked. In verse 38, Daniel praises God for remembering him and not forsaking those who love him. This seems like a particularly important message for second temple Jews who may feel as if God has forgotten them as they suffer under the evil people and kingdoms of the world.</p> <p>Daniel also emphasizes that God will be glorified as the only true God in vs 41 when King Cyrus praises "the God of Daniel." This piece is sort of foreshadowed in verse 5 when Daniel proclaims God to be the living God over all creatures.</p>
<p>What is the tone of the document?</p>	<p>Even though there is a lot of death and threat of death, the story seems upbeat. Lines like "Daniel laughed" (vs 7 and 19) makes it feel as if Daniel has complete confidence in God to work His will and spare him so the story isn't told with fear or doom.</p>
<p>What is the writer's point of view? Objective or biased?</p>	<p>Daniel is Jewish and a decently wealthy and powerful one as he is a "companion of the king and the most honored of all his friends" (vs 2). Later in the story we also see that he had his own servants. But, even more than that, I would say his main point of view seems to be as someone who trusts God and does not fear what man can do to him.</p>
<p>Attitude toward Israel's God? Attitude toward the nations' gods?</p>	<p>Israel's God is the only true God! Other 'gods,' such as Bel, are things crafted by human hands with no power or created creatures with no power, like the dragon.</p>
<p>Attitude toward other Jews?</p>	<p>This doesn't really seem to come out in any part of the story except that we see Habakkuk's care for reapers (fellow Jews, I assume?) and for Daniel.</p>
<p>Attitude toward non-Jews or those ruling the Jews?</p>	<p>Daniel is considered a companion of the King (non-Jew) and you can tell that both Daniel and the King seem to care for one another to some extent. But also, Daniel did not hesitate to see the priests of Bel and their families killed for lying to the king or those who threw him in the lion's den to be eaten by the lions themselves. Seems that the attitude toward non-Jews depends most of if they worship the Jewish God or not (which most don't).</p>
<p>Views of Torah?</p>	<p>This isn't covered in this story but we do see an unwavering faithfulness in Daniel not to worship any other gods besides the God of Israel which is commanded in the Torah.</p>
<p>Views of Jewish customs or institutions?</p>	<p>Nothing is said of Jewish custom except that Daniel "worshiped God" (vs 4) and Habakkuk brought stew and bread to the field for the reapers (vs 33).</p>

Attitude toward morality or natural law?	This isn't covered in this story.
Does the document remind you of any biblical event, character, or book?	<p>Of course, this reminds me of Daniel 6 as it is likely telling the same story with different/more backstory. Similarly, the reference to Habakkuk reminds us of the book the prophet Habakkuk wrote about the evil days he lived in.</p> <p>Verse 5 has an echo of Acts 17:25 "And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else."</p> <p>How Daniel proves Bel and the dragon to be false gods reminds me of the story of Elijah and the false priests of Baal when Elijah calls fire down from heaven to ignite a wet alter and the priests of Baal are unable to call down fire.</p> <p>In John 1, when Jesus calls Nathaniel he says, "Here is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit" like King Cyrus praises Bel in verse 18. Maybe this is a common phrase in this period?</p>

Summary Statement: How does this document give insight into the beliefs and concerns of Jews for the historical period being investigated? How does it add to what the textbooks say about the period?

The textbooks point us to a community of Jews who are suffering under the domination of the Babylonians and spread out and exiled from their homeland. In this suffering, the Jews are wondering where God is and if He still cares for them and is faithful to them. Daniel's story is a picture of a faithful Jews who worships God even under the pressure of friendship and kingly power to worship false gods. Daniel's story reminds the Jews that their God is the true God as they wrestle with possible temptation to give in and worship the gods of those who rule over them. His story shows them that all the false gods will be shown to be nothing more than artistic crafts or earthly creatures but their God is the real God who will provide for their needs, see their suffering and protect them, and, most of all, remain faithful to them! The God of Israel will be exalted and even non-Jews (like King Cyrus) will come to see Him for who He is and worship Him!