

0. LEARNING WITH PICTURES - Story Preface

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At a time when many people could not read or write, pictures in illuminated books and manuscripts helped them to learn. This image depicts 16th-century books in the monastery museum of the Orthodox Church of Ura Kidane Mehret, Zege Peninsula (in Ethiopia). Katie Hunt took this picture of the books; online via Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC BY 2.0](#)

At a time when religion impacted much of European life, Medieval illuminations were often based on Christian themes or were used to illustrate Bibles:

- The style used to illustrate the Gospel of Matthew (produced between 1235-1240 with contorted draperies and abrupt gestures) lasted for about eighty years before it was replaced by a more refined Parisian style. ([Städtische Sammlung, Rathaus, Goslar](#))
- David (the Biblical shepherd, king, harpist and writer of music, including the 23rd Psalm) was also guilty of sending another man (Uriah) to his death so he could marry Uriah's wife. Expressing remorse for that deed, David wrote the 51st Psalm.
- During the 13th century, just like today, scholars prepared Bible commentaries. The profiled work comments on King David's Psalms. Located at the Library, [Esztergom Cathedral](#), Hungary.
- Matthew Paris, an English Benedictine monk, artist and historian, included himself in his illustration of the Virgin and Child. It is the frontispiece of Historia Anglorum, created in 1250. ([British Library](#), London)
- A moralisée, popular in the Middle Ages, is a pictorial Bible in which Biblical events and their "moralizations" are presented in two columns with eight images per page. Each picture is accompanied by a brief text from either the Bible or from a Biblical-related source. The most famous Bible moralisée is the Codex Vindobonensis 2554 maintained in Austria's National Library. (Romans referred to Vienna as Vindobona.)
- Fragments of an Antiphonale (a Roman Catholic liturgical chant) used in the 13th century still survive. Even they are illustrated. One of the pages represents God with Moses and the burning bush. Located at the Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest.
- Although Dante's *Divine Comedy* is still studied, hundreds of years after it was written, today's copies are no longer lavishly illustrated as they once were. One needs, instead, to buy a separate book to pictorially understand Dante's message. Located at the University Library, [Budapest](#).
- St. Bridget of Sweden had visions which are portrayed in 15th century parchment illuminations. In one famous scene, depicting a priest celebrating the Eucharist, Jesus and his mother Mary allow St. Bridget to see the wafer become the body of Christ. *Revelations of St Bridget of Sweden*, The [Morgan Library](#), New York City.

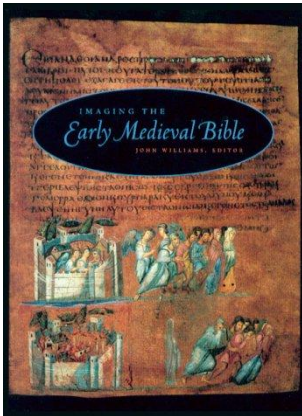
See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/LEARNING-WITH-PICTURES-Illuminated-Manuscripts>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/LEARNING-WITH-PICTURES-Illuminated-Manuscripts>

Media Stream

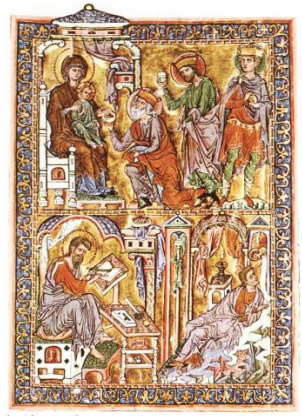


Imaging the Early Medieval Bible - Edited, John Williams

Image online, courtesy the amazon.com [website](#).

View this asset at:

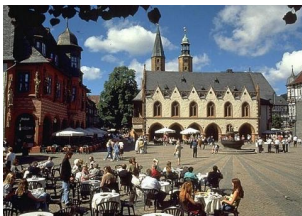
<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Imaging-the-Early-Medieval-Bible-Edited-John-Williams>



Gospel of Matthew - Illumination

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Gospel-of-Matthew-Illumination>



Stadtsammling - Home to Medieval Illuminations

Image online, courtesy a German-language website, via Goslar Marketing GmbH.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Stadtsammling-Home-to-Medieval-Illuminations>



View of Goslar, Germany

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/View-of-Goslar-Germany>



King David's Psalms

A miniaturist, working around 1200 in the southern part of England, illuminated a commentary of the *Psalms* of David. This image depicts a page from that commentary, also known as *Manuscript (Ms. I. 21)*.

This beautifully illustrated work is now maintained at the Cathedral Library, in the [Hungarian city of Esztergom](#).

The Web Gallery of Art [tells us more](#) about the work we see in this image:

The codex contains comments on King David's Psalms. The picture on folio 4v shows a B initial, one of the 14 initials of the codex.

Click on the image for a better view.

Image online via the Web Gallery of Art.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/King-David-s-Psalms>



Esztergom Cathedral

Photo by Eliza0027, taken in August of 2011. Image online, via Wikimedia Commons.

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View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Esztergom-Cathedral->



Virgin and Child - Thirteenth-Century Illumination

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Virgin-and-Child-Thirteenth-Century-Illumination>



Moralisée Bible - Illumination

A moralisée, popular in the medieval era, is a pictorial Bible in which Biblical events and their “moralizations” are presented in two columns with eight images per page.

Such admonitions were intended, among other things, to help people avoid making disastrous decisions in their lives.

With each picture is a brief text from either the Bible or from a Biblically related source.

In this image we see a page from a moralisée which is known (in manuscript terms) as Harley 1527 f. 27. In other words, this is Harley 1527, folio 27. The British Library tells us [a bit more about it](#):

Biblical scenes and moralisations in a series of eight roundels.

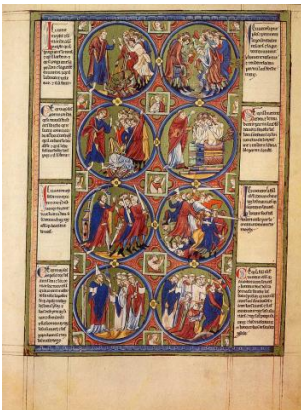
Origin: France, Central (Paris)

Click on the image for a great view.

Image, online via the British Library.

PD

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Moralis-e-Bible-Illumination>



Codex Vindobonensis

Image online via Wikimedia Commons.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Codex-Vindobonensis>

Codex Vindobonensis 2554 - Frontispiece Links Religion and Science

A moralisée, popular in the medieval era, is a pictorial Bible in which Biblical events and their “moralizations” are presented in two columns with eight images per page.

With each picture is a brief text from either the Bible or from a Biblically related source.

A very famous Bible moralisée is the *Codex Vindobonensis* 2554 which is maintained by Austria’s National Library. (Romans referred to Vienna as “Vindobona.”) The work was likely created in France, circa 1250.

At the time, religion and science were linked together. This image depicts the frontispiece of this Bible moralisée which is the illuminator’s interpretation of God as the creator of the world.



The Web Gallery of Art provides [more detail about this image](#):

The kind of bible known as Bible moralisée originated at the French royal court during the first thirty years of the 13th century. These bibles used interrelated medallions or rondels (eight per page) as well as marginal texts to interpret bible passages.

While usually written in Latin, the copy in Vienna is in French. It shows on its first page (folio 1v) God the Father bending down to measure the world with a pair of compasses.

Holding the cosmic orb in his left hand, he uses his other hand to place one arm of the instrument into the orb's centre in order to draw a circle.

Fred S. Kleiner—in the Fourteenth Edition of Gardner's Art through the Ages: A Global History—provides additional commentary about this image (and how artists of the thirteenth century applied their own understanding of the world to their Biblical illuminations):

The painter depicted God in the process of creating the world, shaping the universe with the aid of a compass. Within the perfect circle already created are the spherical sun and moon and the unformed matter that will become the earth once God applies the same geometric principles to it

...the Gothic artist portrayed God as systematically creating the universe with what Villard would describe as “the strong help of geometry” [as opposed to the command “Let there be”]. (See Kleiner, in the referenced work, at the [bottom of page 385](#).)

Click on the image for a much-better view.

Image online via the Web Gallery of Art.

PD

[View this asset at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Codex-Vindobonensis-2554-Frontispiece-Links-Religion-and-Science>

Codex Vindobonensis 2554 - Illustrated Story Summaries

A moralisée, popular in the medieval era, is a pictorial Bible in which Biblical events and their “moralizations” are presented in two columns with eight images per page.

With each picture is a brief text from either the Bible or from a Biblically related source.

A very famous Bible moralisée is the *Codex Vindobonensis* 2554 which is maintained by Austria’s National Library. (Romans referred to Vienna as “Vindobona.”) The work was likely created in France, circa 1250.

This image depicts folio 2 from the *Codex Vindobonensis* 2554. The Web Gallery of Art provides more [detail about this image](#):

The kind of bible known as Bible moralisée originated at the French royal court during the first thirty years of the 13th century. These bibles used interrelated medallions or rondels (eight per page) as well as marginal texts to interpret bible passages.

The picture on folio 2r shows how scenes from the Christian history of salvation are classified according to their typology in eight interrelated medallions.

Click on the image for a much-better view.

Image online via Web Gallery of Art.

PD

[View this asset at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Codex-Vindobonensis-2554-Illustrated-Story-Summaries>

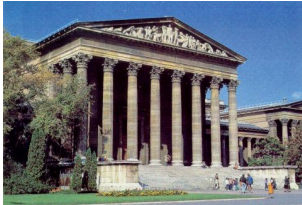




God with Moses and the Burning Bush

Image online via Wikimedia Commons.

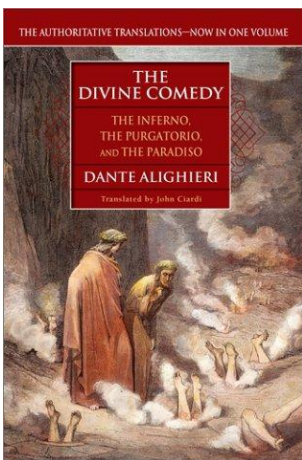
View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/God-with-Moses-and-the-Burning-Bush>



Museum of Fine Arts - Budapest

Image online via Wikimedia Commons.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Museum-of-Fine-Arts-Budapest>



The Divine Comedy - by Dante Alighieri

Image online via Google Books.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/The-Divine-Comedy-by-Dante-Alighieri>



Divine Comedy - Illumination from Dante Codex

An unknown miniaturist, working in Venice during the 1340s, created this work illuminating a page from Dante's *Divine Comedy*. The 14th-century manuscript illustrates the *Inferno*, Canto I.

The manuscript in which the artwork appears is known as the *Dante Codex*. It was once owned by the Emo family, who lived in Venice, but is now maintained by University Library in Budapest.

The Web Gallery of Art gives us [more information](#):

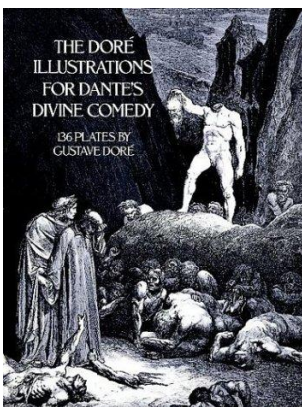
The codex contains Dante's work, the "Divina Commedia." In the 14th century the codex belonged to the Venetian Emo family.

The three figurative pictures on the title page, shown here, illustrate lines 1-2 and 30-50 of the "Inferno." In the N initial the figure of Dante appears, below it Dante meditates in a rocky landscape. The third picture depicts the meeting of Dante with the three symbolic beasts (lion, wolf, panther).

Click on the image for a much-better view.

Image, described above, online via Web Gallery of Art.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Divine-Comedy-Illumination-from-Dante-Codex>



The Dore Illustrations for Dante's Divine Comedy

Image online via Google Books.

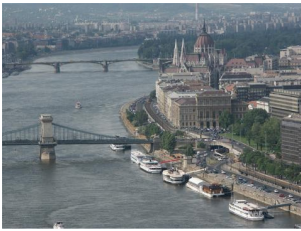
View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/The-Dore-Illustrations-for-Dante-s-Divine-Comedy->

Budapest - Aerial View

This image depicts an aerial panorama of Budapest, Hungary during May of 2003.

The view, we see, is from the Citadella (which is located at the top of Gellért Hill, seen below), looking towards the north with the River Duna and the Parliament building clearly visible.



Click on the top image for a wonderful view of Budapest.

Image by Reto Ambühler, online via his trip report for a 2003 conference in Budapest.

The in-text image of the Citadella is picture is copyright Civertan Grafikai Stúdió who has allowed reuse of the image via License [CC BY-SA 2.5](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.5/)

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Budapest-Aerial-View>

Vision of St. Bridget of Sweden - Illumination

This image depicts the "Revelations of St Bridget of Sweden," an illumination on parchment from the very early 15th century. It was created by an Italian miniaturist, circa 1400.



The Web Gallery of Art [provides more detail](http://www.webgalleryofart.com/) about this work of art (which is currently maintained at the Morgan Library and Museum in New York City):

The illumination shows St Bridget's mystical vision of God.

The often dramatic staging of the transubstantiation of the Eucharistic bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ reaches its high point when the priest raises the host.

Through this act, the believer was able to feel the presence of God, but without being able to see the divine rays of God's gaze necessary for this metamorphosis to take place. This is something witnessed only by the Elect, of whom St Bridget of Sweden was one.

In an illustration of one of her visions, we can see how the transformation of the host occurred. The saint is seated at her writing desk. In front of her the Eucharist is being celebrated. Her head is lit by a divine ray which descends from an open heaven in which the angels and saints have gathered.

The Virgin and Christ, seated in a mandorla, impart the rays which reveal the miracle: only Bridget is able to see the body of Christ rising from the wafer.

Click on the image for a much-better view.

Image online via the Web Gallery of Art.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Vision-of-St.-Bridget-of-Sweden-Illumination>