

0. ILLUSTRATED LAWS - Story Preface

1. SECULAR SCENES

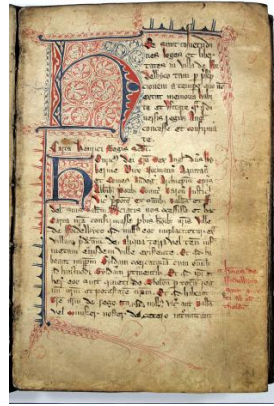
2. ROYALTY'S ILLUMINATIONS

3. LEARNING WITH PICTURES

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6. ILLUSTRATED LAWS



This image depicts a page from the Fordwich Customal (dealing with forms of very harsh punishment—such as drowning in a well—for individuals found guilty of certain crimes). Among other things, the “goods of the guilty party are to be forfeited...” This image depicts the type of illustrated manuscript which was used for secular purposes (i.e. the laws of England) during medieval times. Click on the image for a much-better view.

Today, non-lawyers (and even some professionals) who research the law, are quickly bored by endless pages of uninterrupted text. Rarely are pictures, or illustrations of any kind, found in law books.

Such was not always the case. Even books of the Common Law (the Liber Albus, or, “White Book”) of London (from early 15th century England) contain some color and marginal imagery.

The following samples present additional legal texts, and books of statutes, which employ more than words to make their points.

- Charles IV issued a constitution (called the Golden Bull of 1356) to codify the rights of German princes. His son, Emperor Wenceslas, commissioned a manuscript depicting the opening of an official copy of that law. Centuries later, historian Lord Bryce noted that the Golden Bull “codified anarchy and called it a constitution.” Located at the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna.
- An illustration from *Grand Coutumier de Normandie* (1480) portrays a court bailiff and several knights visiting a sick room - likely checking out whether the defendant was really too ill to appear in court!
- Also from the second half of the 15th century, we see a page (in French with Latin titles) of an English *Nova Statuta* (New Statute) reflecting the end of 9 Henry V and the start of 1 Henry VI. (Bodleian Library, Oxford)
- Unlike the unadorned draft, and final version, of America’s Declaration of Independence, Great Britain’s *Magna Carta* (the Great Charter) of 1215 is a work of art as well as a grantor of rights. Even when this fundamental law appears in medieval books of English Statutes, it (like other pages) is decorated.
- On the other hand, France’s *Declaration of the Rights of Man* follows more closely the presentation of the American *Declaration of Independence* and George Mason’s *Virginia Declaration of Rights* after which it was patterned.

This virtual trip back in time, to view miniatures, illuminations, and other magnificent treasures created in the Middle Ages, prompts some questions:

- When future generations examine the books and ponder the archives we have created, what will our endless pages of typewritten (or computer-printed) text tell them about us?
- What will our lack of printed (let alone handmade) drawings and illuminations in books convey about how people learned in the 20th/21st centuries?

What written treasures, in short, are we creating for future generations to study and admire?

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

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

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

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

Media Stream

Illustrated Law Book - London

This illuminated manuscript is part of a page from the London *Liber Albus* (Book 1, Part 2, Chapter 47), dating to the early 15th century. (The *Liber Albus*, or "White Book," sets forth England's Common Law.)

Written in French, it discusses one of the city's customs concerning legal procedures: *Of Pleas of the Crown in the City of London*.

Where a man is judged by the Great Law, it is awarded him by the reputable men of the City, that he must have six-and-thirty men, who with him shall make oath, at the end of a quinzaine at least, or of a month, or still later, if the Justiciar shall so will it.

And these six-and-thirty men ought to be chosen the same day by the reputable men of the City, if the Justiciar shall so will it, or at such other time as the Justiciar shall think proper; that is to say, eighteen men from the East side of Walebroke, and eighteen men from the West side of Walebroke.

And when they shall be thus chosen by the men of the City - and not by a Sheriff of by the Chamberlain - their names must be taken down in writing, and delivered to the person who is to have them....(Translated by H.T. Riley; online via Stephen Alsford at Medieval English Town website.)

England's Common Law was also a key part of America's developing judicial system during the days of the Colonies.

Image online via Medieval English Town website.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Illustrated-Law-Book-London>



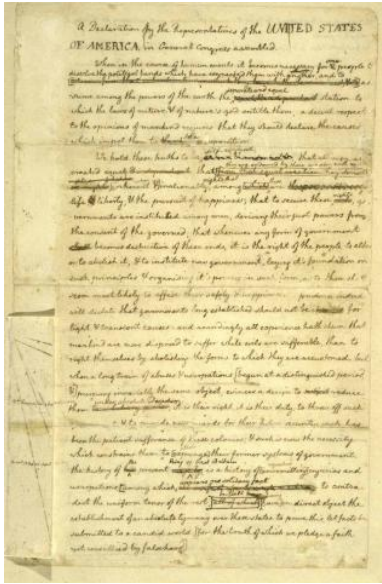
Golden Bull of 1356 - Manuscript Illumination

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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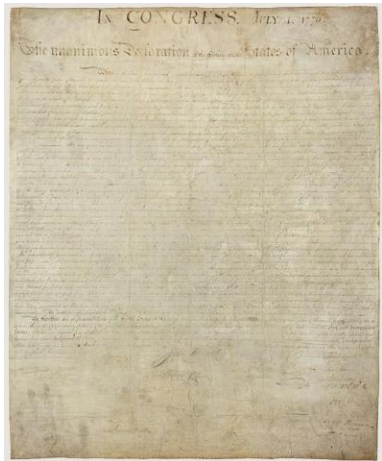


Declaration of Independence - Early Draft

Image online, courtesy the United States National Archives.

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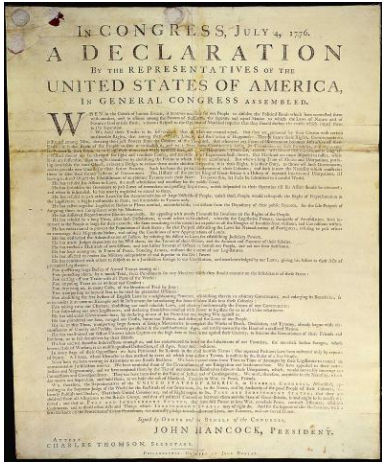


Declaration of Independence - Final Version

Image online, courtesy the U.S. National Archives.

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Declaration of Independence - Printed Copy

Image online, courtesy the U.S. National Archives.

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Declaration-of-Independence-Printed-Copy>



Magna Carta - Printed Copy

Image online, courtesy the [Huntington Library](#), San Marino, California.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Magna-Carta-Printed-Copy>



English Statutes

Image online, courtesy Library of Congress.

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View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/English-Statutes>



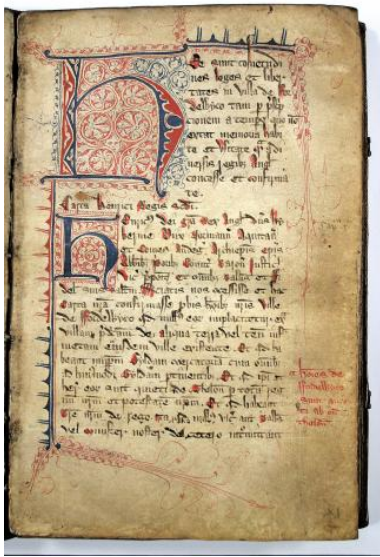
English Statutes - Illuminated Pages

Image, described above, online via the Library of Congress.

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View this asset at:

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ILLUSTRATED LAWS

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