

**5th Grade: October : Watercolor Pencils**  
**Lesson 1: Illuminated Letter**

**Objective:** Exploring Layout and Design to create an interesting and colorful image incorporating the artist's first or last name initial and decorative elements to express or describe ones self.

**Technique:** Drawing with watercolor pencils

**Set-up: (before lesson starts, docent and aides)**

8 ½" x 11" white watercolor paper  
Watercolor pencils  
Drawing pencils  
Erasers  
Metallic watercolor pencils (shared among several students)  
Black ink pens  
Brush & water cup caddy

**Visuals:**

Pictures of Illuminated Letters  
Sample artwork

**Teaching the Lesson: (1 hour, total)** Introduce yourself and your aides

Show pictures of illuminated letters. An illumination is an embellishment, or additional decoration, that enhances the pages of a written or manuscript text. The term "illumination" comes from the term illuminate, or to fill with light. This effect is achieved with the application of gold leaf to the letters and images, which would reflect light and appear to glow. An illuminated letter was the first letter of the page or beginning of a paragraph. It was typically enlarged with images surrounding and enhancing it. The images were modified to fit into or around the letter, and in some cases took the shape of the letter itself. The use of gold is by far one of the hallmark features of illuminated manuscripts; however, the bold use of varying colors provided multiple layers of dimension to the illumination. Color brought the images on the page to life and captivated the readers. Today you will create your own illuminated letter. Show sample artwork.

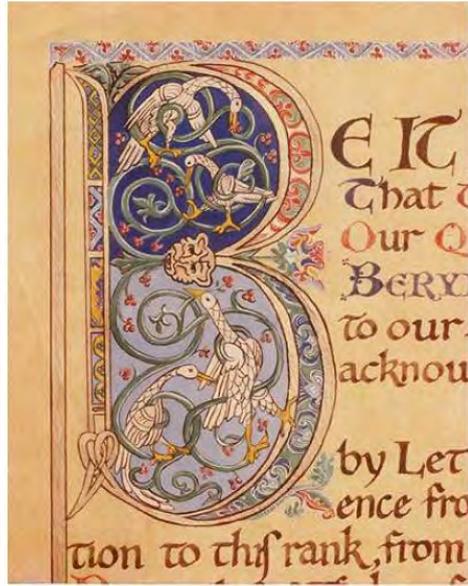
The ancient art of illuminated lettering was developed to tell a story. It is a very early version of what we would now consider Graphic Design. Graphic Design is the process of combing text and graphics to communicate a message, to tell a story, or to sell something. As artists, your students will be designers using a very old method to tell a story about themselves using art and image. The decorative elements they choose to embellish their letter block may be purely decorative or may include symbols or objects that are clues that describe their interests or personality. Embellishments should be imaginative.

**Pattern and repetition** can be used to emphasize an area or element in the background.

**Contrast** in color use, value (dark and light), or size is another useful design tool.

1. Plan and Draw (10min)
  - **Discuss:** Letters often larger than the rest of the text, very elaborate in form, colorful, gold-covered. Embellishments and flourishes adorn and overlap the letters (fluid, decorative).
  - **Show Visual:** Sample artwork (use document camera if available)
  - **Draw:** With a colored pencil, lightly draw large cursive or block first name initial (use most of paper for letter)
  - Complete letter (darken lines; add dimension with additional lines)
  
2. Details (30 min)
  - **Discuss:** Free flowing designs and elliptical shapes decorate the initial. Embellishments can be formal or informal, surrounding and overlapping initial in symmetrical or asymmetrical patterns.
  - **Draw:** With assorted colored pencils, add designs, shapes, embellishments, and flourishes
  - Fill in selective areas with colors
  
3. Complete and Share (20 min)
  - **Discuss:** Borders and edges of patterns & designs can frame the decorative letter. Additional color can be used for darkening pencil lines creating emphasis. Soften lines, and blend colors with moistened paintbrushes
  - **Draw:** With assorted colored pencils, add borders and edges (use lines, cross-hatch, dots, swirls, etc.)
  - Use paintbrush, dipped in water, to evenly fill-in, spread and mix colors in the design.
  - When the design and blending is complete, use additional select colored pencils (dark, metallic) and black ink pens to trace and give accent to particular details
  - Sign name
  - Give a title
  - Share

**Clean-up: (after lesson ends, docent and aides)** Close the lesson, clean up the classroom Sharpen pencils  
Return all materials to bin  
Rinse and return brushes and water containers to caddy  
Return all materials to the art closet  
Ask teacher where to store artwork  
Arrange time with teacher to display artwork



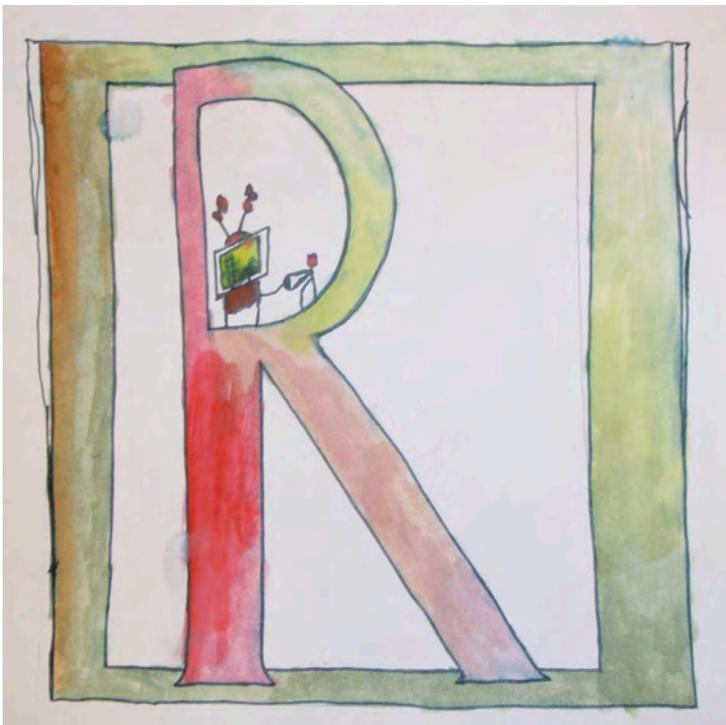
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Pictures of illuminated Letters



Sample artwork: Illuminated Letter



Student Samples showing creative use of descriptive design elements