

SKILL

Medieval art: Illuminated letters

Time

2 hours

Link

RE/History

Resources

Newspaper to cover tables

Per pair of children:

Powder paint or ready-mixed:

- crimson + vermillion red
- cyan + brilliant blue
- brilliant + lemon yellow

(or a tin of watercolours)

Gold ready-mixed paint

1 water pot

1 palette

For each child:

Watercolour brushes, fine and medium sizes

A4 cartridge paper

Sketchbooks or paper

Test paper

1 fine-line black pen

For the teacher:

Access to images of illuminated manuscripts

National Curriculum

1c, 4a,b,c, 5a,d



Nicky Loat, Year 5 (illuminated letter L)

Introduction

Today you are going to design and paint your own illuminated letters. (Read the section on European illuminated manuscripts on page 91.)

Practical activity

- * Show the children the images of the illuminated lettering and explain that the scene depicted inside or around the letter often related to the content of the paragraph.
- * Ask them to choose the first letter of one of their names and ask them to design a letter in their sketchbooks and decorate the letter itself. If they want to, they can place some images about themselves in the background, or take ideas from illuminated letters that they have been shown, or they could simply use patterns and shapes they like.
- * Remind them that the monks would have taken weeks, maybe months, over one tiny painting, and ask them to take time and trouble with their designs.
- * When they have completed the design, it could be photocopied to save the children doing it again, or they could copy it onto white paper.
- * Next, tell them to paint it in using bright, jewel-like colours.
- * Explain to the children that the monks would have considered their art to be 'to the glory of their God' and so would want to do their very best work as part of their worship.
- * Remind them that the blue and gold were incredibly expensive and that the monks would have used them very carefully and sparingly.
- * When the painting is dry, children could go over the outlines with a black fine-line pen.