

Europeana Learning Scenario

Title

Reading in the Middle Ages Programme

Authors

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Abstract

The history of the practice of reading can tell us a lot about the nature and history of the society as a whole. During the Middle Ages, reading was mostly practiced aloud. Much of society was illiterate and texts could only be accessed through public readings. Today the opposite is true — the practice reading silently, and written information is widely available online and through printed text. During this programme, post primary school students will be introduced to the history and function of reading, and explore reading as a means of understanding Medieval society.

Keywords

Monasteries, Cities, Courts

Table of Summary

Subject	History, English, Drama
Topic	The history and practice of reading in the Middle Ages
Age of students	12 - 16 years old
Preparation time	20min homework prep for students
Teaching time	155mins
Online teaching material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hunt Museum Images <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Candle 2. Oil Lamp 3. Inkwell • workbook <p>University of Leiden Videos:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traces of Users
Offline teaching material	N/A



Europeana resources used

Blogs:

- [Private and Public reading](#)
- [How the Carolingian Dynasty changed how we read](#)
- [Monastic vs Scholastic Reading Habits](#)

Galleries:

- [Reading and Writing Tools and Aids gallery](#)
- [Female Literacy in the Middle Ages gallery](#)

Images:

1. [Book Carousel](#)
2. [Lectern](#)
3. [Quill](#)
4. [Book of Hours](#)

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Integration into the curriculum

This programme links with the post primary school history, English and drama curricula. By exploring the practice of reading in the Medieval period, students will develop a historical understanding of life during the medieval period. They will also gain a greater understanding of the significance of developments in reading today. This links with the English curriculum as pupils will develop their understanding of grammar and their communication skills. They will apply this knowledge through practical drama and performance.

Aim of the lesson

- Learn about the origins of reading and its place in daily life, both during the Medieval period and today
- Learn about the place of reading in the lives of women in the Medieval period
- Examine various Medieval manuscripts and use them as evidence to learn about the practice of reading
- Examine medieval reading tools (candles, candle holders, lecterns)
- Learn about melodic lection marks in Medieval texts based on the research of Eleanor Giraud
- Students will be encouraged to experiment with punctuation and tone when reading aloud, engaging creativity skills

Outcome of the lesson

Students will have an awareness of the ways in which reading changed over time and the significance of the Medieval period in these developments. They will gain a better understanding of punctuation and the ways in which tone of voice shapes sentence meaning when reading aloud. They will learn about women's relationship with reading in medieval society.

21st Century Skills

- Students will employ creativity skills as they will have the opportunity to experiment with the performance of tone and punctuation when reading aloud. Pupils will also creatively experiment with creating symbols to represent vocal tonality.
- Students will develop their critical thinking skills when evaluating how tone is used in everyday language.
- Students will develop their communication skills as they will become more confident when using tone when reading aloud.



- Students will develop their literacy skills as they practice reading sentences and learn about how sentence structure has changed over time aloud.
- Students will utilise their information literacy skills when discussing and disseminating texts such as the blogs

Activities

Name of Activity	Procedure	
Preparatory Activity	<p><u>Interactive Reading Aloud game</u></p> <p>Students can play this game at home in advance of class. Alternatively, they can play it in class with the guidance of the teacher.</p>	15 mins

<p>Introduction</p>	<p>Class Discussion: Introduce the topic of reading through history through a class discussion by asking students the following questions:</p> <p>1. What is reading? When we read, we look at symbols to figure out what they mean.</p> <p>Written words are made of symbols called letters. In English, the letters we use are called the Latin Script. This was invented in 700BC.</p> <p>2. What do we read? We read many different different things including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Books - Magazines - Newspapers - Text messages - Emails - Online content - Maps - Music notation - Art <p>3. Why do we read? We read different things for different reasons. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Books for entertainment or learning - Text messages and emails for communication - Online content for sharing ideas - Maps for knowing where to go - Music notation to help us play a musical instrument - Art to figure out what the artist was trying to communicate to the viewer <p>4. Reading in the Medieval period was out loud. (Images from the Reading and Writing Tools and Aids gallery can be viewed here for illustrations of people reading as they would have during the medieval period). They would have read aloud in public spaces or in groups, and they would have talked about the reading afterwards. Compare this to the way we read today. How is it similar and how is it different?</p>	<p>20 mins</p>
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We still read aloud today:

- In school we read aloud to learn together
- Poetry readings and drama performances are read aloud for entertainment
- Religious texts are read aloud at places of worship for prayer

However, today we also read silently:

- We read books and novels silently to entertain ourselves
- We often read silently when doing homework to allow us to think about what we've learnt on our own
- We read text messages, social media, and emails silently for privacy

What things do we need to think about more when reading aloud than reading silently?

When we read aloud to other people, we need to make sure that people understand us. We need to read loudly, slowly, clearly and make sure we know how to pronounce all the words.

We need to make sure we understand the text we are reading so that we can emphasise important parts of the sentence such as the names of people. If we don't do this, we may be misunderstood.

How we say something when reading aloud is very important. We need to make sure we are using the right emotion to convey the meaning of the sentence. This helps the listener to understand what we're saying.

<p>Activity 1: Reading Aloud</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework Preparatory Activity: <p>Read the following blogs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Private and Public reading - How the Carolingian Dynasty changed how we read <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class discussion: what is tone of voice and why is it important? <p><i>Tone of voice is not about what we say, but how we say it. We can say the same thing but use a different tone of voice to give it a different meaning.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ask a student in the class to say “let’s go!” in an excited or happy way. - Ask another student to say “let’s go!” in an annoyed way. - Ask another student to say “let’s go!” in a scared or worried way. <p>These are the same words but all have a different meaning from how they were said.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class discussion: If you were reading from a book, how would you know what emotion or tone of voice to use? <p><u>Possible answers could include:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Context (what is happening in the story) - Punctuation (for example, an exclamation mark) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the ask students to locate each of the symbols (found on page 1) in the image of the manuscript leaf (on page 2). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the students what they think the marks are and how they might have helped the reader? <p><u>Answer:</u></p> <p>In the Middle Ages, these symbols told the reader what tone of voice to use when reading a piece of writing aloud. Melodic lection marks are symbols found in manuscripts during the Middle Ages. Along with punctuation, the melodic lection marks told the reader how to change the tone of their voice while reading aloud. They almost resemble modern-day music notation.</p>	<p>Homework preparatory activity: 20mins</p> <p>Class time: 40mins</p>
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- **Images of the symbols can be found on page 1 of the workbook. Working in pairs, students should work together to come up with their own understanding of what tone of voice the melodic lection marks represent. They can practice making the sounds of each mark out loud using their voices.**
- **Today, punctuation marks can give a hint to the reader of how to change the pitch and tone of their voice. Illustrate this to the class through the following sentence:**

“You went to the shop today.”

Discuss in class what your pitch of voice sounded like when saying this sentence. Did it go up, down, or stay flat? Ask the students to create symbols to represent the pitch and tone of voice used when read aloud. These can be filled in above the sentence in the workbook.

Now read the sentence as a question:

“You went to the shop today?”

Discuss in class what your pitch of voice sounded like when saying this sentence. How was it different from the previous reading? The students can note the symbols to represent this reading of the sentence in their workbook.

Now read the sentence as if it were only the first half of a sentence:

“You went to the shop today, but it was closed.”

Discuss in class what your pitch of voice sounded like when saying this sentence. How was it different from the previous reading? The students can note the symbols to represent this reading of the sentence in their workbook

<p>Activity 2: Reading a Medieval Book</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework Preparatory Activity: <p>Read the following blog:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monastic vs Scholastic Reading Habits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow students to explore the images in the 'Reading and Writing Tools and Aids' Gallery on the Europeana website. Ask them to look at each of the images of people with books and to determine whether the person featured is reading or writing, and what the context is (eg. maybe think an image shows a person reading prayers in a religious ceremony). <p>Ask them to back up their answer with evidence from the image.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certain tools and utensils aided a Medieval reader. Explore the following tools and identify how they may have been helpful for the reading process: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Candle 2. Oil Lamp 3. Book Carousel 4. Inkwell 5. Lectern 6. Quill <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn how quills were used in the reading process in this video 	<p>40mins</p>
<p>Activity 3: Female Literacy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the Europeana Gallery 'Female Literacy in the Middle Ages' with the students and ask them what they can tell about the women in each image by the image and information provided. What is their occupation, status in society etc? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women did read in the Middle Ages. However, reading was not as common amongst women as men - Most literate women were either of high status, and were offered the opportunity of an education, or were nuns who worked in convents. - It was popular amongst wealthy families to give their daughters a Book of Hours to teach them how to read. These books contained a collection of different prayers and stories about the lives of saints. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For more information on female literacy in the Middle Ages, and how women were educated to read at different ages, view this blog from the university of Notre Dame 	<p>40mins</p>