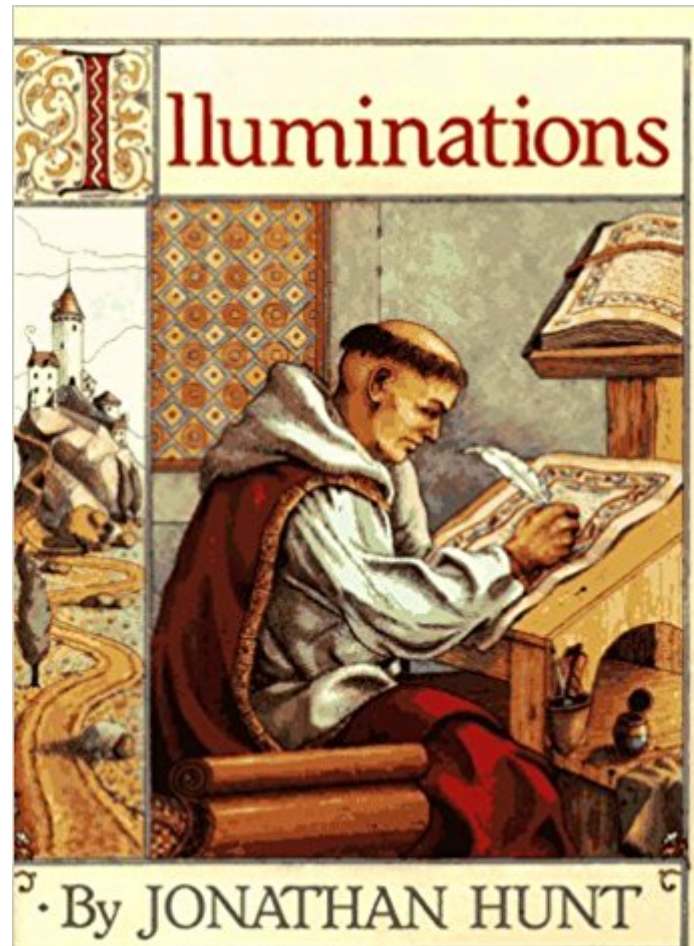




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# Illuminations



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## Synopsis

"From alchemist to zither, Hunt explains things Arthurian in easily understood words and detailed, often dramatic ink-and-watercolor paintings evocative of medieval illuminated manuscripts. . . . This (book) will pique the interest of readers and serve as a handy companion to contemporary fictional retelling of Arthurian lore".--Publishers Weekly. Full color. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

## Book Information

Age Range: 6 and up

Hardcover

Publisher: Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing; 1st ed edition (August 31, 1989)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0027457702

ISBN-13: 978-0027457704

Product Dimensions: 0.2 x 9.5 x 12.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 9 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,494,707 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #46 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Other Media > Illuminations](#) #554 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Other Media > Calligraphy](#) #208763 in [Books > Children's Books](#)

## Customer Reviews

From Alchemist to Zither, this medieval alphabet book glows with ornately illuminated letters and decoration; the text, describing such uncommon entries as Excalibur, Portcullis and Villein, is a virtual history lesson in itself. All ages. Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Grade 1-3-- Using an alphabet book format, Hunt shares his love of the lifestyle, symbols, and artistry of the Middle Ages. Three-quarter-page watercolor paintings, outlined with black pen, illustrate a wide variety of subjects ranging from the Black Death to unicorns. While Hunt is successful in conveying his own enthusiasm for the period, the span of time covered and the skimpy information given will do little to aid children's understanding of this rich and diverse period. The choice of subjects is idiosyncratic, and ideas do not build upon one another. Legendary "Arthurian" characters and mythical symbols are mixed at random with flat-footed definitions of terms such as quintain and wattle and daub. Although the text states that dragons, unicorns, and "Excalibur" are

legendary, the difference will escape many young readers. The descriptions are frustratingly brief, often hinting at stories untold. The full-color illustrations are dramatic and use many of the rich colors of the period. However, Hunt's attempt to recreate the format of illuminated manuscripts falls short. The large scale of the illustrations overwhelms the slim decorative borders, and cleverly designed capital letters barely hint at the beautiful calligraphy that would have dominated a medieval text. The books listed in the bibliography are primarily for adults, and the ideas illustrated would have most appeal to children with some basic knowledge of history. Both the alphabet format and brief text will be disappointing to them, yet the book lacks the coherent structure necessary for an introduction for younger children. Young readers are better served by David Macaulay's *Castle* (Houghton, 1977) or *Anno's Medieval World* (Philomel, 1980). -Eleanor K. MacDonald, Beverly Hills Pub. Lib. Copyright 1989 Reed Business Information, Inc.

This book is great, it's just not what I expected. It's more of a picture book for children than it is a source book for medieval illuminations. It goes letter by letter through the alphabet with one large image or drawing or illumination, if you will, on each page. I was expecting something with more variety and more actual medieval illuminations. Let me reiterate, this is a nice book for children, with large pretty images. It is not a good source of medieval illumination scroll designs. I was looking for something to help me advance my illumination techniques for my work in the SCA and this book is not for that.

Very satisfied with the product, price, and the shipping and delivery. Thank you!

You can't beat the artwork...beautiful illustrations.

Great book. Fast delivery. A-ok.

"An illumination is a picture, design, or decoration drawn on a manuscript page" (Jonathan Hunt, from the "I" page in *Illuminations*). Jonathan Hunt uses this ancient--colorful and exquisitely detailed--method to introduce readers to a glossary of terms and concepts from the Middle Ages. Arranged in alphabetical order, readers are often introduced to more than one concept per letter, for example on the page devoted to "Knight," terms like chivalrous men-at-arms, king, lord, lady, page, squire, fief and the Round Table are mentioned. As another reviewer suggests, this is not really an alphabet book for younger readers. Although *Illuminations* is done in picture book format--and the

illustrations are a pleasure to browse--because of the way Hunt lovingly approaches his subject, it is an ideal introduction to Medieval times for upper elementary grade students, and perhaps all the way up through secondary. In reading it as a school librarian, I learned some things I didn't know before. In my review of Marguerite De Angeli's Newbery Award winning Medieval novel, "The Door in the Wall," I suggested that a book like "Illuminations" would be ideal for introducing middle-grade readers to the language and terminology of this fascinating period of history. This is a resource that teachers and students in our elementary school often turn to. Highly recommended. If you get this book, be sure to read "A Note From the Author;" "About the Art;" "Suggested Reading;" and the Bibliography in the back.

The publisher states this is for all ages. My interest in this book was my fascination with ABC books as a method of teaching my children the alphabet and to read as well as a budding interest in medieval times. At least one of the pages is featured per letter; sometimes the illustration goes across two pages. The illustrations are beautiful and highly detailed. With each word there is a 3-4-sentence explanation of what the word is about. The author states he has gone to great lengths to make the illustrations historically accurate. The author quotes 15 references as the source of his information and he so loves all things medieval that he includes 5 recommended reading materials for readers who are interested in learning more. I love the purist stance the author takes and appreciate the recommended reading section. It is apparent that this is a labor of love for Mr. Hunt. As the homeschooling mother of young children I say: The featured letter is shown in capital form only and highly decorated which is not conducive to teaching young children the alphabet. The words are medieval in nature and therefore not in everyday language of young children. Examples are *excalibur* and *oriflamme*. The text is written in language that may be difficult for even young readers to understand, let alone preschool-aged children. Older children with an interest in medieval times will love this book. As an adult interested in medieval times, I found this a fun book with lovely illustrations. I enjoyed learning some basic information about some medieval terms.

I have taught at both the Middle and High School levels and found that *Illuminations* by Jonathan Hunt is a wonderful way to introduce the medieval period to young adults. This book is not just a children's book. *Illuminations* introduces the students to important vocabulary words relating to the Middle Ages in a fun and visually stimulating manner. The author takes each letter of the alphabet and associates it with something medieval. The illustrations are breathtaking and compliment the students understanding of what illuminations were all about. I highly recommend this book to young

and old alike.

This is one of the few books that I wish I could give separate star ratings for text and illustrations. I totally loved the glorious illuminated pages. Although the title does not give you a clue, this is an ABC picture book, using things from the Middle Ages as the ABC words. The words are interesting, but quite obscure, for example, A is for Alchemist, M is for Merlin, O is for Oriflamme, Q is for Quintain, and U is for Unicorn. The book is fun but has limited use for young children. Older children studying the middle ages might want to research the meaning of those words. Grades 3-6.

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