

Compar-a-thon Guideline (COS 421)

Welcome to the “Compar-a-thon” instructions! There are various biblical manuscripts and traditions of the same content, e.g., Masoretic Text (Hebrew), Septuagint (Greek/LXX), Dead Sea Scrolls (Qumran), Aramaic (Targum), and many more. Reading a biblical text in comparison with these divergent manuscripts can enrich and deepen our theological perspectives as well as enhance our interpretive insights and appreciation on the texts.

This assignment is intended to help you make a close reading of the biblical story, by way of “authentically and carefully” comparing the two in order to better analyze and appreciate the literary plots and themes. Read the ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS of **both** (1) the book of Esther (Hebrew Bible version) **and** (2) the book of Esther (Greek/LXX Additions version). The Hebrew version can be found easily in the OT. The Greek “Additions” version is available in the *Apocrypha*: be sure to check if your Bible has the *Apocrypha* section, normally placed in the volumes between the OT and NT. (Recommended: NRSV, NASB, but not *The Message*).

The task needs to be “authentic” in that you should not consult any other resources, such as commentaries or study Bibles, except the very biblical texts. This is crucial for your learning process and purpose through engaging in the texts for fresh and new insights. Commentaries can be significantly helpful. But one needs to read, study, and interpret the biblical text authentically afresh, and then—only afterwards—should one go to commentaries to dialogue with those commentators. Our task focuses strictly on this first step, i.e., prior to consulting commentaries.

Also, this task needs to utilize a “careful” comparison. Read carefully, critically, and creatively. Read as if you’ve never read these texts/stories before. Read the whole story in a continuous connection (i.e., ideally do not read bits and pieces in isolation). Pay attention to the flow of the plot in the preceding and following literary contexts quite important. Pay attention to the key characters, plot shifts, literary gaps, additions, omissions, rearrangements, and the like. In your reading, you might find it helpful to do COLOR-CODING with which you build your own color/highlighting system and mark key words/phrases accordingly. Feel free to jot down any key characters, scenes/episodes, or themes you come across in your authentic reading. (Optionally, but not for this task, you may feel free to consult/compare further pertinent texts, such as Judith.)

Now, make a column that looks like the example below. **Make a NOTEBOOK** (a bit like a journal, typed, single-spaced) of carefully observed comparison/contrast between Hebrew and Greek versions. **On the left column**, state the observations, mostly key differences, as succinctly and precisely possible; **on the right column**, explore/expound your insights as to comparison, themes, and implications of those differences. Do not try to be too exhaustive—i.e., do not make a book of 50 pages. Please remember: *quality than quantity* (e.g., quantity: both versions are stories about Esther; Hebrew version is shorter than Greek version—this kind of observation not recommended). A total of **ten** major/key “observations” would be sufficient enough (e.g., suggested amount = **approximately 10 differences**). The key is this: Read the biblical texts closely! Compare analytically! *Have fun!*

You might want to make a table or chart, something like the following example:

Details observed (= but more of ≠)	Insights on those observations
1. HB 2:20, Esther is seen to obey Mordecai in her upbringing; Gk 2:20, Esther was taught “to fear God and keep his laws.”	In the HB version, God is only implicitly assumed; in the Gk, characters’ relation with God is explicitly stated.