



Teacher:
Class: 2nd grade
Duration: 3 class periods
Course Unit:
Lesson Title: Illuminating Manuscripts and Bestiaries

LESSON OVERVIEW

Students will encounter the tradition of illuminated manuscripts and bestiaries and create their own illuminated bestiary page. Students will illustrate the animals, write descriptions, invent or retell a corresponding legend, and decorate their pages with initials and borders. Students will choose animals they are familiar with from personal experience, real animals they have never seen before, or creatures they invent themselves.

STANDARDS

Tennessee State Standards

Visual Art—Grade 2

- 1.1 Use tools and media consistently in a safe and responsible manner.
- 1.2 Demonstrate an understanding of a variety of techniques.
- 1.3 Explore a variety of processes.
- 1.4 Recognize and demonstrate levels of craftsmanship.
- 2.3 Understand and apply purpose in art.
- 3.1 Select subject matter, symbols, and ideas for the student’s own art.
- 4.1 Understand that art comes from different cultures, times, and places.
- 4.2 Understand that culture, history, and art influence one another.
- 6.1 Understand connections between visual art and other disciplines in the curriculum.

Science—Grade 2

- GLE 0207.2.1 Investigate the habitats of different kinds of local plants and animals.
- GLE 0207.2.2 Investigate living things found in different places.

Common Core Connections for Integrated Subjects—Language Arts, Speaking & Listening

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.2.2 Recount stories, including fables and folktales from diverse cultures, and determine their central message, lesson, or moral.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.2.7 Use information gained from the illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting, or plot.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.2.9 Compare and contrast the most important points presented by two texts on the same topic.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.2.10 By the end of the year, read and comprehend informational texts, including

history/social studies, science, and technical texts, in the grades 2–3 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

OBJECTIVES

1. Students will create a written description and illustration of several animals.
2. Students will decorate their writing with features of an illuminated manuscript.
3. Students will research and integrate—or imagine—facts about their animals.
4. Students will be able to write a story that includes a moral.

ASSESSMENT/EVALUATION

1. The teacher will walk around the room to observe the students' work habits during the activity and note how well they follow instructions.
2. Teachers will evaluate students' efforts to complete their objectives of decorating the page borders and initial, writing their animal description, and illustrating their animal.

MATERIALS

- A PC-to-projector connection
- 2 gold Sharpies per workstation
- 2 silver Sharpies per workstation
- 2 sets of colored pencils (or equivalent) per workstation
- 1 double-sided Bestiary Worksheet per student
- One 11" x 17" illuminated manuscript template per student
- 1 pencil or pen per student
- [optional] Premade example of an initial letter drawn into a template page
- Gold and silver acrylic or tempera paint
- 1 small/ultrafine paintbrush per student
- 1 well of gold paint per table
- 1 well of silver paint per table

ACTIVATING STRATEGY

1. Show students the "[Books and Art](#)" episode of [ArtQuest: Art Is All Around You](#), and ask students what they found interesting.
2. On the board, draw a circle map with "illuminated manuscript" written in the center. Ask students what they learned and what they observed about illuminated manuscripts from the episode. Freeze the video on some of the illuminated manuscript images and ask students to describe certain aspects of the images. Invite students to share any associations they have with the phrase *illuminated manuscript* and include them within your circle map. (For advanced circle mapping, draw a square around the larger circle and include within this square the answers to *how* they know what they know.)
3. Incorporate these defining characteristics of an illuminated manuscript within your circle map: **decorated initials, borders, and miniature illustrations.**
4. [Say:] Illuminated manuscripts were first made popular in medieval times—that's over 600 years ago—in Europe and the Middle East. Do you think they had TVs and computers back then?... That's right, illuminated manuscripts were first-class entertainment.
5. Tell students that they will be creating their own illuminated manuscript page and a specific kind of text—a **bestiary**.
6. [Say:] A bestiary is a collection of short descriptions about all sorts of animals, real and imaginary, sometimes including plants and rocks. (Source: University of Aberdeen)
7. [Ask:] What is a moral? Have you ever heard someone say, "And the moral of the story is..."? A moral has to do with teaching a lesson about life.
8. [Say:] A bestiary can also include legends and stories in which animals play a part.

9. Read the following legend to the class:

A panther is a creature out of ancient myth that resembles a big cat with a multicolored hide. Under medieval belief, after feasting, the panther will sleep in a cave for a total of three days. After this period ends, the panther roars, and as he roars, he gives off a sweet smelling odor through his breath. This odor draws in any creatures who smell it (except the dragon, who is immune), they are eaten by the panther, and the cycle begins again.

(Derived from various sources at [The Medieval Bestiary](#) website)

10. [Say:] Can you think of any morals that go along with this story? Any lessons we can learn?
11. Field answers and validate them as possible interpretations before offering the following possibility. [Say:] It teaches us that we should be cautious when we are attracted to something that seems sweet, because it might be dangerous.
12. [Say:] For example, candy is sweet, but it can give you cavities. Think of the story of Hansel and Gretel.
13. [Say:] Do you think that the panther described in this legend is a real animal?
14. Show the images of several panthers. (These can include the black-coated jaguars and leopards called black panthers, as well as North American mountain lions.)
15. [Say:] Animals belonging to the scientific classification *Panthera* include lions, tigers, leopards, and jaguars. They have skulls and throats that allow them to roar, but instead of giving off an attractive fragrance like medieval bestiary writers believed, their roars warn others to stay away from their territory. *Panthera* is a Latin word that means “predator of all things.” What are some questions you might want answered about panthers?
16. [Say:] Compare the 2 different accounts of the panther—the medieval legend with the scientific description. What are some similarities and differences?
17. [Say:] Medieval bestiaries also included mythic animals that correspond to strange combinations of real animals, like the **griffin**, a legendary creature that is part lion and part eagle. [Show an image of a griffin.] What body parts look like a lion’s? How about an eagle’s? That’s right, it has a lion’s body, tail, and back legs, and an eagle’s head and wings, along with eagle talons as its front feet. Because the lion was considered the king of the beasts and the eagle the king of birds, the griffin was thought to be an especially powerful creature, and was considered an enemy to horses and men. Griffins were said to live high in the mountains, where they guarded mines of gold or precious stones and gems. (Source: [The Medieval Bestiary](#))

INSTRUCTIONS

PART 1

1. Prior to class, set up workstations for this activity as follows:
 - a. Determine the number of workstations needed, with 3–5 students per station.
 - b. At each station, place 2 gold and 2 silver Sharpies, and 2 sets of colored pencils.
2. Tell students that they may choose...
 - a real animal that fascinates them.
 - a real animal with which they are familiar.
 - an imaginary animal they invent, perhaps through combinations of other animals.
3. Tell students that their manuscript page will have 4 requirements:
 - A written description of a real or imagined animal
 - A written legend about a real or imaginary animal
 - Decorations for the page borders and the initial
 - An illustration of the animal
4. Pass out the Bestiary Worksheet to each student.
5. [Say:] Your first step is to come up with your animal. Choose an animal that fascinates you... one you have seen at the zoo, or only seen in photographs... or an animal you have seen outside or even in your home. There is no animal too big or small, too exotic or ordinary for you to bring to life on your illuminated page! But don’t choose an animal because your friend chose it; choose one that makes you curious. Or, create an imaginary animal that makes *you* wonder... Which animals will you combine? What will you name it?

6. [Say:] Write a physical description of your animal on your worksheet. Make sure that your first sentence starts with your animal's name, because the first letter of the name will become the initial in the top left-hand corner of your manuscript page. For example, if my first sentence is "Pelicans feed their young only on Tuesdays," the "P" in "pelicans" will become the letter in the box and "elicans" will form the first normal letters on my page.
7. [Say:] Use words to describe your animal's head, its body, and its legs and feet. Does it have a tail? Does it have wings or fins? How large or small is it? Can you compare its body parts to other animals? Does it have the head of a lion and the body of a fish? Or is it something as strange and real as an ocelot? Paint a picture with your words so your reader can imagine your animal.
8. [Say:] You have 10 minutes to write at least 3 good sentences describing your animal's physical appearance. Write them on your worksheet, and flip it over to the back if you run out of room.
9. [Say:] Here are some words you can use to describe your animal's body: *antlers, claws, fins, fur, gills, hooves, horns, paws, scales, shells, spots, stripes, tentacles, tusks, wings*. [Write the words on the board as you say them aloud.]
10. When 10 minutes have passed, [Say:] Good job, everyone, now it's time to write a description of the nature of your animal. What is it like? Include at least three "facts" about your animal, such as its habitat, how it finds food, how it survives harsh weather conditions, or what it likes to do. Does it have any special abilities? Who can tell me what a habitat is? Who can describe an example of a habitat? What is your animal's habitat, or place it lives? You have 10 minutes to write this portion on your worksheet.
11. If you like, permit students to leave their seats to consult any informational resources on animals you may have in your room.
12. When 10 minutes have passed, [Say:] Good job, everyone, now it's time to write a legend, like that of the panther, but for *your* animal. Even if you chose a real animal, anything can happen in your legend. And remember, the purpose of your legend is to give a moral—a lesson your readers should learn about life. Many of the ancient and medieval bestiary writers used legends about animals to teach religious ideas. At the end of your legend, answer this question: *What can we learn from your animal?* Will your animal teach us about caution? Or, will it teach us about patience, or hard work, or being selfless? The animal can be a good example, or it can serve a warning. Who remembers how the legend of the panther gave us a warning? What did it warn us about?... There were other versions to the legend of the panther in which the panther attracted the animals with his breath and enjoyed their company instead of eating them. You get to choose what lesson to teach, and how you want to teach it! You have 10 minutes to write your legend.

PART 2

1. Pass out the illuminated manuscript templates.
2. [Say:] Use a pencil or a pen to copy your animal description and legend from your worksheet to your manuscript page. Be extra careful and neat with your writing. Your writing is part of your artwork. Don't write the first letter of your first sentence on the page yet, though. Remember—it's going to go in the rectangle at the top. [Remind them of the "P" and "elicans" example in Part 1, Step 6.]
3. When 10 minutes have passed, [say:] Good job, everyone! I can't wait to read your descriptions and legends! Now it's time for you to start decorating your illuminated manuscript page. In the rectangle at the top left corner, draw the first initial of your animal's name as a big letter that takes up almost the entire box. [As you say this, draw an example on the board or show a premade example.]
4. Show examples from the "Images from Medieval Manuscripts" part of this document. [Say:] Notice how the borders of the page are decorated, too, with different designs, often using vines and other types of plants. [Show students how to draw a winding vine with leaves coming off it.] Make your pages as fancy and ornate as you like. Use colored pencils for most of your illustrations, and plan ahead for which parts you want to add in a little bit of shine! The last step will be adding the gold or silver paint. Add just a tiny amount—handle these metallic paints like a precious, hard-to-get material, just like the illustrators of medieval manuscripts handled real gold leaf. You have 10 minutes to decorate your initial and page borders.
5. Circulate as they work, and check on their written descriptions, making sure that they are on the right track and that they don't have any glaring spelling or grammatical issues. Encourage them with ideas to make their initials and borders more elaborate.

PART 3

1. [Say:] It's time to draw a picture of your animal. Try to give it some personality. What kind of look should it have on its face? Look back at your description. How did you describe it? You want it to look as much like your description as possible. Make it colorful, and give it a nice background, and feel free to use a little of the Sharpie—but not too much. Remember that it is precious gold you're dealing with. You can illustrate your animal from a moment in your legend, too. How can you show visually what's happening in your story?
2. You can draw an example on the board, and then show the panther illustration from the Aberdeen Bestiary and explain how it represents a moment in the story.
3. [Say:] Okay, take the next 10 minutes to focus on drawing your animal. Add lots of details, and choose 1 or 2 (such as the sun or an eyeball) for which you want to use the gold or silver paint. Have fun illustrating your bestiary page!
4. When 10 minutes are up, distribute the small or ultrafine brushes and instruct students in how to slowly and delicately add brushes of gold here or there to illuminate their manuscript pages. Give students 10 minutes to use the gold and silver paint and put finishing touches on their work.
5. To clean up, have students return all Sharpies and colored pencils to their respective bins and worksheets to their appropriate folder.

ALTERNATE/EXTRA ACTIVITIES

- Students can create 3–4 additional bestiary pages to produce their own short illuminated bestiary. Student can use the template for each page or create their own manuscript page layout.
- To focus on life science, charge students with selecting a real animal for an additional bestiary page. Provide access to informational resources on animals, or schedule a trip to the library where the librarian can help you guide students' research on their animals.
- The students could put their pages together to create a class bestiary book, which you can put on display and photocopy in color so each student can take his or hers home.
- Students can use the illuminated manuscript style to simply tell a story and illustrate it.
- For students with special needs and/or fine motor issues, print out a 3" x 4" illuminated letter coloring template from freeprintablecoloringpages.net.

CLOSURE

1. [Say:] Well done, everyone! You've created your own page for a medieval bestiary! Your illuminated manuscript style looks great! Some of you invented creatures and some of you learned more about real animals, but you all discovered something of value—something that means something to you and can be shared with others.
2. Instruct students to leave their manuscript page on their desk and walk around to view their classmates' work. Conclude with a class discussion and encourage them to tell their classmates how much they enjoyed viewing their pages and reading their descriptions.

CROSS-CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

- Language Arts
- Life Science

EXTENDED LEARNING

Activities:

- Lanternfish, "[Animal Body Parts](http://bogglesworldesl.com)," bogglesworldesl.com
- Leticia Lopez, "[Fantastical Beasts](http://getty.edu)," getty.edu
- Metropolitan Museum of Art, "[Lesson Plan: Medieval Beasts and Bestiaries](http://metmuseum.org)" (adapted from Michael Norris, *Medieval Art: A Resource for Educators*), metmuseum.org
- Savetz Publishing, "[Illuminated Letters Coloring Pages](http://freeprintablecoloringpages.net)," freeprintablecoloringpages.net

Articles and books:

- Pauline Baynes, *Questionable Creatures: A Bestiary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006)
- Helen D. Hume, "The Bestiary; Animal Drawings," in *The Art Teacher's Survival Guide for Elementary and Middle Schools* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 159.
- Elizabeth Morrison, *Beasts Factual and Fantastic* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2007)

Videos:

- Frist Center for the Visual Arts, "[Books and Art](#)," *ArtQuest: Art Is All Around You* (2014; available at fristkids.org)
- Getty Museum, "[Making Manuscripts](#)" (2010; available at YouTube.com)
- Sexy Codicology, "[Illuminated Manuscripts—Fantastic Beasts from the Northumberland Bestiary](#)" (2014; available at YouTube.com)
- Wendy Windle, "[Illuminated Letters](#)" (by Academy School's 5th-grade classes) (2010; available at YouTube.com)
- Wisconsin Public Radio, "[Demo of Manuscript Illumination](#)" (2011; available at YouTube.com)

For additional lesson plans and activities, visit us at fristkids.org. This lesson plan was created by an art education student in the Frist Center for the Visual Arts' Teaching Assistant Program under the guidance of education department staff and/or a mentor teacher. The Teaching Assistant Program is designed to introduce participants to museum education by providing unique teaching experiences in an informal learning environment. For more information about this program or other educational opportunities offered by the Frist Center, please visit fristcenter.org.



Bestiary Worksheet

Name of your animal: _____

Directions: Remember to use complete sentences, begin each sentence with a capital letter, and end it with a punctuation mark.

Describe the physical features of your animal. (Begin your first sentence with the plural form of the animal: "Pelicans have long, slender necks...")

Describe the nature of your animal. (What is its habitat? How does it eat and survive harsh weather? Does it have any special abilities?)

Images from Medieval Manuscripts



Phoenix in the Aberdeen Bestiary, 12th century (via [Wikimedia Commons](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Aberdeen_Bestiary_12th_century_Phoenix.jpg))



Leopard in the Aberdeen Bestiary, 12th century (via [Wikimedia Commons](#))

appropinquare draco. Attendo igitur homo et permanere in fide
catholica. ibique habita ibique persevera. in una ecclesia catholica. Ca
ne quantum potes ne extra domum foveas inveniatis. et com
prehendat te ille draco serpens antiquus et devoret te sicut
vidam qui mox ut exiit a domino foveas et fratribus aplis.
statim a demone devoratus est et perit. **De serpentibus.**

Anguis omnium serpentum est genus quod compli
cari et torqueri potest. et inde quod anguis angu
losus sit et nunquam reclusus. Colubrum ab eo dictum
quod colat umbras. vel quod in lubricos tractus siccis sim
osis labat. Nam lubricum dicitur quicquid labitur dum tenetur
ut pisos. serpens. Serpens autem nomen accepit quod occultis
accessibus serpit. non aptas passibus sed squamarum minutis
firmis nrisibus reptat. Ita autem que. iiii. pedibus nrisibus sicut
laccere et stiliones. non serpentes sed reptalia nominantur. Serpen
tes autem reptalia sunt. que peccore et ventre reptant. Quorum
tot venena. quot genera. tot pines. tot dolores. quot colores



habentur.

**De draco
hibus.**

Draco
maxime tunc
totum ser
pentium
sunt animan
tum omn
ium super
terram hinc
gigni draco

Elephant in the Aberdeen Bestiary, 12th century (via [Wikimedia Commons](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Aberdeen_Bestiary_f01v_r1r.jpg))

Panther
in the
Aberdeen Bestiary,
12th century



(via [Wikimedia Commons](#))

An actual
panther



Jaguar at the Henry Doorly Zoo in Omaha, Nebraska, 2006, by Colin M. L. Burnett
(via [Wikimedia Commons](#))

Griffin in the
Northumberland
Bestiary,
about 1250–60



(digital image courtesy of the [Getty's Open Content Program](#))



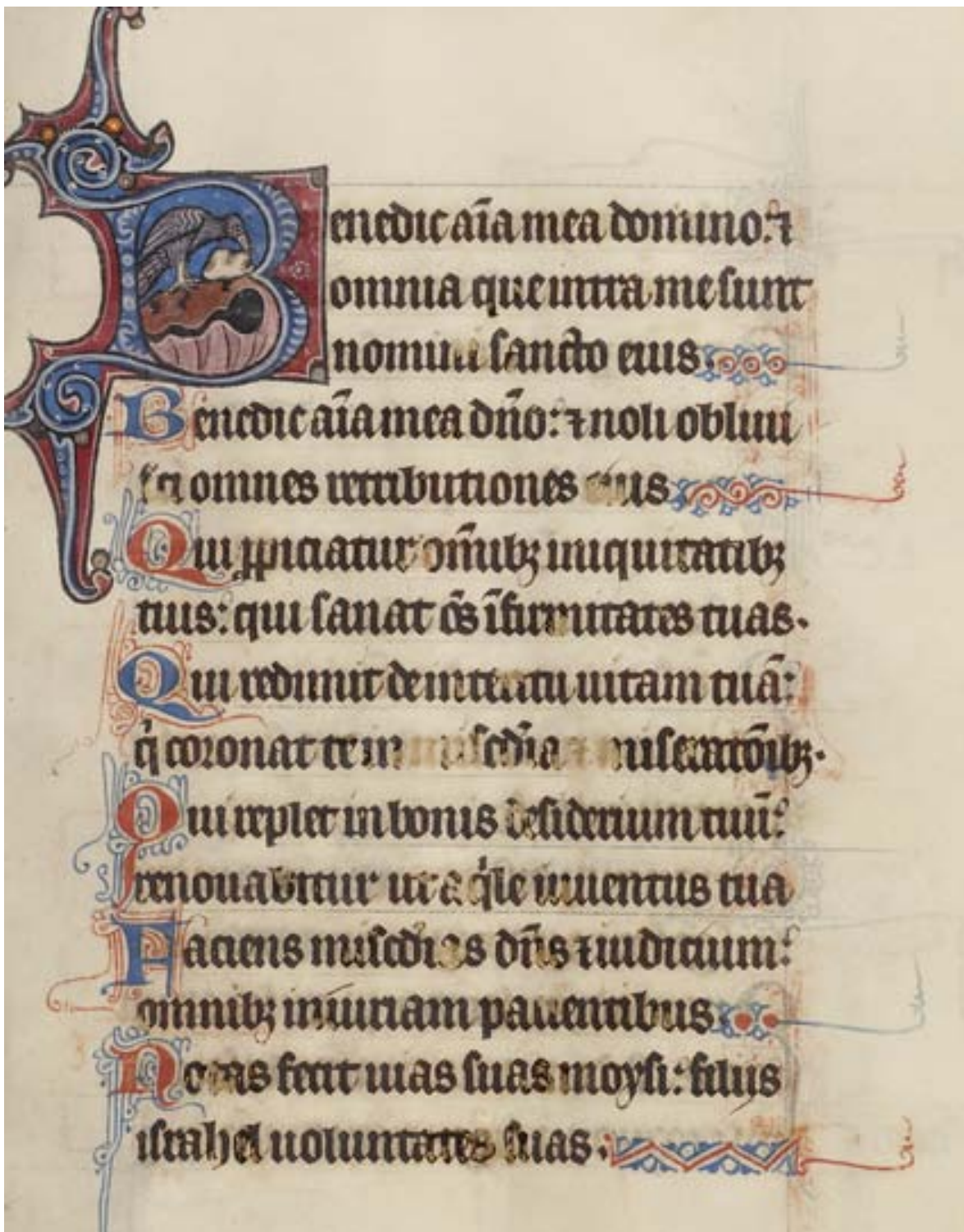
Initial D: A Pelican Feeding Her Young, in the Bute Psalter, about 1270–80
(digital image courtesy of the [Getty's Open Content Program](#))

partus creari. ut mulus et burdo. **De pantera.**



Panther animal quod dicitur pantera. uanum quidem colorem. huius est speciosissimum nimis et mansuetum. Philosophus dicit de eo quod inimicum habet solum draconem. Cum ergo comederit et factatum fuerit: recondit se in spelunca sua et dormit. Post iduum exsurgit a sompno. Et emittit maximum rugitum. et ab ore eius odor suauissimi exit: uelud omnium aromatum. Cum autem audierint eius uocem cetera animalia propter suauitatem odoris sequuntur eam. quicumque ierit. solus autem draco audiens eius uocem: timore perterritus fugit in cauinis terrae. Ibi si ferens odorem impetatur in semetipso: et tanquam mortuus immobilis manet. Sic et dominus noster ihesus christus uerus pantera descendens de caelis eripuit nos de potestate diaboli. Et per incarnationem suam sociavit nos sibi in filios. cepit omnia. captiuamque ducens captiuitatem dedit dona hominibus. Quod si uerum animal significatur: sicut dicitur in psalmonem de christo. sapientia dei patris. spiritus intelligibilis: spiritus unicus. multiplex ueritas. suauis. aptus. clemens. firmus. stabilis. securus. omnia potens. omnia prospiciens. Quia speciosum animal sit: dicitur de christo.

Panther in the Aberdeen Bestiary, 12th century
(via [Wikimedia Commons](#))



*Initial B: An Eagle Pushing a Stone into a Fountain, in the Bute Psalter, about 1270–80
(digital image courtesy of the [Getty's Open Content Program](#))*

al'en un village po auon
 une corde a son arc Et ar
 la sienne estoit rompie Et
 sicome il estoit en une mai
 son ou il faisoit sa corde
 une vieille sa femme qui
 lui en demanda S'ave q
 estoit vous. Len mappelle dist
 Il henry m'ame me voulez
 vous espouser. Par foie
 dist elle se vous mauec
 espousee je seroie royne
 de n'estre en amorie quil
 fust deuy jours. Quant
 henry leur oye si comença
 a rire z cuida que ce fust
 une folle Et quant sa corde
 fu fce si monta sur son
 cheual et sen vint a la
 forest. Il noc pas longue
 ment ale quil vit les gens
 du roy par trop peaux q
 faisoient grant dueil.
Quant il les vit le cuer
 lu effruia z ala a culz
 Et il li distrent que le
 roy son frere estoit mort
 Et dont henry se pausma
 sur le col de son cheual z
 fust cheu a terre se les
 gens ne leussent soustenu
 qui le descendirent et
 couchierent a terre Quant
 il fu reuenu de sa pau
 maison chascun le recosta

au mieux quil pot. Apres
 ce le corps du roy fu porte
 a Bmaestre z mis en sepulce
 a grant solempnie. Ou cuer
 du moustier aux momes
 de la ville. **La mort du**
 roy ainsi auenue grant
 tiel nosa demouuer en engle
 terre. Combien que len ne
 rapprouchast pas de la mort
 du roy Et que len tenoit
 sil lauort feru si nauoit ce
 pas este a escent. Mais sen
 vint en normandie Et Alec
 au chastel de chaumone ou
 il demoura puis lontrouua



Comme commence
 l'histoire du roy
 henry d'engle
 terre. Et
 parle premierement de son
 couronnement et puis
 coment il espousa la fille
 au roy d'escoce.

The Coronation of Henry I, in Chronique de Normandie, about 1400-1415 (digital image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program)

ti mugitu pium testat. Est in si forte defecit. boues impediēte pl
 uua. ad p̄sepiā se tenere noīit. Item in naturali sensu collegunt
 mutuaōm celi spectant foras. ut p̄sepiā suā extendūt suas.
 vna om̄s spē ut p̄dite se uelle testentur. v̄ri agrestes boues sūt
 ignāna h̄ntes cornua nūm̄ca uicantium ut regūt m̄ē s̄ in sig
 ni capacitāte esens gēcula potūū fiant sūt. et in india boues un
 cornos. solidi singul' nec fissi s̄. arceissunt. Buba uocacōm in
 trahunt. q̄o sūt similes bouum. ad eo in domū ut p̄sentate ug
 um nō recipiant. uacca dicta q̄i uacca ē. et ex̄litate mobilū no
 mūū sicut leo leena. draco dracena. ut uul' uicula auriditate
 uocati sūt. uitate uiridi. sicut uirgo. vitulam em̄ puulam ēē
 nō dum em̄ram. Nam em̄ra uicena est. id est uacca.



Camelus cuius nomē dedit siue qual' q̄i h̄nerant. et uenio
 res et humiliores fiant. acculunt q̄i grece cum humile et uie
 dicit siue q̄i cuius ē dorso. camur greco uō s̄m̄m significat. h̄
 licet. aut regiones mittunt. ues. et arabia plimos uocum. h̄ dicit
 q̄ arabia b̄ma tūba in dorso h̄nt singlā uaccam. h̄ nūq̄m pedes at
 terē. Sūt ei uisus reperi quib̄dam palmūclis. nestigia erum̄lenti

h̄act camelos fortissimos
 mittunt licet et arabia
 plimos signat.

