CLASSICS LIBRARY · STORY MAP

# Confessions

**Jean-Jacques Rousseau** · *1782–1789 · Public-domain English translation (translator not named in the catalogue)*

I have entered upon a performance which is without example, whose accomplishment will have no imitator. He means to present a man in all the integrity of nature, and that man shall be himself. This is a public-domain English of the Confessions (1782–1789), Project Gutenberg #3913; the catalogue does not name the translator. Adult/Advanced. Quote the opening books; later books require adult discretion. No prurience on the map.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

## How should a school treat Rousseau's opening claim—that he will present himself, without example, before the sovereign judge—without following him into later pages that require adult discretion?

*"I have entered upon a performance which is without example, whose accomplishment will have no imitator. I mean"*

Book I, opening

The book opens with a claim that has no precedent and will have no imitator: he will present a man in the integrity of nature, and that man shall be himself. When the last trumpet sounds, he will stand before the sovereign judge with this book in his hand. The hosted English does not name a translator in the catalogue; do not invent one. Teach the opening as he wrote it. The work is Adult/Advanced. Later books require adult discretion; do not put prurience on a school map, and do not assign those later books as if they were the opening.

KEY CHARACTERS

**Jean-Jacques Rousseau**
*The writer of the Confessions, who opens by promising to present himself, without example, before the sovereign judge*

**His father, the watchmaker**
*Whose moderate share, divided among fifteen children, left the watchmaker's craft as his dependence*

**The sovereign judge**
*Before whom, when the last trumpet sounds, he says he will stand with this book in his hand*

HOW TO READ THE OPENING IN A SCHOOL

> *"I have entered upon a performance which is without example, whose accomplishment will have no imitator. I mean"*
>
> Book I, opening

> *"Whenever the last trumpet shall sound, I will present myself before the sovereign judge with this book in my hand, and loudly proclaim, thus have I acted; these"*
>
> Book I, opening

Grades Adult/Advanced
Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01

### A Performance Without Example

BOOK I, OPENING

*He has entered upon a performance which is without example, whose accomplishment will have no imitator. The first sentence is a claim about the book itself.*

- Keep this exact English. Do not substitute a later, more familiar wording.
- The translator is not named in the catalogue; do not invent a name.
- Adult/Advanced.
- Quote the opening, not only a later summary.

> *"I have entered upon a performance which is without example, whose accomplishment will have no imitator. I mean"*
>
> Book I, opening

02

### This Man Shall Be Myself

BOOK I, OPENING

*He means to present his fellow-mortals with a man in all the integrity of nature; and this man shall be himself. The subject is not a type; it is one life, named.*

- Integrity here is his word; teach it as a claim, then test it.
- The later books are not this sentence.
- No prurience on the map.
- Adult/Advanced.

> *"I mean to present my fellow-mortals with a man in all the integrity of nature; and this man shall be myself. I"*
>
> Book I, opening

03

### Before the Sovereign Judge

BOOK I, OPENING

*Whenever the last trumpet shall sound, he will present himself before the sovereign judge with this book in his hand, and proclaim: thus have I acted; these were my thoughts; such was I.*

- The opening is framed before God, not only before a later public.
- Keep "sovereign judge" and "this book in my hand."
- The claim is costly; do not soften it into a pose only.
- Adult/Advanced.

> *"Whenever the last trumpet shall sound, I will present myself before the sovereign judge with this book in my hand, and loudly proclaim, thus have I acted; these"*
>
> Book I, opening

04

### A Watchmaker's House

BOOK I

*His father's share of a moderate competency was divided among fifteen children; the business of a watchmaker was his only dependence. The Confessions begin in a household, not only in a preface.*

- Book I includes the Geneva childhood. Teach that before later wanderings.
- Keep the watchmaker and the fifteen children.
- Later books require adult discretion; stay with the opening when you assign this map.
- Not a later film.

> *"My father's share of a moderate competency, which was divided among fifteen children, being very trivial, his business of a watchmaker (in"*
>
> Book I

05

### The Hosted English, and Discretion

THE EDITION

*Project Gutenberg #3913 is a public-domain English of the Confessions. An Aldus Society printing stands in the file; the catalogue does not name the translator. Do not invent one. Quote Rousseau's opening, not only an editor's note. Adult/Advanced: later books require adult discretion; no prurience on the map.*

- Do not name a translator the catalogue does not give.
- Assign the opening with care; do not treat later books as the whole school text.
- Keep the first sentences exact.
- Brand: a life before the sovereign judge, not a slogan about "being human."

> *"I have entered upon a performance which is without example, whose accomplishment will have no imitator. I mean"*
>
> Book I, opening

A life presented without example | Integrity claimed, and tested | Before the sovereign judge | A watchmaker's house | Adult discretion in later books

## What to watch for as you read

GRADES ADULT/ADVANCED

1. Keep this file's opening English; do not swap in a later, more familiar wording of the first sentence.
2. The catalogue does not name the translator; do not invent one.
3. Adult/Advanced. Later books require adult discretion; no prurience on the map.
4. The opening is framed before the sovereign judge, with the book in his hand.

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