

Leaves of Gold Slide Show: Teacher Packet
Slide Script -- Discussion Questions and Additional Information

This text supports the eight slides selected from the manuscripts in the *Leaves of Gold* exhibition to illustrate the parts and types of medieval manuscripts and what they can tell us about medieval life. The first slide is intended to introduce the viewer to the parts of a medieval manuscript and will probably require the longest amount of class time.

Additional information and examples from the exhibition can be found at the project's website: <http://www.leavesofgold.org/>

Slide 1

Nativity. Book of Hours by the Master of the Collins Hours, c. 1445-50. Bruges (?), Belgium. Philadelphia Museum of Art.

These pages contain all the main decorative elements of an illuminated manuscript. They are:

- Miniature painting
- Decorated margins
- Decorated initials
- Calligraphy
- Gold Leaf

Discussion Questions.

1. Find the five decorative elements on the two pages.
2. Ask students to describe each person in the painting.
3. What are the people doing?
4. Can you find a musical instrument? *Hint: Look at the man sitting in the margin on the bottom right side of the Nativity scene.*
5. Are there animals? What kind? *An ox and a donkey.*
6. In what kind of buildings are the animals standing? *A stable.*
7. What is the baby lying on? *A saddle [looks different from a modern saddle]*
8. Describe the buildings on the hills in the background. *Castles.*
9. What is the season? Spring? Summer? Fall? Winter? How can you tell? *It looks like summer because the grass and the trees are green. Though Jesus was born on December 25, a winter day, the Holy Land is warm all year long.*
10. What things did the artist use to decorate the page? *He used colors, plants and flowers, designs on the letters and at the end of the sentences and paragraphs, red letters and fancy writing.*
11. Where is the gold on the pages? *There is gold around Mary's head (halo), rays of gold (light) from the sky, the frame around the miniature and the large decorated letters are also illuminated with gold.*
12. How did the artist make the two pages complement each other?

This page is from a **Book of Hours**, the main prayer book used in medieval Europe. Books of Hours were divided into eight sections, or hours that were meant to be read at specific times of day.

During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, every member of the middle and upper classes would have wanted to own an illuminated Book of Hours. These treasured books were given as gifts on special occasions, such as weddings, and they often appeared in medieval wills, testifying to their value and importance. A Book of Hours was often the first and only book an individual owned in his or her lifetime.

This small manuscript is written in Latin using gothic bookhand script. It was painted by an artist named after this manuscript: the Master of the Collins Hours. The pages are from the Hours of the Virgin, which traditionally is illustrated with a Nativity scene. In this Nativity, the stable frames the main figures who are all in reverence of the baby Jesus. All of the figures in the margins are also paying respect as if they, too, were present at the event. The artist painted Mary in a traditional blue robe and illuminated a gold halo around her head and the rays shining from the sky. Yet he took artistic liberties in this scene by placing the figures in an architectural setting that was familiar to him during his lifetime. He chose to pay close attention to details such as the handmaiden's candle, the saddle serving as Christ's pillow and the costumes of the figures in the miniatures and in the margins.

Slide 2

King David and Fool. Genealogy of Jesus. Leaf from Bible du XIIIe Siecle, by the workshop of the Master of the Echevinage de Rouen, c. 1465-75. Rouen, France. Free Library of Philadelphia, Rare Book Department.

Discussion Questions

1. Describe the costumes of each person in this picture.
2. Who do you think these people might be? (farmers? warriors? royalty?)
3. Describe the room and furnishings.
4. What kind of place do you think this is? (farm? palace? temple?)

This is a page from a Bible. The word "Bible" is derived from the Greek word *biblia*, meaning "books." The earliest sacred Judeo-Christian writings were set down separately, at different times, on scrolls of papyrus or vellum. When these independent elements were bound together, they were called "Bibles."

Bibles of two different types are displayed in the *Leaves of Gold* exhibition. Large versions intended for communal reading are sumptuous manuscripts written in beautifully decorated and embellished calligraphy. Smaller ones for personal use and study by priests, monks, scholars, and students were less elaborate.

The miniature shows a fool before King David, who is enthroned and surrounded by courtiers. This is the standard illustration for Psalm 52, which begins "The fool said in his heart: there is no God." The fool wears a pointed yellow hood and hose and tight fitting blue jacket and carries a stick with an image of the fool, the symbol of his profession.

David (died 962 BCE) was king of Judah and Israel and founded the Jewish royal dynasty at Jerusalem. He is said to be an ancestor of Jesus of Nazareth. This page comes from a section of the Bible that is dedicated to the family lineage of Jesus.

The figures surrounding King David are dressed in elegant mid-15th century French garments. They are surrounded by a lavish interior of tiled floors, leaded glass windows, and a gilded throne covered with silk brocade. King David rests his feet on a plush embroidered and jeweled pillow and a silk and gold brocade tapestry is hung in the background. Beyond the pink wall of the courtyard is a refined and cultivated landscape. In the blue sky above, God surrounded by a golden halo watches from Heaven. His right hand is raised in a gesture of blessing and rays of golden light shine on the group below. All this in a painting not more than five (5) inches high!

Slide 3

Scenes from the Life of King David. Gallican Psalter with Canticles, by Nikolaus Bertschi, c. 1520. Augsburg, German. Library Company of Philadelphia.

Discussion Questions

1. Compare this page to the previous page. What is different? What is similar? *The writing and the spaces are bigger. The text is in the center of the page instead of the miniature painting. There are red letters in the margins. Red letters are called rubrics and derive from the Latin word rubrica, meaning red. Rubrics are used as titles, chapter headings, or instructions.*
2. What part of this page shows the main scenes? *The margins.*
3. How is the capital B decorated? *There is a picture of a person in the letter.*

This is an opening page from a Psalter, (pronounced saul-ter), or a book of psalms, that was made around 1520. This Psalter contains events from the life of David, the Old Testament king. King David is considered the author of most of the 150 psalms. This page begins with Psalm 1 and is illustrated with images. Can you find:

- David playing a musical instrument? *Inside the initial B. The initial B is called a historiated initial, a letter containing an identifiable person. The margins are also historiated.*
- David as a boy before the giant Goliath? *In the upper margin.*
- The death of David's son Absalom? Absalom met his death in battle against his father's troops, when his long hair was cut in the branches of a tree. *In the lower margin.*

The psalms (derived from the Greek word *psalmos*, meaning song) are short lyrical passages. In the Middle Ages, psalms were sung and recited by all members of society. Children learned to read from Psalters because they were written in Latin and easy to understand and they provided prayers that they might call upon throughout their lives.

Slide 4

Historiated Initial M with Christ and the Apostles. Leaf from a Gradual by the Master of the Morgan Biblia Pauperum, c. 1435. Regensburg, Germany. Free Library of Philadelphia, Rare Book Department.

Discussion Questions

1. Compare the script on this page to the writing you have seen so far. What is similar? What is different?
2. Now compare the margin designs. What is similar? What is different?
3. Which do you like best? Why?
4. Compare this music sheet to one made more recently. What is similar? What is different?

This beautiful leaf is from a liturgical manuscript called a gradual. Liturgical manuscripts are Books of Common Prayer in the Christian Church and the gradual is the sung response to the readings during religious services. It is the principal music book used by the choir and contains singing responses, hymns, and chants. Often elaborately decorated and ornamented, these choir books were usually quite large so that a number of people could sing from them at the same time. To have all the music necessary for an entire liturgical year, many volumes of musical texts were needed.

This page of music is 20-1/2 inches high and 14-1/4 inches wide and is written in Latin. It is decorated with a historiated initial M containing a miniature of Christ standing among the apostles, including Peter on his right and John on his left. The orb in Christ's left hand refers to his role as Savior of the World. The border decoration of this page is lively and playful with curling vines of acanthus leaves supporting drolleries, or humorous figures, including a wild man playing the lute, two wild men hunting a monkey, and a griffin with very large claws.

Attending church services during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance was a regular event for most people. Priests led worshipers through all the celebrations of the church year and were among the first members of European medieval society to become literate because they used these books every day.

Slide 5

The Author Joins other Laborers in the Castle of Work. Jacques Bruyant, La Voie de Povreté ou de Richesse (Le Livre du Chastel de Labour), by the workshop of the Bedford Master, 1430-40. Paris or possibly Rouen, France. Free library of Philadelphia, Rare Book Department.

Discussion Questions:

1. Look at the miniature painting. What are the people doing? *The people are building a castle and one man, the overseer, stands beside a curfew bell and watches the laborers.*
2. What kinds of tools are they using? *Saws, mallets and levels.*
3. What are the four people in the margins doing? What do you think they represent? *From top to bottom: Sowing seeds, cutting wheat, chopping wood, gathering grapes. They represent activities relevant to each season of the year.*

Both scholars and ordinary people today wonder about daily life in the Middle Ages, especially the way they used science and technology. Important information can be found in illustrated manuscripts like these, even though they aren't about building or farming techniques. Here the people are building a castle and one man, the overseer, stands beside a curfew bell and watches the laborers. The workmen are using a variety of tools, including saws, mallets, and a level. In the margins, from top to bottom, people are sowing seeds, cutting wheat, chopping wood, and gathering grapes. They represent activities for each season of the year.

About the Book

In addition to devotional texts, wealthy men and women owned elaborately decorated books containing works of secular (nonreligious) literature. Often written or translated into French, these manuscripts attest to the rise of lay (average person) readership in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The newly literate public desired instructional, entertaining, and visually appealing books. Literature in the form of moralized histories and romances became very popular. Tradition often dictated what images should accompany the texts of Bibles and Psalters. The artists who executed the miniatures in literary texts had the opportunity to interpret the written words in a freely imaginative and inventive manner.

Le Livre du Chastel de Labour (The Book of the Castle of Work) is an allegorical poem that was written around 1342 by a Parisian cleric named Jacques Bruyant. The story describes the vision of a newlywed man, called the Author, who must choose between the path of honesty and hard work and that of fraud and deceit. The climax of the story occurs in the Castle of Work, where the Author commits himself to a life of truthfulness, humility, and labor. Although eleven manuscripts of this text survive from the fifteenth century, this is the only copy that is illuminated. A miniature that represents characters in remarkably clever ways introduces every chapter of the book. This page introduces chapter 40, "The Castle of Work." Upon entering the Castle, the Author sees hundreds of people at work. He is eager to join them, but first he is warned that he must labor hard and that he will not be allowed to be idle. Agreeing to this, he joins the other workers building the castle.

Slide 6

Inhabited initial H to Exodus. Cutting from a Bible, 1150. Champagne or Burgundy, France. Glencairn Museum, Academy of the New Church, Bryn Athyn, PA.

Discussion Questions:

1. This is a lowercase letter. Can you see which letter it is? *It is an h.*
2. Why is it difficult to see? *Because it is hidden within a lot of intricate decorations.*
3. Look carefully at the decorations. What kind of designs do you see? *The initial h is almost hidden in a trellis of vine scrolls that spiral so hypnotically, you almost overlook the half-length man and stylized beasts entangled within them.*
4. Why would the artist/illuminator decorate this letter so elaborately? *This inhabited initial once opened the Book of Exodus in what was once a large, splendid monastic Bible.*
5. In books made today, how do you know when you've come to a new chapter?
6. In what ways is the style of drawing and painting different than the other images you have seen?

This was the earliest work of art in the *Leaves of Gold* exhibition. It was made around 1150, making it 300 years older than the other pages illustrated in these slides.

Certain types of illuminated manuscripts were very large. The huge size of these books contributed to their destruction. In nineteenth-century Europe, high import taxes, computed by weight, were placed on books. In order to avoid this tax, dealers and collectors frequently cut out the illuminated and decorated pages. When an entire page with miniatures, marginalia, capitals and calligraphy was removed it is referred to as a *leaf*. A *cutting* is usually a miniature painting with no calligraphy. In the case of this cutting, the miniature painting is the inhabited initial h.

Slide 7

Calendar leaf for February (Keeping Warm; Pisces), c. 1500. "Hours of Henry VII," by Jean Bourdichon. Tours, France. Free Library of Philadelphia, Rare Book Department.

Discussion Questions

1. Describe how this man is dressed.
2. Describe the objects and furnishings in the room.
3. Since he is warming himself by the fire, what season do you think it is?
4. Why did the artist paint fish in the sky? (Hint: Do you know the zodiac sign represented by two fish?)
5. How is this calendar page similar to calendars we use today? How is it different?

This calendar page shows a man dressed warmly, with two layers of fur-lined garments and a fur-lined hat with ear flaps. The room is furnished with a trestle table with white tablecloth, chair, a cupboard that was probably used to store the glass, pewter and silver plates, jugs, and knife shown here. Behind the man is a large fireplace.

The calendar scene points to a winter month, and we know this is so because of the two fishes in the sky, representing Pisces, the sign of the Zodiac for February in the middle ages. Like our modern calendars, this one shows events for days of the month. Unlike our calendars, they identify feast days and important religious holidays.

The calendar sections of illuminated manuscripts most often come before the main texts. They identify feast days pertinent to the patron and the region, using different colors to highlight important religious holidays, such as Christmas or the Annunciation (so-called red-letter days). Calendars were often illuminated, the two most popular schemes being the labors (depicting the labors appropriate to each of the months) and the zodiac signs. For example June (Reaping; Gemini), August (Sowing, Virgo).

This calendar page is from the "Book of Hours of Henry VII." The illumination is the work of Jean Bourdichon, official painter to the courts of King Louis XI, Charles VIII, Louis XII, and Francis I. Today, scholars think this book was owned by Louis XII, the King of France, instead of Henry VII, the King of England -- but the old name still sticks. Bourdichon introduced a technique known as the "dramatic close-up," in which he places large figures close to the foreground and cut off by the picture frame.

This miniature, titled *February: Keeping Warm; Pisces*, shows how difficult it was to stay warm and well fed during the winter month of February. It also lists feast days and tells the time by citing the saint or holy event celebrated on that day. The colors of the feast days on the leaf alternate blue and red for decorative reasons. (The red ink has faded badly.) The more important feasts, however, are written in gold.

Slide 8

The Building and the Destruction of Troy, c. 1408-10. Saint Augustine, *La Cité de Dieu* by the Orosious Master and his workshop. Paris, France. Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Discussion Questions:

1. Look carefully at the miniature.
2. What is happening on the left side of the line?
3. What is happening on the right side?
4. What kind of lettering is this? Where can it be seen today?
5. Choose words from the vocabulary list on the next pages that describe some of the decorative elements used to create this page.

This decorated page is from an early fifteenth-century illuminated manuscript. Titled *La Cité de Dieu* (The City of God), the manuscript is a French translation of a book originally written in Latin in 413-26 CE by Augustine, an early Christian bishop and theologian. Imagine how many copies would have been made of this text between the fifth and fifteenth centuries. Augustine's book explained human history as a conflict between the City of God (made up of Christians) and the Earthly City (composed of nonbelievers). The eternally peaceful City of God is presented in vivid contrast to the Earthly City, which is doomed to rise and fall repeatedly -- like Rome.

This page of the manuscript includes Chapter One and part of Chapter Two of Book III. The text is written in formal Gothic script, with a decorative initial beginning each chapter (J for the first chapter and E for the second). Words in red ink (rubrics) mark the end of Chapter One.

This miniature presents almost symmetrical depictions of the rise and fall of the ancient city of Troy, one of the mythological examples Saint Augustine cites to illustrate the fate of the Earthly City. A fine line divides the picture in two, and buildings on each side are labeled "Illion" ("Troy")

Phrases below the city identify what is taking place: on the left, the building of Troy ("l'edification de troie"); on the right, the destruction of Troy ("la destruction de troie"), the city is under attack, crumbling and burning. In the lower right are two warships full of armored knights brandishing shields and weapons. In the upper left a man dressed in red and gold gestures toward two gold statues in a shrine. Text on the base of the shrine identifies the gesturing figure as Laomedon, king of Troy, and the two statues as the mythological gods Apollo and Neptune. According to Saint Augustine, Troy fell because King Laomedon broke a promise he had made to Apollo and Neptune.

Vocabulary words

- calligraphy
- decorated letter
- decorated margins
- gold leaf
- historiated letter
- historiated margins
- illuminated
- inhabited letter
- inhabited margins
- leaves
- manuscript
- miniature
- parchment
- rubrics
- vellum

Glossary: Medieval Manuscript Terms

Antiphonal, Antiphony. The antiphony contains the sung portions of the Divine Office. Such books are often large in format, so that they could be used by a choir, and include decorated and historiated initials, depicting saints and key events of the liturgical year. Hymns are usually contained in a separate volume. Originally, the antiphonal may have included chants to be sung in the Mass, but its use became restricted to the Divine Office during the Carolingian period (when Charlemagne ruled), and the gradual became the principal choir book for the Mass.

Bible. The word "Bible" is derived from the Greek word *biblia*, meaning "books." The earliest sacred Judeo-Christian writings were set down separately, at different times, on scrolls of papyrus or vellum. When these independent elements were bound together, they were called "Bibles."

Book of Hours. The main prayer book used in medieval Europe was divided into eight sections, or *hours* that were meant to be read at specific times of the day. Each section contained prayers, psalms, hymns, and other readings intended to help the reader secure salvation for himself and his departed loved ones.

Breviary. A service book containing the texts necessary for the celebration of the Divine Office. From the 11th century on, the various volumes used during the Divine Office (Psalter, Antiphonal, Lectionary, Collectar, Martyrology, and others) were combined to form the breviary. All members of the monastic orders and the clergy in major orders are committed to the daily recitation of the breviary.

Calendar. The calendar sections of illuminated manuscripts most often precede liturgical and devotional texts. In this context, they identify feast days pertinent to the patron and the region, using different colors to highlight important feasts, such as Christmas or the Annunciation (so-called red letter days). Calendars were often illuminated, the two most popular schemes being the labors (depicting the labors appropriate to each of the months -- June is reaping, August is sowing) of the months and the zodiac signs.

Canticle. A song or chant with words taken directly from a Biblical text.

Codex (plural, codices). Originating in the first century, the codex is a book composed of folded sheets sewn along one edge.

Cutting. Certain types of illuminated manuscripts were very large. The huge size of these books contributed to their destruction. In nineteenth-century Europe, high import taxes, computed by weight, were placed on books. In order to avoid this tax, dealers and collectors frequently cut out the illuminated and decorated pages. An entire page with miniatures, marginalia, capitals and calligraphy is referred to as a leaf. A cutting is a miniature painting with no calligraphy.

Decorated Letter. 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.

Divine Office. A cycle of daily devotions -- the prayers of the canonical hours -- performed by members of religious orders and the clergy. Along with the Mass, the Divine Office forms the basis of the Christian Liturgy.

Drollery. An amusing figure, often of a grotesque character. Drolleries appear throughout the history of book illumination, from insular works such as the Book of Kells to late medieval manuscripts.

Exemplar. A book from which another is copied.

Folio. A sheet of writing material, one half of a bifolium. The front and back of a folio are referred to as the recto and verso, respectively. The numbering of leaves, as opposed to pages, is termed foliation and is commonly found in manuscripts. "Folio" and "folios" (or "folia") are often abbreviated as f. and ff.

Gallnut. A swelling that forms on the bark of an oak tree after it has been stung by an insect laying its eggs. Tannic and gallic acids contained in gallnuts can be soaked out in water, the gall solution forming the basis of iron gall ink.

Gatherings. Booklets of which a book is formed.

Gilding. The application of gold leaf. The gold leaf could simply be laid down on the area to which a binding medium such as glair (egg white) or gum Arabic has been applied. It could also be laid on a raised ground of gesso. In order to enrich the tonality of the gold and to make the areas to which the ground has been applied more visible, a colorant such as bole (a pink earth color) was often added to the base.

The gold was burnished. Gilding formed the first stage in the painting process of illumination, since it was a messy activity, the gilded area often requiring trimming with a knife. The gilding of a manuscript illustration was carried out by the artist or by a specialist. **Gradual.** A gradual is the response and versicle to the Epistle reading that constitutes one part of the Mass. The name derives from the practice of singing the gradual on the steps of the raised pulpit. More commonly, however, the term refers to the principal choir book used in the mass.

Historiated Initial. A letter containing identifiable scene or figures, sometimes relating to the text. Historiated initials, first encountered in insular illumination of the first half of the 8th century, became a popular feature of medieval illumination. Borders can also be historiated.

Illumination. Illumination, from the Latin *illuminare*, "to enlighten or illuminate," is the embellishment of a manuscript with luminous colors (especially gold).

Illuminator. An artist producing illumination. The illuminator could, on occasion, also be the scribe. Illuminators could be male or female and members of monastic or minor clerical orders; from about 1200 members of the laity increasingly took up the profession. By the later Middle Ages, most illuminators were lay people.

Inhabited Initial. An enlarged letter at the beginning of a chapter, paragraph, or important section of a text that contains human or animal figures but not identifiable narrative scene (which is a historiated initial). Borders can also be inhabited.

Iron Gall Ink. The gall solution forming the basis of iron gall ink comes from tannic and gallic acids contained in gallnuts.

Liturgy. Rites observances, or procedures prescribed for public worship. At the core of Christian liturgy are the Mass (The celebration of the Eucharist) and the Divine Office.

Marginalia/Border. Decorative surrounds, or borders, 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 and intercolumnar space. 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. A full border surrounds an image or text on all sides, while a partial border frames only part of the area in question. Like an initial, a border can be inhabited or historiated.

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*).

Missal. A service book containing the texts necessary for the performance of the Mass (including chants, prayers, and readings), together with ceremonial directions.

Psalter. Psalters are books that contain, in a single volume, the 150 biblical poems known as psalms. The psalms (derived from the Greek word *psalmos*, meaning "song") are short, lyrical passages written in the first person. Due to their varied content and versatility, individual psalms are often employed as prayers, both in public worship and in private devotion. In the Middle Ages, the psalms were sung and recited by all members of society, but Psalters were especially popular among lay men and women who used them both at home and at church. Psalters also contained devotional material like canticles and other religious hymns, and a calendar. Children learned to read from Psalters because the Latin of the psalms was easy to understand and provided them with prayers that they might call upon throughout their lives.

Quire. Quires are the "gatherings" or "booklets" of which a book is formed.

Rubric. 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*.

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

Stylus. A pointed implement, usually made of metal or bone, used for pricking and ruling a manuscript.