Designing Illuminated Text

Subject: Art 1

Grade level: 9-12

Purpose:
Students will study illuminated manuscripts from the Gutenberg Bible to better understand the influence of technology on art. Viewing examples of illuminated manuscripts from the Renaissance will encourage students to explore the effects of the printing press on the monetary and aesthetic value of literature and art. Finally, students will create an illuminated initial through traditional and contemporary means and discuss how their experiences might alter their opinion concerning the effect of technology on art.

Materials:
PowerPoint and accompanying *Notes handout*
Quill pens, India ink, pencils, erasers, drawing paper, watercolor pencils, paint brushes, gold paint or pens, and prisma pencils
Computer scanner, Photoshop

Lesson Duration:
Six 45-minute class periods

Objectives: Art 117.52
 (1A) illustrate ideas for artworks from direct observation/imagination.
 (1B) compare/contrast art elements/principles in personal artworks and those of others, using vocabulary accurately.
 (2C) demonstrate effective use of art media/tools in design and drawing.
 (3A) compare and contrast historical and contemporary styles.
 (4A) interpret, evaluate, and justify decisions in personal artworks.

Activity:
Step 1: Introduce the unit using the included PowerPoint and *Notes handout*. Be sure to acquaint yourself with the Ransom Center's Gutenberg Education Module so that you may elaborate where appropriate. (http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/exhibitions/education/modules/gutenberg)

Step 2: Have students create 10 thumbnail sketches exploring a variety of designs combined with Gothic letters. Emphasize exploring various compositions and spacing of the letters. Have them choose one they feel exemplifies the true spirit of illuminated images.

Step 3: Have students enlarge their favorite design onto a 9 x 12 sheet of paper. Remind them to sketch lightly with a pencil. (I suggest a 1" top and bottom margin and 1 _" side margins.)

Step 4: Demonstrate to students the pen and ink process. Have students use the pen and ink to outline the letter and designs where needed. Dry completely.

Step 5: Review watercolor and prisma color techniques. Have students use watercolor pencils to hand-color their designs. Have them vary value and intensity with the prisma colors where needed. Allow them to accent with a gold pen or acrylic paint to get an illuminated effect.

Step 6: Review basic PhotoShop techniques with students. As students complete the hand-colored piece, have them scan their image into PhotoShop. They should save the original image to their student drive.

Step 7: Have each student use basic PhotoShop skills to make at least five changes to the image and print the new image.

Step 8: If available, have students mat the two pieces.

Step 9: Display the work and have a short class critique on both the composition and concept of various designs used.

Modification:
Use stencils to create letters or enlarge and copy computer font to trace from a light table. Use only prisma pencils.

Student Product:
Students will complete the unit with the two images they have created and notes from the PowerPoint.

Closure:
With the artwork still available to view, discuss the following:
1. Which image is more artistic? More valuable?
2. How do you think persons living during the Renaissance might have felt about the effects of the printing press/technology on art?
3. Can you think of other issues or concerns contemporary artists might face in the future when combining technology and art?

Assessment and evaluation:
Artwork may be self-critiqued by each artist and turned in with the work. The work should be evaluated based on a rubric created at the beginning of the assignment (Mine is typically 25% composition, 25% criteria, 25% craft, and 25% creativity.)

Extension:
Have students create an illuminated sketch of one of their initials. Incorporate objects that describe their hobbies or interests into the design. They could color it or leave it black and white.

Teacher Resources:
Be sure to look over the **Gutenberg Education Module** for information to go along with the PowerPoint:
    http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/exhibitions/education/modules/gutenberg/

Interesting facts about paper:
    http://www.tappi.org/paperu/all_about_paper/paperHistory.htm
    http://www.uh.edu/engines/epi1227.htm

Gothic patterns, designs, and fonts:
    http://store.doverpublications.com/0486297918.html
    http://www.retrokat.com/medieval/le.htm

Medieval Music:
    http://www.amazon.com

Activity by:
Stacy Hunt
Creekview High School
Carrollton-Farmers Branch ISD

Illuminated Text Power Point Notes
The Influence of the Gutenberg Bible

The Gutenberg Bible
Background Information

❧Johannes Gutenberg's Bible was completed c.1455.

❧It was the first book printed with movable metal type.

❧It was the beginning of mass production of written material.

❧The UT Ransom Center purchased its Gutenberg Bible in 1978 for $2.4 million.

Why was it important?
It is an accurate historical example of a traditional Medieval Church Bible.

❧It was created for the church, not individuals.
❧The pages were made from linen rags.
❧It was printed in Latin.
❧It exemplified gothic type and ornate illumination popular during the era.

What is Illumination?

❧Illuminations are painted decorations added after text is handwritten or printed.

❧The term illumination comes from the Latin *illuminare,* which means to light up.

❧An illuminated manuscript is technically one decorated with gold or silver because it reflects light. Many manuscripts and books, however, are richly decorated with colors and not gold or silver. The term illumination is often used in a general, if not completely accurate, way to refer to all of these artistic embellishments.

#1: Elegant decorations by a highly skilled illuminator in a German style are found in the first sections of Volume 1.

#2: Following the elegant decorations found in the first sections, the illuminations in the remaining sections of Volume 1 demonstrate inferior skill and diverse styles.

#3: The decorated letters in Volume 2 are painted using only red and blue, and contain no gold leaf.

How were illuminations designed?

❧In the beginning, the illumination was completely drawn and colored by hand.

❧After the press became popular, the image letter and the images may have been printed, but the coloring was typically completely by hand.

❧Today, most images for mass production would be completed through a series of layer printing processes.

How will you apply this information?

❧You will create two final images of your medieval inspired illuminated letter.

> ❧Your first will be a traditional drawing created with quill pen, ink, and hand coloring.
> ❧Your second one will be created by scanning your first image and creating changes on it using computer technology.

Student Examples