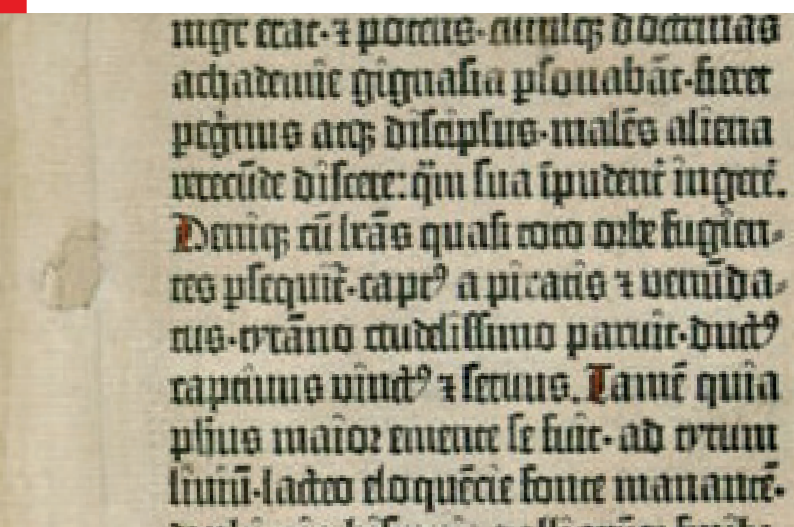




ingressi: aliud terra urbem querebant. Apolloni⁹ siue ille mag⁹ ut vulgus loquitur. siue phis. ut pitagorici tradunt. intrauit plas. p̄t̄uit caucasu. albanos. scythas. massagetas. opulētissima indie regna penetrauit. et ad tetramum latissimo phryson ampne t̄sisuillo puenit ad bragmanas. ut hyarcam in throno sedentē aureo et de tantali fonte potantem. inter paucos discipulos: de natura. de moribz. ac de cursu diei et sider. audiret docentem. Inde p̄ elamitas. babilonios. chaldeos. medos. assyrios. parthos. syros. phenices. arabes. palestinos. raris ad alexandriā: perrexit ad ethiopiā. ut gignosopistas et famosissimam solis mensam videret in sabulo. Quenit ille vir ubiq; q̄ disceret. et semp̄ proficiēs. semp̄ se melior fieret. Scripsit super hoc plenissime cetera volumi.

FEB. 23, 1455: GUTENBERG BIBLE PUBLISHED

Biographies, discussion questions, suggested activities and more



et magister gentiu. qui se totum t̄m t̄m i se hospitiis loquebat. dices. An experimentū querās eius qui in me loquit xpc. Post damascū arabiāq; lustratā: ascēdit iherosolimā ut videt petū et m̄sit apud eū diebz quindē. Hoc cū nūstio ebdomadis et ogdo adis: futur⁹ gentiū p̄dicator instructus erat. Rursūq; post ānos q̄tuordecim assumpto barnaba et tro: repositū cū orbe quāq; odiū ne foret in uo-

PRINTING

Setting the Stage

Before Johannes Gutenberg introduced printing to the West, knowledge of the world was limited to those who could afford to buy expensive, hand-copied books--mainly royalty and religious orders. However, the printing process was already well established in other parts of the world. Chinese artisans were pressing ink onto paper as early as the second century A.D., and by the 800s, they had produced full-length books using wooden block printing. Movable type also first surfaced in the Far East. Sometime around the mid-11th century, a Chinese alchemist named Pi Sheng developed a system of individual character types made from a mixture of baked clay and glue. Metal movable type was later used in Korea to create the "Jikji," a collection of Zen Buddhist teachings. The Jikji was first published in 1377, some 75 years before Johannes Gutenberg began churning out his Bibles in Mainz, Germany.

Cover photo: A close up of the Gutenberg Bible.

FEB. 23, 1455

GUTENBERG BIBLE

PUBLISHED



A page from the Gutenberg Bible.

Most scholars believe that on February 23, 1455, Johannes Gutenberg published what comes to be known as the "Gutenberg Bible" using a printing press he designed and built. The elegant, two-volume Latin bible was Europe's first mass-produced book, and one of the earliest works made using movable metallic type, a system of individual letters and character pieces that could be rearranged and reused during printing.

Before the rise of the Internet, no innovation did more for the spread and democratization of knowledge than Johannes Gutenberg's printing press. Prior to its development, books had to be laboriously copied by hand, a slow and expensive process that made books so costly that they were available to only a small, wealthy segment of the population. They were also prone to human transcription errors, which would then be copied from volume to volume. Gutenberg saw an opportunity to develop a new, less expensive and quicker way to print.

Developed around 1440 in Mainz, Germany, Gutenberg's printing press machine improved on already existing presses through the use of a mould that allowed for the rapid production of lead alloy type pieces. This assembly line method of copying books enabled a single printing press to create as many as 3,600 pages per day. By 1500, over 1,000 Gutenberg presses were operating in Europe, and by 1600 they had created over 200 million new books.

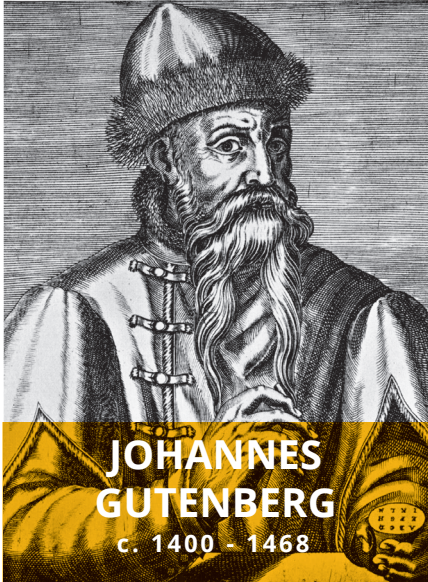
The printing press not only made books affordable for the lower classes, but it helped spark the Age of Enlightenment and facilitated the spread of new and often controversial ideas. In 1518 followers of the German monk Martin Luther used the printing press to copy and disseminate his seminal work "The Ninety-Five Theses," which jump started the Protestant Reformation and spurred conflicts like the Thirty Years' War (1618-48). The printing press proved so influential in prompting revolutions, religious upheaval and scientific thought that Mark Twain would later write, "What the world is today, good and bad, it owes to Gutenberg."

Out of some 180 original printed copies of the Gutenberg Bible, 49 still exist in library, university and museum collections. Less than half are complete, and some only consist of a single volume or even a few scattered pages. Germany stakes the claim to the most Gutenberg Bibles with 14, while the United States has 10, three of which are owned by the Morgan Library and Museum in Manhattan. The last sale of a complete Gutenberg Bible took place in 1978, when a copy was sold for \$2.2 million. A lone volume later went for \$5.4 million in 1987, and experts now estimate a complete copy could fetch upwards of \$35 million at auction. □

DID YOU KNOW?

Before the advent of the printing press, books cost as much as an average person could earn in a lifetime.

PEOPLE TO KNOW



Gutenberg was a German blacksmith, goldsmith and printer who became one of the most influential figures of the last millennium. The printing press he introduced helped transform Europe, democratizing knowledge, sparking a literacy boom and ushering in the Reformation and the Renaissance. Scholars don't know exactly when he was born, whether he married or had children, where he is buried or even what he looked like. Almost all the information about Gutenberg comes from legal and financial papers, and these indicate that the printing of his Bibles was a particularly tumultuous affair. According to one 1455 document, Gutenberg's business partner Johann Fust sued him for the return of a large sum of money loaned to help in the production of his Bibles. Gutenberg lost the lawsuit, and the final ruling stipulated that he had to turn his printing equipment and half the completed Bibles over to Fust, who went on to peddle them alongside one of Gutenberg's former assistants, Peter Schoeffer. Gutenberg was driven into financial ruin. He later started a second print shop, but it's unlikely that he ever turned a profit off his most famous work.

SEE IT



Reproduction of a Gutenberg Printing Press. Source: vlasta2

CONCURRENT EVENTS



BYZANTINE EMPIRE FALLS

In May 1453, the once-mighty Byzantine Empire fell to the Ottomans when Turkish forces under the command of Mehmed II stormed the Byzantine capital of Constantinople. Byzantine ruler Constantine XII died in the fighting. The Byzantine empire was essentially the eastern half of the Roman Empire, which survived, and in fact thrived, for 1,000 years after the fall of Rome in the year 476. The Byzantine Empire spawned a rich tradition of art, literature, theology and learning that exerted great influence on Western intellectual tradition. Even after its fall, scholars of the Italian Renaissance sought help from Byzantine scholars in translating Greek pagan and Christian writings. This process would continue after 1453, when many of these scholars fled to Italy from Constantinople. Long after its “end,” Byzantine culture and civilization continued to exercise an influence on countries that practiced its Orthodox religion, including Russia, Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece, among others.



HUNDRED YEARS' WAR ENDS

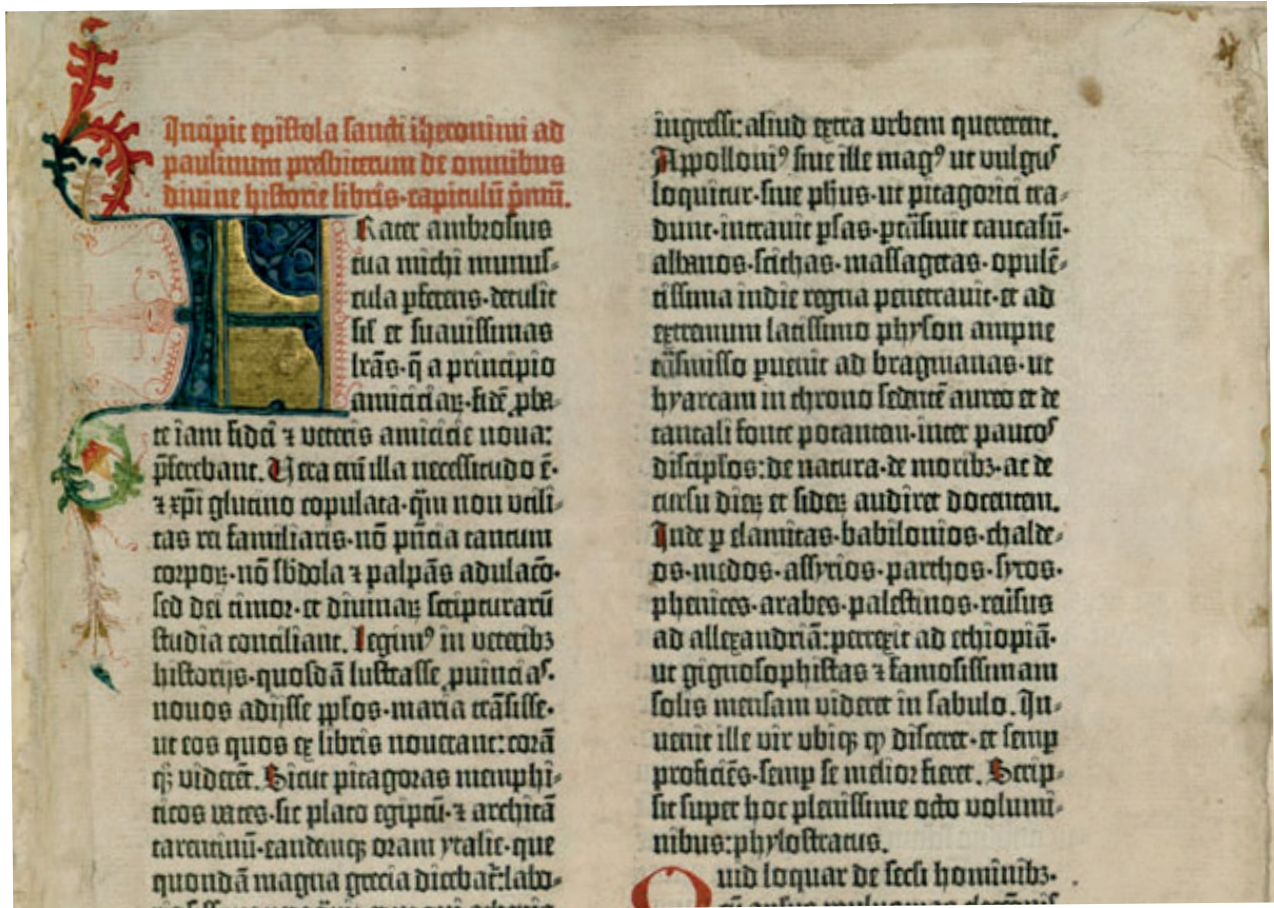
The term “Hundred Years’ War” refers to a series of intermittent conflicts between France and England that took place during the 14th and 15th centuries. Traditionally, the war is said to have begun in 1337 when France’s Philip VI attempted to reclaim Guyenne (in southwestern France) from England’s King Edward III—who responded by laying claim to the French throne—and to have lasted until 1453 when the French claimed victory over the disputed territory at the Battle of Castillon. However, the origin of the periodic fighting could be traced nearly 300 years earlier to 1066, when William the Conqueror, the duke of Normandy, subjugated England and was crowned king. Technically a vassal of the king of France (as the duke of Normandy), William’s simultaneous new role as king of England ushered in a complex web of dynastic marriages in which descendants of both the French and English kingdoms could arguably lay claim to the same territories. Over time, these overseas possessions resulted in inevitable clashes, and by 1337, Philip VI’s declaration that Edward III had forfeited his right to Guyenne was just the push Edward needed to renew his claim to the French throne as the nephew and closest male relative of King Charles IV, who had died in 1328. In subsequent decades, England made a series of military and territorial gains, but these were neutralized as the French liberated Orleans, thanks to Joan of Arc, in 1429; Paris and Ile de France (1436-1441); Normandy (1450); and Guyenne (1453). At this point, England recognized that they could not prevail against the more powerful French and the conflict came to an end, though England maintained control of the port of Calais until 1558.



WAR OF THE ROSES

In May 1455, forces representing the House of York defeated King Henry VI’s House of Lancaster in the opening battle of England’s War of the Roses. As a result, King Henry VI was forced to submit to the rule of his cousin, Richard of York. However, the dynastic struggle between the House of York, whose symbol was a white rose, and the House of Lancaster, later associated with a red rose, over which branch of the royal family should reign over England continued for 30 years. During this bloody and tumultuous time, rule bounced back and forth between the Yorkists and the Lancastrians several times, with the House of Lancaster ultimately prevailing with the ascension of Henry VII. Henry VII then married Elizabeth of York, finally uniting the dual claims to the British throne.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



Gutenberg Bible

- 1 Why was using moveable type a more efficient way of printing books?
- 2 After the advent of the printing press, the most popular books weren't about religion or science, but what today would be called travel books—books that described distant lands and people. Why do you think this was?
- 3 In what ways were the effects of the invention of the printing press and of the internet similar?

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES



The Gutenberg Bible. Source: Kevin Eng.

DEAR HISTORY

Ask students to compose a letter to Johannes Gutenberg from their vantage point in the 21st century. Letter can cover some or all of the following (1) how the student feels his invention has helped to shape modern life (2) the importance of books in the modern world (3) a description of how people consume information today as compared to Gutenberg's time (4) his or her favorite book and what impact it had on his or her life.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Although he never ended up making money from the printing press, historians believe that money was part of Gutenberg's motive for its creation. Conversely, the developers of the internet intended for it to be free for everyone to use. Should access to knowledge be free? Ask students to write a short essay defending their answer to this question, and follow up with a class discussion.

HISTORY OF BOOKS

Assign students to small groups, and assign each group one of the following ways in which information has been recorded and passed on over the course of history. Topics can include clay tablets in Mesopotamia; papyrus scrolls in ancient Egypt; Roman codices; European manuscripts in the Middle Ages; and wood block printing. Students should research their assigned topic and prepare a short presentation for the class on the technique including: what the technique was; how it was done and what material was used; what kind of information was disseminated; its benefits and drawbacks; and illustrations of the technique. Presentations can be given in front of the class. After students have had a chance to learn about each technique, ask them to write a short explanation (in a few sentences) of what made the printing press superior to previous publishing techniques. To deepen the experience, ask students to view images of the Gutenberg Bible and to write and illustrate their words in a similar style.

RESOURCES

Video: The Printing Press

<http://www.history.com/shows/mankind-the-story-of-all-of-us/videos/the-printing-press>

Video: The Book That Changed the World

<http://www.history.com/topics/middle-ages/videos/the-book-that-changed-the-world>

Website: Explore the Gutenberg Bible Online, The Morgan Library

<http://www.themorgan.org/collection/Gutenberg-Bible>

Website: Johannes Gutenberg and the Printing Press: Social and Cultural Impact, by Owlcation

<https://owlcation.com/humanities/Johannes-Gutenberg-and-the-Printing-Press-Revolution>

Website: History of Writing and Printing, Oregon State University

<http://scarc.library.oregonstate.edu/omeka/exhibits/show/mcdonald/incunabula/gutenberg/>

Website: Teacher's Activity Pack on Printing and Bookmaking, Ireland's National Print Museum

<https://www.nationalprintmuseum.ie/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Primary-School-Teachers-Fact-and-Activity-Pack-New-2013.pdf>