



Book of Hours - Teacher's Notes

Book of Hours



In Medieval times people read their "Book of Hours". They were used across society and contained prayers and psalms and other daily and seasonal devotions. Since they were often the only book in the household, they also had an alphabet so they could be used to teach children to read. They were often given by a husband to his wife as a marriage gift and were passed down through generations. Rich people had books full of illustrations and often the major initial letters were heavily illuminated.

Divide daylight hours amongst the class and ask them to produce a small illuminated picture indicating what activities should be carried out at that time. E.g. 12 o'clock eating. These can be progressively organised along a wall to represent the passing of the hours of daylight.

Rich people could afford beeswax candles to measure the passing of hours. When Henry XIII had a son he gave a very large donation to the church for candles to mark the passing of the hours. The child died at two months. Town criers walked through cities calling out the passing of the hours when clocks were rare.



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