



Miniature

An independent illustration, as opposed to a scene incorporated into another element of the decorative scheme such as a border or initial. It takes its name from the Latin *miniare*, meaning "to color with red" (the adornment of books originally was executed in red, or *minium*.)

Decorated Letters

An enlarged and decorated letter introducing an important section of a text. Initials can have different levels of significance, according to the division of the text or their place within a program of decoration. **Initials:** *Historiated initial* is a letter containing an identifiable scene or figures sometimes related to the text. *Inhabited initial* is an enlarged letter at the beginning of a chapter, paragraph, or important section of a text that contains human or animal figures but not an identifiable narrative scene.

Margins can be historiated and inhabited.

Marginalia/Border

Decorative elements, surrounding a page, were popular in Gothic and Renaissance illumination and evolved during the 13th century from the extenders that sprang from decorated letters. A border surrounds text and/or image and may occupy margins. Some borders are in paneled form, others are composed of foliate decorations or bars, the latter often sprouting plant forms and known as foliate bar borders.

Rubrics (not shown)

A title, chapter heading, or instruction that is not strictly part of the text but which helps to identify its components. Red ink was often used to distinguish such elements, hence the term, which derives from the Latin for red, *rubrica*.

Gloss (not shown)

A word or words commenting on, elucidating, or translating those of the main text. Glosses were often written in the margins or between the lines.

Explicit (not shown)

The closing of a textual unit, from the Latin *explicitus*, meaning "unrolled. When cataloguing manuscripts, the INCIPIT and explicit of a text are often cited to aid textual identification.

Before the invention of the moveable type printing press, books were made entirely by hand. A book made by hand is called a **manuscript** and is derived from the Latin words *manus*, meaning hand and *scritus*, meaning to write.

In Europe, after the fall of the Roman Empire, Christianity began to spread. Scrolls and tables containing ancient literature were copied for churches and royalty in the form of a **codex**, or a folded bound manuscript. For more than a thousand years copying texts in a monastery **scriptorium** was virtually the monopoly of monks. During the Renaissance, schools, universities and the educated middle class created a demand for more books and the tasks of copying texts moved from the monastery to trained specialists. They created exquisite manuscripts with leaves, or pages, embellished with colorful *miniature illustrations* and *illuminated with gold*.

Scriptorium (pl. scriptoria)

A writing room. The term is generally used of the place in a monastery or church where books are made.

Text or script shown on this manuscript is 15th century French gothic style calligraphy.

Illuminated Manuscripts

Who? What? Why? Where? How?

Who Made Medieval Manuscripts?

Medieval manuscripts were made between the late Roman Empire to the high Renaissance in every part of Europe, and in conditions as varied as it is possible to imagine from hermit's cells in the mountains to sophisticated commercial production lines in large cities.

Each scribe or illuminator wrote or painted in the style of his time.

Medieval monks did not make all the illuminated manuscripts. As Christianity advanced across pagan Europe in the Dark Ages, it brought with it the Middle Eastern skills of reading and writing.

The Rule of Saint Benedict encouraged monks and nuns in the use of books, and monasteries and religious communities needed libraries. Teaching children to read was one of the parochial duties of the Church. Perhaps most manuscripts before the 12th century were probably made by monasteries where monks sat in cloisters copying and studying texts. By the 15th century, a layman would go to a book shop or stationer and commission one unless he'd settle for a second-hand copy.

How Long Did It Take to Make a Manuscript?

Monks had other chores and commitments and there is evidence of monastic manuscript-making projects extending over years because it was a part-time occupation. On the other hand, a professional scribe working for a commercial book shop in the 15th century was paid by the job and not by the hour. His work may have been completed in a matter of days.

All medieval manuscripts were written on parchment. Paper was a Chinese invention probably of the 2nd century, and during the 8th century, the process was passed on to Muslims by captured Chinese. By the 13th century, the Muslims established paper mills in Spain, and this manufacturing technique was passed to Italy, and in France by 1340, Germany by 1390, and in England in the later part of the 15th century. It was the invention of the movable type printing press in the 1450s which transformed the need for paper and replaced parchment.

Pens

Metal-gall ink (usually iron gall), or oxide was made by mixing a solution of tannic acids with ferrous sulfate (coppers) mixed with gum Arabic used as a thickener. The principal ingredient was the oak apple which grows on the leaves and twigs of oak trees. Because of the tannic acid and ferrous sulfate, the ink was actually etched into the parchment.

Sequence of Making a Medieval Manuscript

- Pumice was rubbed over the parchment to give it a really clean, grease-free surface.
- A rough design was sketched out and outlines completed in ink.
- Blank spaces left for decoration and ornament, miniatures, or initials.
- Gold leaf added and burnished
- Scribes copied text.
- Decorations and Illustrations were added subsequent to the writing of the text. Pattern books and exemplars used for decoration ideas.
- Book was bound.