

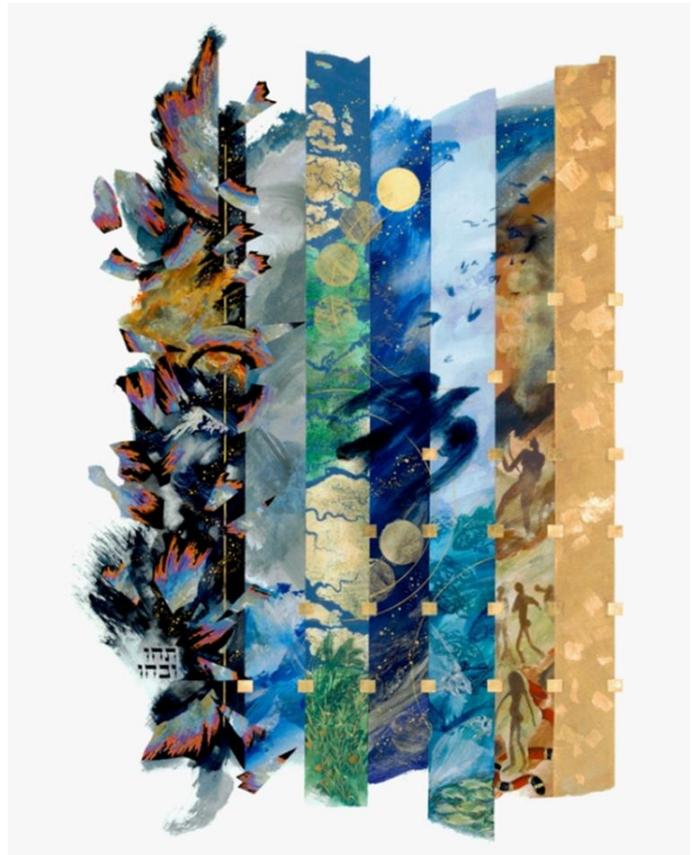


Canton Museum of Art  
**Educator Packet**

# *Illuminating the Word*

Beginning in 1995, the community of Saint John's Abbey and University in Collegeville, Minnesota, began planning and working on *The Saint John's Bible* – the first handwritten, illuminated Bible to be commissioned by a Benedictine monastery in five hundred years. The work of creating the Bible involved countless hours of meetings, artist studio time and the financial support of almost 1,400 individual donors. On May 9, 2011, the last word of the Bible was penned, bringing the almost 15 year production phase to completion.

At Saint John's University, the creation of *The Saint John's Bible* was directed by a committee of theologians, artists and scholars known as the Committee on Illumination and Text. The actual pages were created by a team of 23 professional scribes, artists and assistants headquartered in a scriptorium in Wales, under the artistic direction of renowned calligrapher Donald Jackson. This extraordinary presentation of one of the world's great religious texts was conceived as an expression of faith relevant to the modern world. It is a visual record of a new generation's perception and artistic interpretation of an age-old historical and literary document.



*Creation*, Donald Jackson, 2003, *The Saint John's Bible*, Saint John's University, Collegeville, MN, USA.



This unique undertaking combines a centuries-old tradition of craftsmanship with the latest capabilities of computer technology and electronic communication. Handwritten on vellum (calfskin) using hand-cut quills, ancient inks, natural pigments and 24-karat gold, silver and platinum, creating *The Saint John's Bible* was a collaborative effort involving many persons in both the United Kingdom and the United States.

The 1127 pages of *The Saint John's Bible* remain unbound at this time to allow for exhibition; when and how to bind the seven volumes that make up the entire Bible will be determined at a later date. The Hill Museum & Manuscript Library on the Saint John's University campus is the permanent home of the Bible, however the books will be used in the Abbey Church during worship services and be on display for viewing by thousands of visitors each year.

In the Middle Ages, monumental Bibles were made for daily use in monastic communities, and carefully preserved for future generations. *The Saint John's Bible* is the modern representative of that great tradition, and it aspires to be ecumenical as well—to unite humankind, not further divide it. As a work of art it speaks to people of many faiths, traditions and cultures.

### The Artistic Director

*The Saint John's Bible* was born out of a lifelong dream of one man, Donald Jackson.

Donald Jackson is one of the world's foremost Western calligraphers. At the age of 20, Jackson was appointed a visiting lecturer at the Camberwell College of Art, London. Within six years he became the youngest artist calligrapher chosen to take part in the Victoria and Albert Museum's first International Calligraphy Show after the war and appointed a scribe to the Crown Office at the House of Lords. As a scribe to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, he was responsible for the creation of official state documents. In 1985, he received the Medal of The Royal Victorian Order (MVO). Jackson is an elected Fellow and past Chairman of the Society of Scribes and Illuminators, and in 1997, was named Master of the 600-year-old Guild of Scriveners of the city of London. He is the author of *The Story of Writing*. Jackson and his wife Mabel live and work in the Hendre, a converted town hall and outbuildings in Monmouth, Wales.

Donald Jackson knew he loved the art of writing even as a very young boy. He was only about 8 years old when he discovered how much he enjoyed calligraphy.



Image: Donald Jackson, Artistic Director of The Saint John's Bible

## The Committee on Illumination and Text

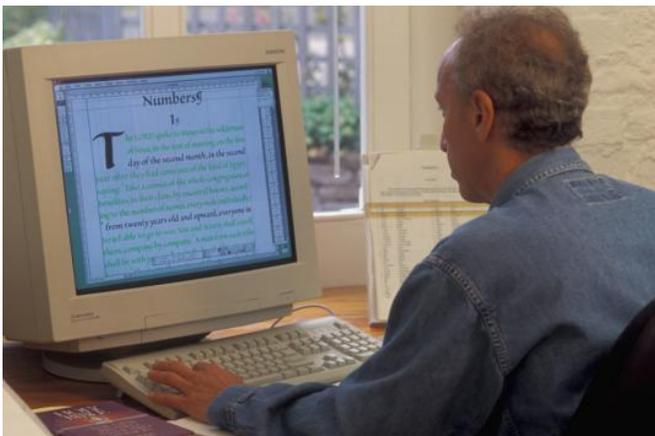
The theological foundation of The Saint John's Bible was under the direction of the Committee on Illumination and Text (CIT) at Saint John's University. The CIT was made up of artists, art historians, medieval historians, theologians, and biblical scholars, who met regularly at Saint John's University.

Each illumination began at Saint John's with a written brief prepared by the CIT. Through scripture study and reflection of the passages identified for illumination, this group prepared the briefs for the artists. These exegetical and theological narratives provided the artists with suggested verses, scriptural cross-references, free association about the text, imagery brainstorming, and local association/references to existing works of artistic interpretation. The briefs helped to provide Donald Jackson and his team with a full background on each passage. The CIT members often described their experience of working on the briefs as similar to the monastic practice of *Lectio Divina* which is a thorough mulling over of the text. The group carefully read and studied the passages to be illuminated. They looked at the details while thinking, meditating and letting the meaning sink in. Collectively, they pondered the words and phrases with one practical aim: to spark visual ideas.

The briefs, combined with individual research, were used by each artist to generate visual interpretations of the passages. Once inspired, Donald and the other artists created sketches (rough drafts) of each passage which were intended to share the visual ideas with the CIT. The sketches were then digitized and e-mailed to Saint John's. After careful review and study, the CIT prepared a written response with reactions and specific feedback for the artist beginning a back-and-forth dialogue. This would continue until both sides of the Atlantic agreed that the artwork was both theologically and artistically sound, and then the final illumination was then completed on a page of vellum.



The entire creation team celebrated the completion of The Saint John's Bible in May, 2011 at the home of Donald and Mable Jackson in Wales.  
(Greg R. Anderson Photography)



Computer graphic designer, Vin Godier, worked on the layout of every page. It is from these computer generated layouts that the scribes took their text for writing.

## Technology Ancient and Modern

*The Saint John's Bible* blends the medieval and the modern. As in the Middle Ages, every word was written by hand, and all the illuminations (illustrations and decorations) were individually designed and hand painted. Scribes wrote with quills on sheets of vellum (calfskin), and illuminators used casein paint, gouache, watercolor, and gold, silver, and platinum leaf.

In Donald Jackson's scriptorium in Wales, all this work was carried on as it would have been in a medieval monastery. Tools and materials were prepared by hand, on site. Unblemished calfskins were scraped and sanded to produce a perfect writing surface. Goose, swan, and turkey quills, taken straight from the birds, were cleaned, cured, and trimmed. Antique ink sticks were ground to make dense black ink. Paint was made by mixing hand-ground pigments with egg yolks—lapis lazuli for brilliant blues, vermilion for rich reds, and malachite for glistening greens.

But there is also much that is modern. To ensure seamless continuity, the layout of every page—even the placement of every word—was planned on a computer. This enabled the team of scribes, working simultaneously, to produce perfect sheets that could later be combined in perfect order. So that their writing would be uniform throughout the Bible, all the scribes used a script specially designed by Donald Jackson.

## Tools and Materials

### Vellum

The pages of *The Saint John's Bible* are made of calfskin vellum. The skins are soaked in lime, dried, scraped or "scrutched," and sanded smooth. The final product is nearly translucent, with a "hair side" and "smooth side."

### Quills

All the script is written using quills hand-cut by the scribes. Only the largest flight feathers, called "primaries," are used: goose quills for the main body of text, turkey and swan quills for heavier letterforms.

### Ink

The script is written in lamp black ink from nineteenth-century Chinese ink sticks. The ink sticks are ground in an ink stone with distilled water.

### Pigments

Vermillion, lapis lazuli, and other cakes and powdered pigments are used for color. The materials are mixed with egg yolk and water to make paint that is thicker than the black ink and loaded onto the quills using brushes.

### Gold Leaf

Gold leaf makes the manuscript truly illuminated. Using the moisture of breath imparted through a bamboo tube, the artist activates the glue binding agent in gesso until it bonds with the gold leaf. Burnishing tools and brushes finish the gilded image.

### Stencils and stamps

Stencils and stamps are used to apply paint and gold powder throughout, creating a rich visual vocabulary. Stencils and stamps are made from computer images and provide recurring elements within and across volumes of *The Saint John's Bible*.



Silence fills the Scriptorium as scribes write at their desks with complete concentration.



## Glossary of Terms

**Bible** The word, Bible, comes from the Greek word *biblia*, meaning "books." Many times the earliest sacred scriptures were written on separate scrolls or vellum. When these separate documents were bound together they became known as 'Bibles'.

**Book of Hours** A medieval European prayer book. It was to be prayed at designated times throughout the day. It contained psalms and prayers for everyday as well as for departed loved ones and other needs.

**Calligraphy** This is artistic, stylized, or elegant handwriting or lettering. The script used in The Saint John's Bible was designed by Donald Jackson with three qualities in mind. The text had to be readable, modern, and appropriately dignified for the Bible. Subtle differences in the final script mark the work of the six individual scribes on the project.

**Decorated Letter** This is the very large letter decorated to introduce the important section of text. Often the letter was very ornate and the work of individual artists.

**Exemplar** The exemplar is the book that serves as the guide to copy a new book. This book was used in the monasteries as the master from which to copy new books.

**Gilding** The process of applying gold leaf to the illumination. The process of gilding a manuscript requires the skill of an artist or a gilding specialist. Often it is the first thing artists do in the painting process because it is messy.

**Historiated Initial** This is a popular feature of medieval illumination. Inside the illuminated letter the artist depicts a scene that the people of that time recognize. The figures or scene may or may not be related to the text. Borders or marginalia were also often historiated. The scenes could depict a recognizable person or scene with which the people would identify.

**Illumination** Illumination is the act of enlightening. This is the process of adding bright and beautiful colors as well as gold leaf to manuscript. The root word is *illuminare*, from Latin.

**Marginalia/Border** The borders or marginalia are the decorations surrounding the text. The borders are varied but became very popular to include by the 13th century. The borders take many forms including the inhabited or historiated.

**Miniature** This is an illustration that is not related to a specific text. The root of the word is *miniare*, Latin meaning: "to color with red."

**Parchment** Parchment is animal skin from sheep or goats that, through a special process, is prepared for use as a writing material.

**Scriptorium** The scriptorium is the room where books are made. Literally, it means the writing place. Originally, scriptoria (plural for scriptorium) were found in churches and monasteries.

**Stylus** This is a sharp, pointed implement used for preparing a manuscript. It is made of metal or bone and helps rule the area where the text will be laid down.

**Vellum** This is parchment but it is made from the skin of calves. It is considered to be of higher quality than sheep or goat parchment. It can also be made of lambs or kids. It is very expensive to purchase. The preparation of the skin for use as a writing material is very labor intensive. The finest books still use vellum instead of paper.

## Resources:

### Reading List for Children and Educators

#### **Children's Reading List**

Brookfield, Karen. Books. (Dorling Kindersley, 1993)  
Langley, Andrew. Medieval Life. (Dorling Kindersley, 1996).  
Robertson, Bruce. Marguerite Makes a Book. Illustrated by Kathryn Hewitt (The J. Paul Getty Museum, 1999)  
Wilson, Elizabeth B. Bibles and Bestiaries: A Guide to Illuminated Manuscripts. Straus and Giroux, 1994).

#### **Educator's Reading List**

Alexander, Jonathan J.G. Medieval Illuminators and Their Methods of Work. (Yale University Press, 1994).  
Backhouse, Janet. The Lindisfarne Gospels. (Phaidon Press, Inc. 1990).  
Backhouse, Janet. Sherborne Missal. (University of Toronto Press, 1999).  
Brooke, C., The Monastic World, 1974.  
Brown, Michelle B. Understanding Illuminated Manuscripts: A Guide to Technical Terms. (Getty Museum, 1994).  
Carter, Patricia. Illuminated Calligraphy.  
Child, Heather. The Calligrapher's Handbook (Taplinger, 1985)  
DeHamel, Christopher. The Book: A History of The Bible (Phaidon 2001)  
DeHamel, Christopher. A History of Illuminated Manuscripts. (Phaidon Press, 1997).  
De Hamel, Christopher. Medieval Craftsmen: Scribes and Illuminators. (British Museum, 1992).  
Dyer, C. Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages, 1989.  
Fox, Gabrielle. Essential Guide to Making Handmade Books. (F & W Publishing, Inc., 2000).  
Holmes, G., ed., The Oxford History of Medieval Europe, 1992.  
Holtman, Mollie, ed. Masterpieces of the J. Paul Getty Museum: Illuminated Manuscripts. (Getty Publications, 1997).  
Hufton, Susan. Step-By-Step Calligraphy: A Complete Guide with Creative Projects (Sterling Publishing, 1995)  
Jackson, Donald. The Story of Writing. (Taplinger, 1980)  
Jean, Georges. Writing: The Story of Alphabets and Scripts. (Abrams, 1992).  
Knowles, David, Christian Monasticism, 1969.  
McManners, J., ed., The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity, 1990.  
Mehigan, Janet. Illumination for Calligraphy. (Search Press, 2002).  
Oliver, Stefan. Paint Your Own Illuminated Letters. (Quantum Books, 1999).  
Parker, Murial M. Illuminated Letter Designs in the Historiated Style of the Middle Ages. (Stemmer House, 1986).  
Swanson, R.N., Church and Society in Late Medieval England. 1989  
Tanis, James R. et al. Leaves of Gold: Manuscript Illumination from Philadelphia Collections. (Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2001).  
Walther, Ingo F., Wolf, Norbert, The World's Most Famous Manuscripts. (Taschen America LLC, 2001).  
Wilson, Elizabeth B., Pierpont Morgan Library. Bibles and Bestiaries: A Guide to Illuminated Manuscripts. (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1994). The Saint John's Bible Project

### Internet Resources

#### **The Saint John's Bible Project web site:**

[www.saintjohnsbible.org](http://www.saintjohnsbible.org) This site has a wealth of information on all the aspects of The Saint John's Bible. Please utilize this site when using the curriculum.

#### **Websites with historic illumination/calligraphy and Medieval Times:**

<http://www.leavesofgold.org/learn/index.html> Leaves of Gold, an excellent resource with great educational information from the Philadelphia Museum of Art  
<http://www.ibiblio.org/expo/vatican.exhibit/Vatican.exhibit.html> The Vatican Exhibit  
<http://humanities.uchicago.edu/images/heures/heures.html> Les Tres Riche Heures: The Medieval Book of Hours with additional historic information on Book Arts.  
<http://www.hmml.org/> The Hill Museum & Manuscript Library housed at Saint John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota  
<http://portico.bl.uk/> The British Library is a good web site. There is a virtual tour that is engaging. It is possible to turn pages of some of the ancient books from the library.  
<http://centerforbookarts.org/> Center for Book Arts  
<http://history.boisestate.edu/westciv> Great information on the history of western civilization in the Medieval and Renaissance eras.  
[http://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/classroom\\_resources/curricula/manuscripts/manuscripts\\_lesson01.html](http://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/classroom_resources/curricula/manuscripts/manuscripts_lesson01.html)

#### **Website for resources about the art of calligraphy and instruction:**

<http://www.paperinkarts.com>  
<http://www.studioarts.net/calligring/>  
<http://www.sacsrepackaging.com/parchment.html> William Cowley, a source of vellum  
<http://talasonline.com> source of vellum  
<http://www.societyofscribes.org/> Good educational ideas on calligraphy and illumination

## The Saint John's Bible: Illustrated Illumination (Group collage inspired by text)

**Grade Level:** High School: Beginning  
(can be adapted to any grade level)

**Overview:** Students will learn about the Saint John's Bible and how it was created. Students will work collaboratively utilizing critical thinking and visual literacy to communicate a specific idea. Students will create an illuminated collage from text that is meaningful to them.

### **Content Standards:**

PERCEIVING/KNOWING: 1PE, 2PE, 3PE, 4PE, 6PE

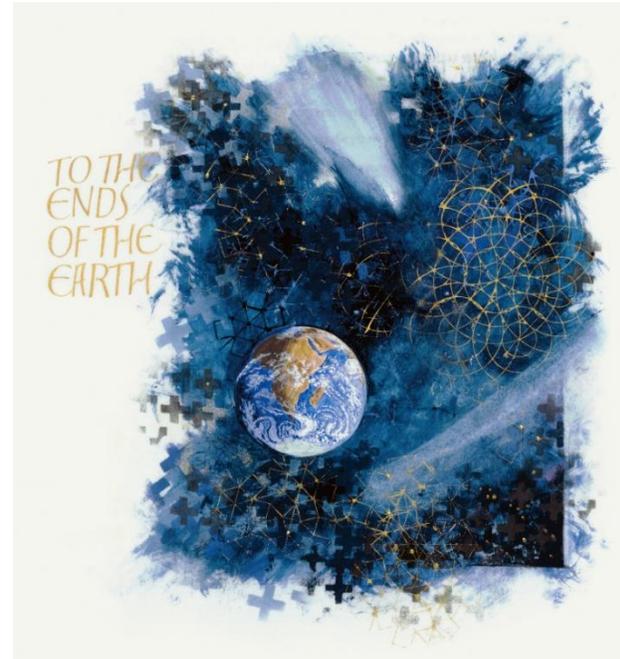
PRODUCING/PERFORMING: 1PR, 2PR, 3PR, 4PR, 6PR

RESPONDING/REFLECTING: 1RE, 2RE, 3RE, 6RE

**Materials:** The Saint John's Bible background information, artwork images, drawing paper, card stock, and mixed media materials.

### **Vocabulary:**

1. **Decorated Letter** This is the very large letter decorated to introduce the important section of text. Often the letter was very ornate and the work of individual artists.
2. **Illumination** Illumination is the act of enlightening. This is the process of adding bright and beautiful colors as well as gold leaf to manuscript. The root word is *illuminare*, from Latin.
3. **Gilding** The process of applying gold leaf to the illumination. The process of gilding a manuscript requires the skill of an artist or a gilding specialist. Often it is the first thing artists do in the painting process because it is messy.
4. **Marginalia/Border** The borders or marginalia are the decorations surrounding the text. The borders are varied but became very popular to include by the 13th century.
5. **Scriptorium** The scriptorium is the room where books are made. Literally, it means the writing place. Originally, scriptoria (plural for scriptorium) were found in churches and monasteries.
6. **Vellum** This is parchment but it is made from the skin of calves. It is considered to be of higher quality than sheep or goat parchment. It can also be made of lambs or kids. It is very expensive to purchase. The preparation of the skin for use as a writing material is very labor intensive. The finest books still use vellum instead of paper.



*To the Ends of the Earth*, Donald Jackson, The Saint John's Bible, Order of Saint Benedict, Collegeville, Minnesota.

**Background/Key Ideas:** *The Saint John's Bible* was created by a committee of theologians, artists and scholars known as the Committee on Illumination and Text. The actual pages were created by a team of 23 professional artists, art historians, medieval historians, theologians, and biblical scholars under the artistic direction of renowned calligrapher Donald Jackson. Each illumination began with a written brief prepared by the CIT. This group provided the artists with suggested verses, scriptural cross-references, free association about the text, imagery brainstorming, and local association/references to existing works of artistic interpretation. The briefs helped to provide Donald Jackson and his team with a full background on each passage. The group carefully read and studied the passages to be illuminated. They looked at the details while thinking, meditating and letting the meaning sink in. Collectively, they pondered the words and phrases with one practical aim: to spark visual ideas. The briefs, combined with individual research, were used by each artist to generate visual interpretations of the passages. Once inspired, Donald and the other artists created sketches (rough drafts) of each passage. The sketches were then digitized and e-mailed to Saint John's. After careful review and study, the CIT prepared a written response with reactions and specific feedback for the artist beginning a back-and-forth dialogue. This would continue until both sides agreed that the artwork was both theologically and artistically sound, and then the final illumination was completed on a page of vellum.

### **Procedures:**

- **Introduction:** Give lecture on *The Saint John's Bible's* history, artwork, and background. Use supporting materials in attached packet as needed. Explain how it was created by a group of people with varying backgrounds and that each illumination was collaboratively created by toughly researching and discussing the text. Clarify that Illumination can mean many things: The act of making understood, clarification, intellectual enlightenment, insight or understanding. A source of light, and the art or act of decorating a text, page, or initial letter with ornamental designs, miniatures, or lettering.
- **Activity One:** Explain to the students that the CIT team used text to create the imagery. Talk with students about imagery and how text can create a picture in your head. Have students close their eyes and ready a short excerpt, saying, poem, etc. Have them focus on imagining what they see in their heads. Then have students spend 5 minutes drawing a quick image of what they saw. Have select students share their drawings and as a class compare and contrast. Celebrate the similarities and differences and that each student has a unique perspective.
- **Activity Two:** Divide students into groups. Assign group members a specific role just like the CIT committee filled specific roles that contributed to the group. Some examples could be: Facilitator, recorder, timekeeper, prioritizer, etc. Explain to the students that they will be working together to create an illuminated collage utilizing a piece of text of their choosing. Talk with student about the power of written text and how the text they choose should be meaningful and agreed upon by the group as a whole. Go over what it takes to work together successfully and that each student will be graded not only by their work individually but also

anonymously by their group members. Read good examples of “texts” that have strong imagery to help students understand what they should be looking for. Have groups brainstorm ideas for where to get their text. Assign homework for each student to bring three different “texts” to the next class.

- **Demonstration:** Show students how to create a collage using mixed media techniques. Go over “rules” of a good composition utilizing the elements and principles of design. Show additional examples of *The Saint John's Bible* illuminations and discuss what the collage is illustrating and how it utilizes the elements of principles of design.
- **Studio Production:** Have students disperse into groups. Each group should agree on one piece of text. As a group they should come up with several sketches, discuss and confirm with the teacher their final design. Students will create the collage working collaboratively using mixed media collage techniques.

**Closure:** Participate in class critique. Have students share as a group, first reading their text and then showing their final piece.

**Assessments:** See attached rubric.

**Enrichment Activities:** Student artwork could be put on display at the Canton Museum of Art during the *Illuminating The Word: The Saint John's Bible* exhibition.

**Resources:**

*The Saint John's Bible*, “Educators Tool Kit”, curriculum:

<http://www.saintjohnsbible.org/assets/pdf/curriculum.pdf>

# Art Rubric: Illuminated Collage Group Work

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date turned in: \_\_\_\_\_

Criteria	Points	Student Comments	Teacher Comments
<b>Criteria 1</b> – Group participation: Cooperatively worked as a team and shared in the responsibility of tasks.	20	__/20	__/20
<b>Criteria 2</b> – Artwork Concept: Collage creatively illustrates the groups chosen text?	20	__/20	__/20
<b>Criteria 3</b> – Technique: Student used materials correctly and demonstrates knowledge of how to create a mixed media collage.	20	__/20	__/20
<b>Criteria 4</b> – Elements and Principles: Collage utilizes the “rules” of good composition.	20	__/20	__/20
<b>Criteria 5</b> – Craftsmanship: Effort: took time to complete project? (Didn’t rush.) Good use of class time? Neat & complete?	20	__/20	__/20
		/ 100	/100

**Partner Group Work Grade:**

Mark from as scale from one to ten (10 being the best) how much participation and effort did your partners contribute to the creation of the group’s artwork?

Partner Name: \_\_\_\_\_ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
 Partner Name: \_\_\_\_\_ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
 Partner Name: \_\_\_\_\_ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
 Partner Name: \_\_\_\_\_ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
 Partner Name: \_\_\_\_\_ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

As a group member what do you think you contributed to the group and how well did you participate and work as a team member? **(At Least 3 full and complete sentences)**

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How does your groups collage use the “rules” of good composition in your artwork?  
**(At Least 3 full and complete sentences)**

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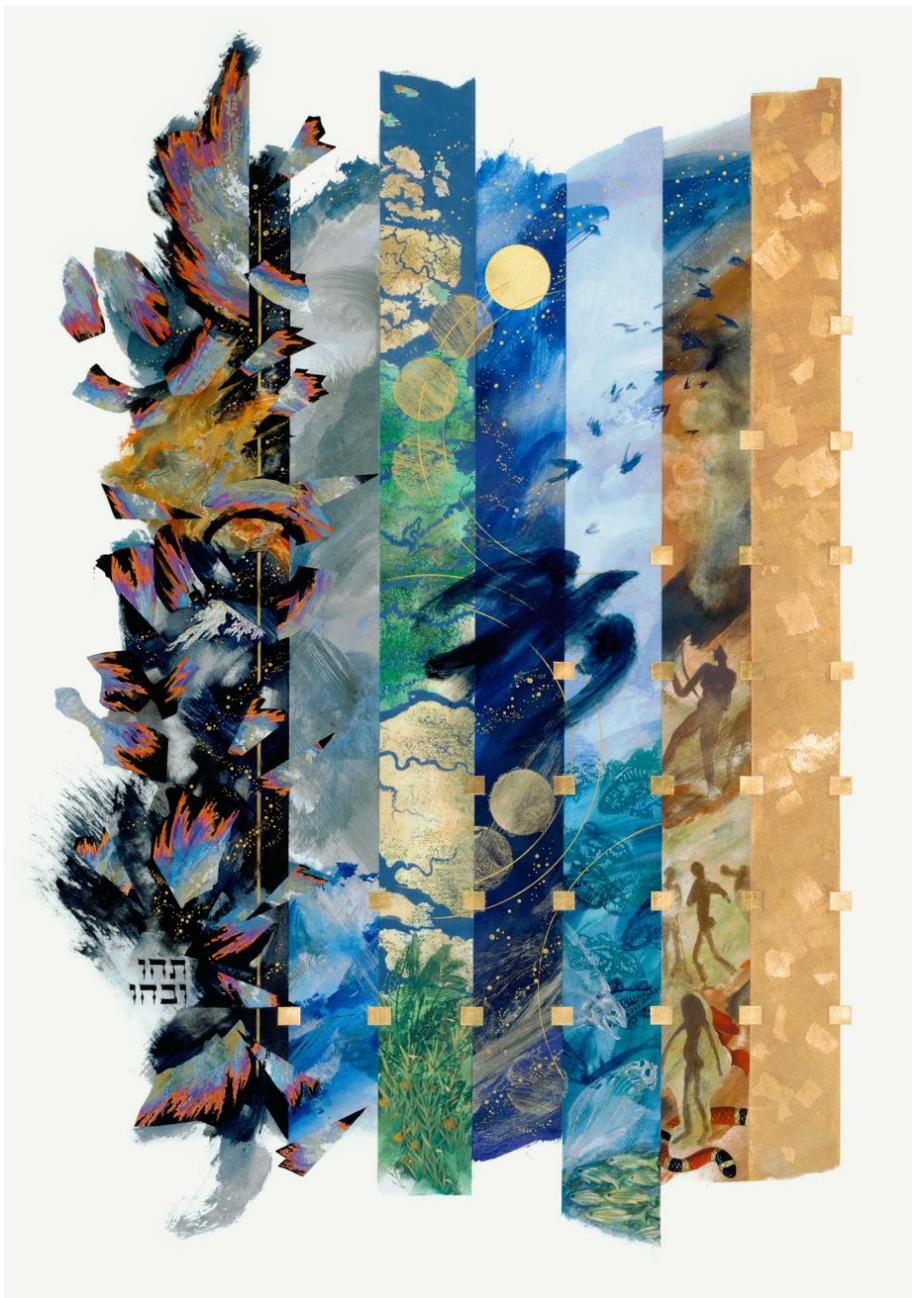
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Donald Jackson with contributions  
from Chris Tomlin, 2003  
**Genesis frontispiece: Creation**  
(Genesis 1:1–2:3 NRSV Translation)  
Vellum, with ink, paint and gold  
Hill Museum & Manuscript Library,  
Collegeville, MN

### **Creation:**

The Creation story unfolds within a framework of counting. As each day passes, the writer repeats his refrain: “And there was evening and there was morning, the first [or second or sixth] day.” The structure of this illumination reflects the progression of days, with seven vertical strips, one for each day, and small golden squares arranged in sequences of seven.

On the first day, fragmented shapes explode from the primordial void, expressed by the Hebrew words *tohu wabohu* (“chaos”). A vertical gold line marks the crucial moment when God said, “Let there be light.” Gold is used throughout to symbolize God’s ordering of the universe. The gold squares expand outward and upward from day one until reaching the serene Sabbath, the seventh day.

Day three contains satellite pictures of the Ganges River Delta, suggesting the division of land and water and the beginnings of vegetation. The creation of human beings on the sixth day is represented by images from aboriginal rock paintings in Africa and Australia. The snake implies dangers to come, in the Garden of Eden. The golden seventh day is given over entirely to the contemplation of the spirit. The raven flying across the composition is the traditional carrier of God’s message to Saint Benedict.

Donald Jackson with contributions  
from Chris Tomlin, 2003

**Adam and Eve** (Genesis 2:4–25 NRSV  
Translation)

Vellum, with ink, paint, gold and silver  
Hill Museum & Manuscript Library,  
Collegeville, MN

**Adam and Eve:**

Adam and Eve are presented as an African man and woman surrounded by patterned fabrics from various ancient cultures. Photographs of Ethiopian tribes people influenced Jackson's design. He wanted to link the notion of the first man and woman with current archaeological and anthropological theories that humankind originated in Africa. The decorative framing around Adam and Eve includes African tapestry patterns and, on the right, a Peruvian feather cape. The horizontal stripes are details of Middle Eastern textiles and of white body painting on black skin.

The poisonous coral snake, also depicted in the Creation and Garden of Eden illuminations, appears between Adam and Eve. It represents the serpent that tempts Eve to disobey God. The gold bar framing Adam and Eve is meant to suggest God's presence as a framework for human life.





Donald Jackson, 2006  
 Scribe: Donald Jackson  
**Ecclesiastes Frontispiece** (Ecclesiastes 1:1 – 2:11 NRSV Translation)  
 Vellum, with ink, paint, silver and gold  
 Hill Museum & Manuscript Library, Collegeville, MN

**Ecclesiastes:**

As a Wisdom Book, Ecclesiastes, focuses attention on life, death and God’s relationship with humanity. A raven, a common symbol of death, serves as a messenger flying up from the center of the illumination appearing to carry the breath of life back to God. It is pierced and surrounded by gold and silver bars, designations of divinity.

The divine, human, and natural realms are juxtaposed with each other as they portray the various ways in which God creates.

The four elements of creation are all here: the green hues of fertile earth, the mysterious blues reflected in both sky and water, and the fire found in stars and comets. Despite the chaos of circling images spinning off the page, there is a constant communication between the heavens and the earth.



7. **Historiated Initial** This is a popular feature of medieval illumination. Inside the illuminated letter the artist depicts a scene that the people of that time recognize. The figures or scene may or may not be related to the text. Borders or marginalia were also often historiated. The scenes could depict a recognizable person or scene with which the people would identify.
8. **Inhabited Initial** This is different from the historiated initial. The inhabited initial contains humans or animals, but not a recognizable scene. There are also inhabited borders.
9. **Marginalia/Border** The borders or marginalia are the decorations surrounding the text. The borders are varied but became very popular to include by the 13th century. The borders take many forms including the inhabited or historiated.
10. **Miniature** This is an illustration that is not related to a specific text. The root of the word is *miniare*, Latin meaning: “to color with red.”
11. **Scriptorium** The scriptorium is the room where books are made. Literally, it means the writing place. Originally, scriptoria (plural for scriptorium) were found in churches and monasteries.
12. **Stylus** This is a sharp, pointed implement used for preparing a manuscript. It is made of metal or bone and helps rule the area where the text will be laid down.
13. **Vellum** This is parchment but it is made from the skin of calves. It is considered to be of higher quality than sheep or goat parchment. It can also be made of lambs or kids. It is very expensive to purchase. The preparation of the skin for use as a writing material is very labor intensive. The finest books still use vellum instead of paper.

### **Background/Key Ideas:**

*The Saint John's Bible* combines medieval traditions of craftsmanship with the latest capabilities of computer technology. Handwritten on vellum using hand-cut quills, ancient inks, natural pigments and 24-karat gold, silver and platinum these same techniques were used in monasteries centuries ago. Many monasteries had a scriptorium, where scribes copied manuscripts of the Bible, religious tracts, and ancient philosophical and scientific treatises. The copying often took years and required expensive materials. Books were precious, and monasteries guarded them zealously, often chaining them to shelves and desks.

The manuscripts were written with stylized calligraphy and decorated with beautiful ornate details. A decorated letter was commonly used as the first letter of a page or paragraph. It was enlarged and in color with gold applied in specific areas. Inhabited initials contained humans or animals, but not a recognizable scene. There are also inhabited borders. The images used to enhance the letters included animals, plants and people. These images were modified to fit into or around the letter or in some cases took on the shape of the letter itself. Some letters served to illustrate the story in the text. Historiated Initials were a popular feature of medieval illumination. The figures or scene may or may not be related to the text. Borders or marginalia were also often historiated. Inside the illuminated letter the artist depicted a scene that the people of that time recognized.

Illumination is the act of making understood, clarification, intellectual enlightenment; insight or understanding, a source of light, and the art or act of decorating a text, page, or initial letter with ornamental designs, miniatures, or lettering.

**Procedures:**

- **Introduction:** Give lecture on medieval manuscripts and *The Saint John's Bible's* history, artwork, and background. Use supporting materials in attached packet as needed. Clarify that Illumination can mean many things: The act of making understood, clarification, intellectual enlightenment, insight or understanding, a source of light. The art or act of decorating a text, page, or initial letter with ornamental designs, miniatures, or lettering. Compare and contrast medieval manuscripts and the Saint John's Bible pointing out the similarities and differences from the different time periods. Explain to the students that they will be creating a medieval decorated letter with modern techniques. They will choose the first letter of their first or last name and create a unique letter that says something about themselves that has meaning for them. Some examples could be family, interests, hobbies, etc. The style should also reflect their personality. Tell students that they have three choices on how to create their decorated letter:
  1. They can create a letter using a unique and creative font and decorate the background with a story or images. Encourage student to utilize objects to wrap and weave around the letter.
  2. They can create a letter using images of objects to create the letter and decorate the background with a simple color or motif.
  3. They can create a letter using images to fill the inside of the letter.
- **Demonstration:** Show students how to start their design with a rough draft done in light pencil. Have students create a border first. This border should also incorporate and unify elements from their design. Show students how to use a ruler to create straight lines and emphasize filling the page with the whole letter. Use metallic paint, markers, or colored pencils to add a gilded effect.
- **Studio Production:** Student will create their illuminated letter using colored pencil. Provide students with any examples of fonts, animals, design, etc. that might be helpful for students to look at.
- **Closure:** Participate in class critique. Have students share as a group.

**Enrichment Activities:** Student artwork could be put on display at the Canton Museum of Art during the *Illuminating The Word: The Saint John's Bible* exhibition.

**Resources:**

*The Saint John's Bible*, "Educators Tool Kit", curriculum:

<http://www.saintjohnsbible.org/assets/pdf/curriculum.pdf>

*New York Public Library*: Collection of Medieval Manuscripts contains over 2000 digital images of manuscript pages dating from the 9th to the 16th centuries:

[http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/explore/dgexplore.cfm?col\\_id=173](http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/explore/dgexplore.cfm?col_id=173)

*The British Library*: Online collection of digital images of Christian and Hebrew manuscript pages:

<http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/welcome.htm>

*The J. Paul Getty Museum*: Website includes a video describing the process for creating an illuminated manuscript, from preparing the parchment to decorating the parchment with imagery:

<http://www.getty.edu/art/gettyguide/videoDetails?cat=2&segid=372>

*The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, Illuminated manuscripts in Renaissance Italy:

[http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/iman/hd\\_iman.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/iman/hd_iman.htm)