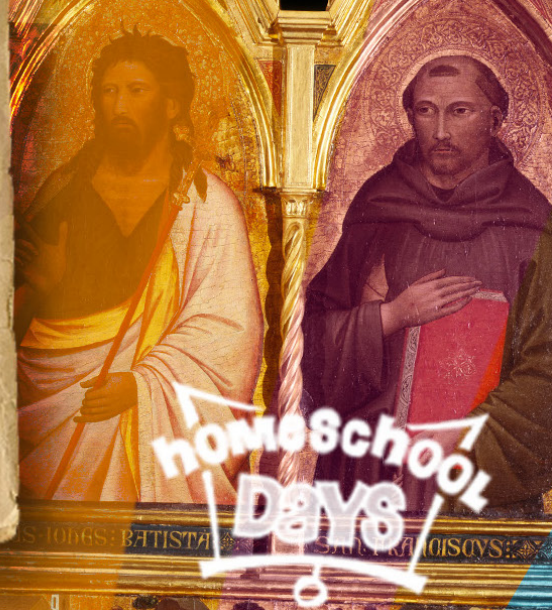


Picture Books of The Past:

Celebrating M&G's Collection

Gothic Period: Not the Dark Ages



What We Learned:

- We discovered that most people couldn't read during the Middle Ages, so the church used paintings as educational "picture books" to help people understand the Bible.
- We learned how to identify important biblical, historical, and fictional characters by their attributes (objects, colors and costuming details associated with them).
- We also explored Gothic painting techniques. For example, we learned how egg tempera paint is made.

Art Activity: ILLUMINATED LETTERS

For the art activity students imagined that they were Medieval scribes—commonly monks in the Roman Catholic Church who spent their days carefully copying books, like the Bible, by hand! To beautify their work, scribes would often "illuminate" the first letter of each page.

Like Medieval monks, students created colorful designs and imagery to "light up" the first letter of their name. After carefully drawing a 1-inch border, they boldly drafted their initials in the center of the page. Next, they used colors and designs to fill in their letters and Celtic knotwork stamps to create unique decorative designs around the letter. They finished off their unique designs using stamps and metallic ink pads to create a decorative border around the edge of their illumination. If you ask your young "scribes" why they chose each color and design, you'll better appreciate these one-of-kind illuminated letters!



For Parents:

Throughout this year we'll be exploring paintings from M&G's collection that span centuries of art. In today's lesson we focused primarily on the techniques and storytelling power of the Gothic painters. However, since art is always influenced by the broader culture, we also wanted to include some historical context. So, to not overload the students with 800 years of history, we very briefly highlighted the six key events on the pictorial timeline below. For students interested in further exploration on any of these topics, they can check out the Additional Resources section.

FEUDALISM BEGINS

In Europe, 700s
In Japan, 1100s

FIRST STAINED-GLASS WINDOW

In France, 1140s



FIRST PANDEMIC

Begins in China 1348-ends 1351
spreads along trade routes infecting the blue, teal, tan, orange, yellow, green, and red countries)



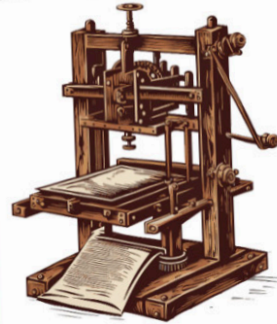
BOOK OF HOURS ILLUMINATED MANUSCRIPT

In France, 1411
produced by the three Limbourg brothers,
the most famous illuminators of all time



PRINTING PRESS

In Germany, 1440s
developed by goldsmith,
Johannes Gutenberg



COLUMBUS SETS SAIL

For America from Spain, 1492



Connections at Home: CREATE A FAMILY PORTRAIT!

As we've discovered, **attributes** were used not only to help viewers identify the characters but also tell us something about their story, including what they were like and what they did. We still rely on these same visual "clues." For example, when we meet someone new, we notice what they are wearing. The color of their clothing, the accessories they like, how they fix their hair, and even how they treat the everyday objects they carry. (The stickers people put on their personal computer, or their choice of cell phone cover tell us something!) Of course, how they decorate their surroundings also reveals a lot.

Create a self-portrait that tells us something about who YOU are and what you like to do. The portrait can be a photograph or drawing. You can also do both—take a photo and use your photo to create an art piece!

As you plan your portrait consider the following:

- What are some of your favorite outfits (including any accessories you usually wear with each one)?
- Which of these favorites would you choose if you were meeting someone new?
- What one object would you choose to take along to further express who you are?
- Finally, identify one of your favorite places to use as your background (outdoors, in your colorful bedroom, in a library, etc.,).

Have fun and be sure to share your portrait with family and friends!

A Closer Look:

In today's lesson we learned that Gothic painters used **attributes** (special objects, colors, or costuming details) to help us identify the characters in their paintings. For example, in Imola's *Coronation of the Virgin* we discovered that Mary Magdelene is almost always pictured with long flowing hair and Catherine of Alexandria with a spiked wheel. In addition, in Pietro Alemanno's *Madonna and Child with Saints* we learned that two of the Apostle John's common attributes are a book and quill pen.

Notice that the painter of this Gothic panel, **Lorenzo di Bicci**, uses a book and quill pen (just like Alemanno) to help us identify John. But who is the character walking beside the Apostle? His name is Christopher. Unlike John, he is not a biblical character. Nonetheless his story is both fascinating and inspiring.

Christopher's Story: Christopher's legend originates in the sixth century. In this traditional story, we learn that Christopher's sole ambition was to serve the most powerful prince in the world. As he sets out to find such a prince, he meets Satan (in the guise of a knight) and travels with him into the wilderness. There they come upon a cross. Christopher sees that his companion is afraid. When questioned about his fear, Satan replies, "There was a man called Christ which was hanged on a cross, and when I see His sign, I am sore afraid and flee from it." Christopher replies, "Then He is greater and mightier than you are, and I will no longer serve you but seek Christ."

Christopher meets a hermit who instructs him in the gospel and sends him to assist people crossing a river swollen by rain. With the help of a palm tree, which he uproots to use as a staff, he performs his duties faithfully. One night a child asks him to carry him over the river. During the crossing, the waters turn turbulent and the boy grows heavier and heavier. When they at last reach the other side, Christopher asks, "Who art thou, child, that hath placed me in such extreme danger?" The boy replies, "Christopher, you have not only born all the world upon your shoulders, but you have born Him who created the world. I am Jesus Christ the King." Christ then commands him to plant his staff by the river that it may "flower" and bear spiritual fruit.

Christopher's Attributes: the child Jesus seated on Christopher's shoulders and holding a globe, a river (signified by the fish at his feet), and a flowering staff



St. John and St. Christopher

Tempera on panel

Lorenzo di Bicci

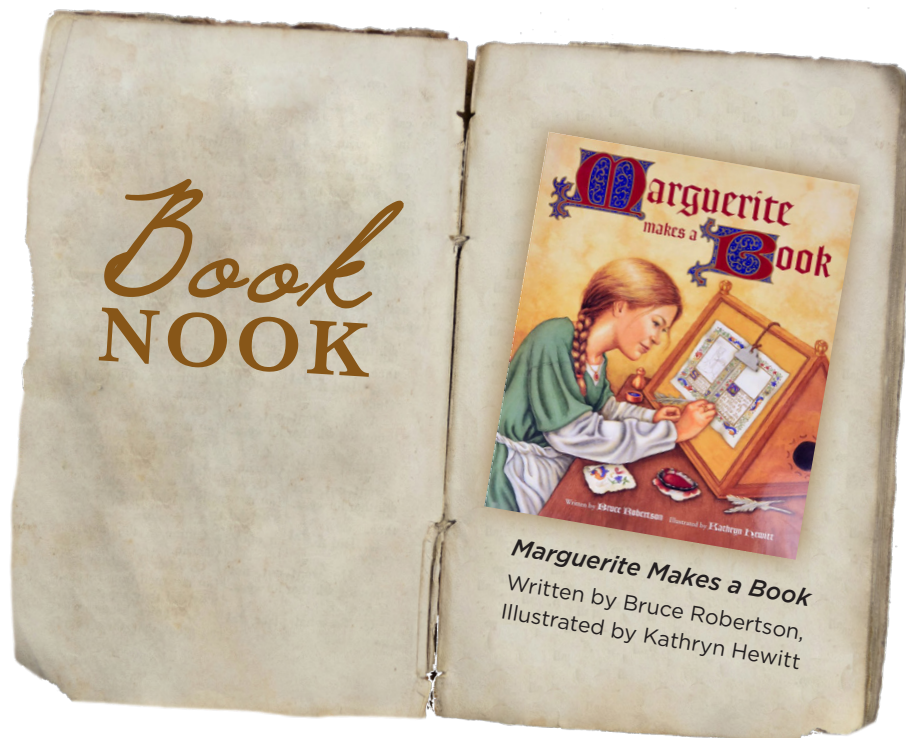
Florentine, ca. 1350–d. 1427

From the Collection of the Museum & Gallery

ADDITIONAL Resources

- Castles were an important part of feudalism, the Medieval system that “organized” how people lived and worked. The Simple History video [“Life Inside a Medieval Castle”](#) highlights the development and importance of these fascinating fortresses.
- If you have a Kindle membership, check out these books on Amazon about [Medieval life](#).
- Would you like to create your own stained-glass window? You can get started with [Katharina Nasobem’s Medieval Stained Glass Mandalas: 40+ Fantasy windows with Dragons, Knights, Castles & Gothic Art.](#)
- Read more about the [Limbourg brothers](#) and their [Book of Hours](#).
- For a close-up look at Gutenberg’s marvelous invention watch this 2-minute PBS [Nova video](#); then to learn more watch this episode from the [Museum of the Bible](#).
- Visit Fun History for Kids to [“Discover the Voyages of Columbus”](#) and to learn [“How Columbus Navigated Using Stars.”](#)

Due to the changing nature of web resources, M&G strongly urges you as the parent to preview these sites before your child accesses them. The fact that these sites are available on this handout does not imply that M&G endorses their content from the standpoint of morals, philosophy, theology, or scientific hypotheses.



M&G Educational Mission:

Through tours, events, and publications, the Museum & Gallery seeks to partner with educators in fulfilling all of the National Visual Arts Content Standards. By integrating art into the core curriculum, M&G's goals are to teach children to value the arts, to communicate through the arts, to become creative problem solvers through the inclusion of STEAM-related concepts and fully-developed STEAM units, to understand history and culture in light of the arts, to improve literary interest and understanding through visual storytelling, to critique the arts, and to develop an aesthetic awareness of the arts. Through fulfilling the mission, M&G is able to help develop citizens who have the ability to think, feel, and understand the world in which they live.

