

WRITING IN THE MIDDLE AGES

Target audience:

Primary and secondary school students

(the workshop will be adapted to participant age group)

Goal:

Starting with the Dante manuscript fragments preserved in the Antiquarium, the workshop will explore how manuscript codices—ancestors of modern books—were made, and the materials and writing techniques that make them up.

Structure:

A short explanation of the history of writing, from the earliest forms and modalities to our day, focusing on medieval fragments and on the techniques specific to the medieval period. Students will reproduce ancient letter-forms.

Duration:

2 hours

Cost:

€ 5.00

Municipality of
FOSSATO DI VICO
ANTIQUARIUM

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Study Kit – Reproduce an Initial Letter

The “capolettera” is the first letter of the first line of a text.

In ancient texts the initial was generally larger than the letters that followed it, and was decorated by copyists with lines, frames, or specific illustrations.

The earliest examples of such initials that we know of date from the fourth century of the common era. They seem to have had the function of dividing a block of text into smaller chunks, indicating where new sections began. They weren’t cosmetic or decorative; they guided readers in finding the passage they were looking for, and in keeping track of the flow of the content.

Over time, copyists began to color the initial letter and then to ornament it with images that recalled the theme of the text that followed it.

In the Middle Ages, decorating the initial letters of valuable books became an art: the art of Miniature.

As time went on, the use of initial letters became progressively less practical and more decorative.



**DRAW THE INITIAL LETTER OF THIS PASSAGE
FROM CANTO XI OF *Paradiso* (vv. 43 – 117)**

Intra Tupino e l'acqua che discende
del colle eletto dal beato Ubaldo,
fertile costa d'alto monte pende,
onde Perugia sente freddo e caldo
da Porta Sole; e di rietro le piange
per grave giogo Nocera con Gualdo