

0. ILLUSTRATED HISTORIES - Story Preface

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A famous historical murder took place in 12th-century England when four of King Henry II's knights murdered Thomas Becket, the Archbishop of Canterbury. This image, circa 1220, depicts the earliest-known portrayal of that event (which occurred on 29 December 1170 at Canterbury Cathedral). The original—captioned "Martyrdom of Thomas Becket"—was once part of a psalter and is now maintained at the British Library where it is referenced as: "Harley MS 5102, f. 32."

National histories, created in the Middle Ages, not only chronicled the exploits of kings and subjects, they featured beautiful pictures which illustrated the text.

- The Villani Chronicle, about the history of Florence, features illuminations on parchment. Pictures include the Conquests of Fiesole and Carmignano. Located at the Vatican Library.
- When the Jewish people left Egyptian captivity, their leader was Moses. The Peszach Haggada depicts a scene of Jews, with Moses, wandering in the desert. The people in the picture are wearing Oriental clothing. Located at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest.
- Sometime in the 13th century, after 1272, the Chronicle Roll of the Kings of England was created to depict the monarchs. Located at the Bodleian Library, Oxford.
- In the 14th century, it was believed that French people had Trojan origins. That legend is reflected in scenes from the Great Chronicle of France (created for Charles V) which portray the siege of Troy. Located at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.
- An Illuminated Chronicle about the history of Hungary includes stories, traditions and legends of 14th century Hungarian life. One of its illustrations depicts the Capture of Gyula. Located at the National Library, Budapest.
- Livy, the Roman historian, chronicled many events of Rome including its legendary founding by Romulus and Remus. The title page of a 15th century copy of his history portrays events mentioned in the book, including (on the lower right) a picture of Romulus, Remus and the wolf. Located at the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich.
- In the first century B.C., Curtius Rufus (another Roman historian) wrote a history of Alexander the Great. Remaining fragments of that history were copied on to parchment in the 15th century. The title page of this Deeds of Alexander the Great once belonged to Giovanni Matteo Butigella. Located at the National Library, Budapest.

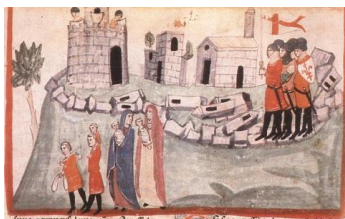
See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/ILLUSTRATED-HISTORIES-Illuminated-Manuscripts>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/ILLUSTRATED-HISTORIES-Illuminated-Manuscripts>

Media Stream



Conquests of Fiesole - Illumination

Image, described above, online via Wikimedia Commons.

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



Fiesole - Panoramic View

Image of Fiesole, online via Wikimedia Commons.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Fiesole-Panoramic-View>

Medieval Knights on Their Horses

This illumination on parchment, by an unknown Italian miniaturist who was likely working in Florence during the 14th century, is from the *Villani Chronicle*. Dating from the 1390s, the *Chronicle* is currently maintained at the Vatican Library.



The illustration we see depicts an artist's interpretation of the the Conquest of Fiesole.

Translated into English, the *Chronicle* tells us what happened:

In the year of Christ 1125, the Florentines came with an army to the fortress of Fiesole, which was still standing and very strong, and it was held by certain gentlemen Cattani, which had been of the city of Fiesole, and thither resorted highwaymen and refugees and evil men, which sometimes infested the roads and country of Florence; and the Florentines carried on the siege so long that for lack of victuals the fortress surrendered, albeit they would never have taken it by storm, and they caused it to be all cast down and destroyed to the foundations, and they made a decree that none should ever dare to build a fortress again at Fiesole.

Fiesole is located very near Florence.

Click on the image for a better view.

Image, described above, online via Wikimedia Commons.

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Peszach Haggada - Illumination of the Exodus

This illumination on parchment, by an unknown Spanish miniaturist who was likely working in Spain during the 14th century, is known as the *Peszach Haggada*. It depicts the story of "The Exodus," when the Jews left the land of Egypt.

Measuring 185 by 220 mm (7.28 x 8.66 inches), the manuscript is currently maintained at the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, in Budapest.



The Web Gallery of Art [describes this medieval-era work](#) for us:

The Haggada is one of the richly decorated Hebrew manuscripts of the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. The picture shows its only page with figural initial illustrating the Exodus (Second Book of Moses).

The miniature represents a group of wandering Jews headed by Moses. They wear Oriental robes and characteristic hats.

The Haggada is a book which observant Jews read on the first night of their Passover celebration. The word Haggada means "telling." The word Peszach (also written as Pesach) means "Passover."

Hence, the illumination featured here is a pictorial telling of the Jewish Passover as seen through the eyes of a 14th-century artist.

Click on the image for a better view.

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

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[View this asset at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Peszach-Haggada-Illumination-of-the-Exodus>

Great Chronicle of France - Illumination

This illuminated manuscript, likely created sometime between 1375-80, is entitled *Grandes Chroniques de France de Charles V* ("The Great Chronicle of France of Charles V").

Also known as Manuscript (Ms. français 2813), it tells the story of the achievements of Charles V of France.

Measuring 350 x 240 mm (13.78 x 9.45 inches), the manuscript is currently maintained at the *Bibliothèque nationale de France* (BnF) known, in English, as the National Library of France.

The Web Gallery of Art [describes this medieval-era work](#) for us:

The Grandes Chroniques de France de Charles V (The Great Chronicle of France of Charles V) was recognized as the standard official history of the French monarchy.

By the late 13th century it had become the custom of the monks of Saint-Denis to record remarkable contemporary events. This habit was then systematically continued by court historians, and ultimately developed into a historical project unique in the whole of Europe.

Like his predecessors, Charles V was strongly concerned to have a lavish, historically updated new copy of the chronicles made, based on the old repertoire of text. This luxurious manuscript actually consists of two volumes illuminated by numerous anonymous artists in very different styles.

The scenes on folio 4r [shown above] depict episodes from the [Trojan War](#) and the mythical Trojan origins of the French people. The coat-of-arms held by the angels at the bottom of the page indicated that the codex was executed for Charles V.

Click on the image for a better view.

Image online via the Web Gallery of Art.

PD

[View this asset at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Great-Chronicle-of-France-Illumination>



Bibliothèque Nationale de France - Reading Room

In this image we take a virtual visit to the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris.

Including reading rooms designed by Henri Labrouste, in the 1800s, the BnF is one of the oldest and largest libraries in the world.



Here we see the oval Labrouste Reading Room. It is the BnF's main reading room at the rue de Richelieu location.

The [BnF tells us more](#) about this significant part of the library:

Henri Labrouste (1801-1875) is one of the few 19th century architects who never ceased to be praised whether in France or in abroad.

He imagined a variety of rational solutions for the difficult projects he was entrusted with; attaching much importance to iron and cast iron, he designed impressive buildings with unique ornaments that made his work a milestone in the history of architecture.

He reorganized the Imperial National Library located rue de Richelieu and designed the outstanding reading room and its stacks.

Thanks to bequests made by the Labrouste family, the Bibliothèque nationale de France houses a rich collection of drawings and archives...

Image online via Wikimedia Commons.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Bibliotheque-Nationale-de-France-Reading-Room>

Illuminated Chronicle of Hungary

This image depicts a page from the *Illuminated Chronicle*, also known as Manuscript (Cod. Lat. 404).



A national treasure for the country of Hungary, the work is maintained at National Széchényi Library, in Budapest.

The [Web Gallery of Art](#) tells us [more](#) about this important Hungarian manuscript:

The picture shows the title-page of the Illuminated Chronicle which contains the history of Hungary and represents the international artistic style of the royal courts in the court of Lajos (Louis) the Great.

The Illuminated decoration of the manuscript was executed in Hungary before 1360 and it provides the knowledge of the Hungarian life, historical traditions and legends.

According to an assumption it was made by the merited painter of the King, Hertul fia Miklós.

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/Illuminated-Chronicle-of-Hungary>

Capture of Gyula - Illumination

This image depicts a page from the *Illuminated Chronicle*, also known as Manuscript (Cod. Lat. 404).

A national treasure for the country of Hungary, the work is maintained at National Széchényi Library, in Budapest.



The [Web Gallery](#) tells us [more](#) about this important Hungarian manuscript:

The illumination depicts the Capture of Gyula.

Who was Gyula? According to The Deeds of the Hungarians (Gesta Hungarorum of Anonymus), he was captured by his maternal uncle, King St. Stephen, for religious reasons:

Zumbor begat the younger Geula [Gyula], father of Bua and Bucna, during whose time the holy King Stephen subjugated to himself the land of Transylvania and led Geula in fetters to Hungary and held him imprisoned for all the days of his life because he was false in faith and refused to be a Christian and did many things against the holy King Stephen, even though he was of the line of his mother. (The Gesta Hungarorum of Anonymus, the Anonymous Notary of King Béla.)

Click on the image for a better view.

Image online via the Web Gallery of Art.

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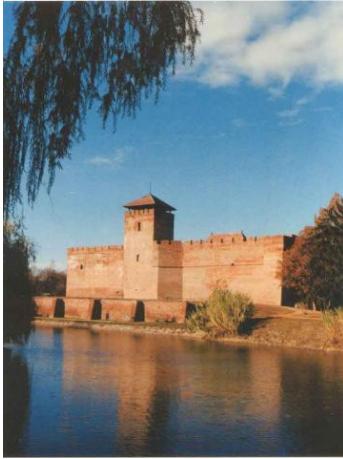
View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Capture-of-Gyula-Illumination>

Gyula Castle

In this image we see a castle in the town of Gyula, Hungary. It is named after Gyula III, a Hungarian ruler.

Gyula is located in the Great Hungarian Plain, 146 miles (235 km) southeast of Budapest and 3 miles (5 km) from the Hungarian-Romanian border.

What was life like in this town? How, for example, did the people dress? Joseph Böss, an Austrian painter, created this work in 1856. It is called "Hungarians from Gyula."



In more modern times, the famous Hungarian composer, Béla Bartók (1881-1945), lived in Gyula. Image online via Wikimedia Commons.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Gyula-Castle>

Livius Codex - Title Page Illumination

This image depicts a page from the *Livius Codex*, also known as *Manuscript (Cod. Lat. 15731)*.

This important work, circa 1450, is now maintained at the *Bayerische Staatsbibliothek* (Bavarian State Library) in Munich.

The [Web Gallery of Art](#) tells us [more](#) about the work originally created by [Livy](#) (Livius), the ancient Roman historian:

Titus Livius Patavinus (59 BC-AD 17) - known as Livy in English - was a Roman historian who wrote a monumental history of Rome and the Roman people.

*His work *Ab Urbe Condita Libri* (Books from the Foundation of the City) covers the period from the earliest legends of Rome well before the traditional foundation in 753 BC through the reign of Augustus in Livy's own time.*

The present codex [seen above] contains Livy's work. The illuminations on the title page, shown here, refer to events mentioned in the book.

The first initial F depicts the marriage of Aeneas with Lavinia, daughter of King Latinus. At the bottom left of the page Rhea Sylvia and Mars, at the right Romulus and Remus with the wolf can be seen.

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/Livius-Codex-Title-Page-Illumination>

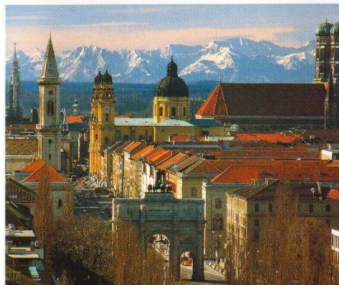


Bavarian State Library

Image online via [Wikimedia Commons](#).

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Bavarian-State-Library>

MUNICH



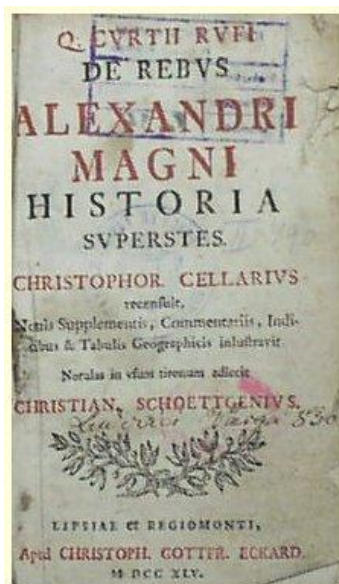
Munich, Germany

Munich is the largest city and the capital of the German state of Bavaria. It is situated on the River Isar, north of the Bavarian Alps.

A cultural center, the city has a rich history and the nearby scenery is spectacular.

Image online via [Wikimedia Commons](#).

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



Alexandri Magni Historia - by Curtius Rufus

In the first century B.C., [Quintus Curtius Rufus](#) (a Roman historian) wrote a history of Alexander the Great.

Remaining fragments of that history—*Alexandri Magni Historia*—were copied on to parchment in the 15th century.

This image depicts a page from that work. It is now maintained by the Hungarian National Library, in Budapest.

Image online via [Wikimedia Commons](#).

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Alexandri-Magni-Historia-by-Curtius-Rufus>

Deeds of Alexander the Great - Title Page Illumination

This image depicts a page from the "Deeds of Alexander the Great" (*Alexandri Magni Historia*) also known as Manuscript (Cod. Lat. 161).



This important work, circa 1400-50, is now maintained at the National Széchényi Library, in Budapest. It contains words written thousands of years before by the ancient Roman historian Quintus Curtius Rufus.

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

The codex contains the copy of the fragmentary work by the Roman historian Curtius Rufus (1st century B.C.)

The miniatures of the codex are the work of an unknown artist referred to as "Master of Vitae imperatorum" after his most significant work. The owner of the codex was Giovanni Matteo Butigella who served the Visconti family.

The page presented here is the title page. The decoration is full of references to the Visconti and Butigella families.

Click on the image for a better view.

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

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Deeds-of-Alexander-the-Great-Title-Page-Illumination>