

Art A Day CHALLENGE: You are a Bright Light!

Investigating Illuminated Manuscripts

Washington County Museum of Fine Arts

Stuff you'll need: Materials are up to you! Read through the challenge and make your decision based on your idea! If it is a nice day, draw it in chalk on your driveway!

Words to know:

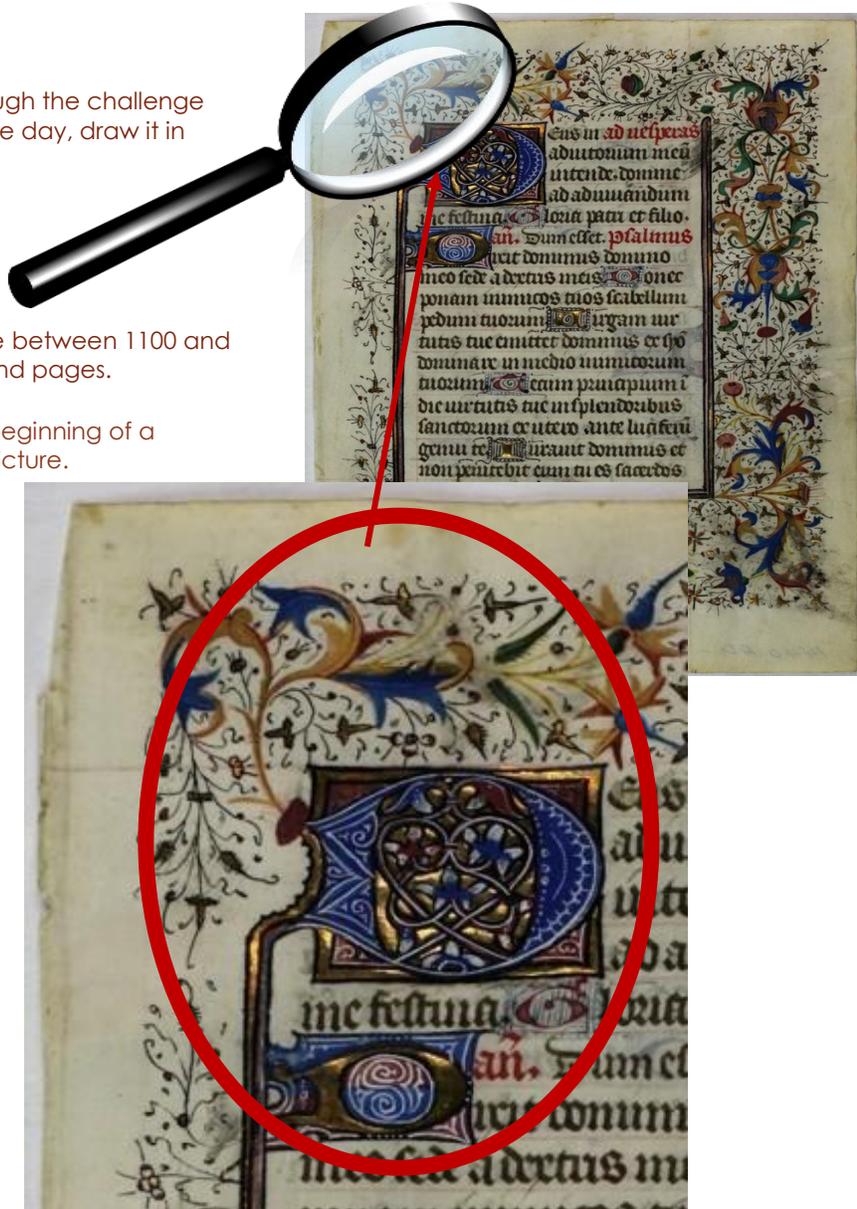
Illuminated Manuscript are hand-written books with painted decoration and can include gold or silver. The pages were made from animal skin and were made between 1100 and 1600. Monasteries were the first to create these books and pages.

Historiated initials is an initial, an enlarged letter at the beginning of a paragraph or other section of text and can contain a picture.

LOOK at this hand-made page from *Book of Hours* (1440s). Before the invention of the printing press, books were created by hand! Books that held great importance to people were often created with great details. These details often included gold and had detailed initial decorations, miniature illustrations, and extravagantly detailed borders. Sometimes the gold made the page look like it was glowing. People started calling them Illuminated Manuscripts. Illuminated means lit up and manuscript means writing. Usually, these books were made by monks that were educated, could read and write. People who could afford the books paid a lot of money to have the pages made just for them, this included: psalms, prayers, calendars of feast days, and prayers for the dead.

The first letter on the page usually was the most decorated. We call this the **historiated initial**. It is usually larger than the other letters and has symbols and contains a picture. The rest of the hand written letters are a form of calligraphy, that art of drawing letters.

THINK about books, articles, and media that you read every day or have around your home. Where have you seen something similar? Look at books about fairytales and the first letter in a news article.



Unknown (French, ca. mid-15th century)

Leaf from a *Book of Hours*, ca. 1440

Psalms 109 with antiphons and responses

Pigments, ink, and gold leaf on vellum

Collection of Museum of Fine Arts-
Washington County

Gift of William T. Hassett, Jr., 1957

MAKE your own **historiated letter** and **illuminated manuscript!** Draw a 1" border around your entire page. In the center, draw the first initial of your name using the letter inspiration <https://www.gettyimages.com/illustrations/medieval-illuminatedletter?family=creative&mediatype=illustration&phrase=medieval%20illuminated%20letter&sort=mostpopular> (or feel free to make up your own!). Decorate the border by creating patterns, animals, fantasy creatures, or hobbies and sports that describe your interests the best! Use your illuminated manuscript to show us who you are!

Writing Extension: Write a list of words to follow your name that describe the best parts of who you are.

TAG US!

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