

# Contents

	<b>The Story of Illustration</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Setting the Stage: Early Modern Printing and Publishing</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>The Rise of Reading and the Visualization of Literature</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Conflict in the News: The Illustrated Press</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Advertising, Consumer Culture, and Domestic Life</b>	<b>108</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Illustrator as Author</b>	<b>138</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Ideological Battlefields: Persuasion and Propaganda</b>	<b>174</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Desire Illustrated: New Women, Modern Men, and Popular Performance</b>	<b>208</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Picturing Peoples: Race-Thinking and Representation</b>	<b>244</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Telling Stories: Illustration, History, and Memory</b>	<b>276</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>Decorating Childhood: Literacy, Learning, Pleasure, and Control</b>	<b>310</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>Illustration as Counterculture: Freedom, Advocacy, and Dissent</b>	<b>342</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>Late Modern Reading: Paragraphs, Panels, and Pixels</b>	<b>372</b>
	<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>390</b>
	<b>Index</b>	<b>393</b>
	<b>Image Credits</b>	<b>398</b>
	<b>Acknowledgments</b>	<b>400</b>

# The Story of Illustration

Illustration sits at the intersection of two well-established, jealously independent cultural territories: literary studies and art history. Literary folk study texts. Art historians claim academic jurisdiction over objects and images. Neither field has prioritized a synthetic approach to common material. Compounding that problem are two others. First, not all illustration appears in literary contexts. Second, until recently art history has shown little interest in illustrations as artifacts or in illustration as a cultural practice. The legal concept of an orphan work is one without available claimants. In some respects, illustration can be seen as an orphan field.

As it happens, few subjects require more integrated treatment than illustration, by implication and in fact, a blend of word and image. Extravagantly mixed, illustration has suffered from plentiful biases that have affected its cultural standing around the world. For example, the autonomous or independent status of high modern artworks proved easier to assess than the contingent character of illustration, bound up in obligations to textual sources, and rightly suspected of shared authorship. Technological advancements posed ideological problems as well; connoisseurs since the nineteenth century have expressed disdain for the cookie-cutter of mass production. From the very beginning, collectors have preferred the authentic singularity of the original artwork, a view mirrored by Ming and Qing Dynasty literati, who found printed illustrated books vulgar. Lastly, distrust of commercial motives negatively influenced high cultural reception of illustrated print. Each of these objections—analytical messiness, multiplicity, money-grubbing—can be associated with Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790), a foundational text that explored the cultivation of taste and defined terms for the modern art object.

Reputationally speaking, illustration fared poorly during the explosive growth of consumer culture, characterized as

“commercial art” after 1910. Art critic Clement Greenberg denounced illustrated magazines and comic strips in newspapers as forms of kitsch in 1939. With serious acceptance increasingly foreclosed, the field suffered from insularity. Under such conditions, during the postwar period illustration proved resistant to critical writing, and even now lacks useful boundaries.

Even so, enthusiastic audiences have long welcomed compendiums of illustration. Over the last century and a bit more, professional chronicles have supplied colorful surveys of style and influence, stressing individual practitioners who adapted to changing technical and commercial contexts. Such books have tended to be organized as a march across essentialized decades: “The Roaring Twenties,” and the like. Other more capacious projects have stretched to integrate more material, from Paleolithic cave painting to medieval tapestries and Renaissance frescoes. Most histories of illustration have tended to define the subject rather loosely, a shortcoming attributable to the field’s fraught status as an aesthetic category.

## A Different Focus

Having cultivated university collections with families of storied illustrators and hawkers of stray ephemera, and after writing on, teaching, and curating exhibitions with such materials for the last twenty-five years, I am untroubled by, and uninterested in, the status anxiety that has bedeviled thinking about the field of illustration. Instead, I have come to focus on reading as the central activity illustration enables, enlivens, and clarifies, and to which it adds delight. As the illustrator and art director Steven Guarnaccia recently remarked, simply, “We are people of the book.”

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Lord Acton famously advised historians to study problems, not periods. Defining illustration has been a problem. For starters, “What is illustration?” may be answered: Illustrations are pictorial, symbolic, and decorative contributors to reading experiences. A good start, but this is a formal answer to the question, not a historical one, as it fails to account for change over time. In 1938, the British historian R. G. Collingwood observed, “The history of dining is not the history of eating.” That is, famished early humans devoured foodstuffs eons before their descendants threw fancy dinner parties. Collingwood implicitly invites us to ask, when is illustration? Was there a moment before illustration existed? Looking ahead, is it possible to imagine conditions under which illustration will no longer exist? (Yes, and yes.)

In this book I will argue that illustrations—printed, by definition—are pictorial, symbolic, and decorative contributors to modern reading experiences published in vernacular languages. The earliest extant illustration may be found on the frontispiece of the first dated printed book: the *Diamond Sutra*, printed in Tang Dynasty China in 868 CE. The design of printed pictures for books emerged as a professional practice in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in Europe, earlier, if spottily, in China, and later comprehensively in seventeenth-century Japan. Illustrators, so named for the first time during the middle of the nineteenth century, found their footing in transatlantic print culture between 1820 and 1850. A boom followed. The high season of illustrated mass publishing can be dated roughly from 1870 to 1970. “If there be nothing new under the sun,” wrote Henry James in *Picture and Text* in 1893, “there are some things a good deal less old than others. The illustration of books, and even more of magazines, may be said to have been born in our time, so far as variety and abundance are signs of it.” James was noting a new chapter in media history and praised the “comprehensive, ingenious, and sympathetic spirit” of the field.

## Aims

*Reading Pictures* is my attempt to tell a story of how printed images and texts developed, engaged, and sometimes manipulated audiences in North America, Europe, and East Asia from the early modern period to the present day, with greatest emphasis on the era of mass culture during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I am concerned with the uses to which illustrated materials were put, and the particularities of precisely how words and pictures were combined: when, where, and why. These are historical questions, of course, but they are also critical ones with contemporary resonance. From the early nineteenth century, pictorial accompaniments made books and booklets more appealing; in the early twenty-first, hybridized literacy requires a blend of reading and looking. The cumbersome ancient scroll was replaced by folded codices that later blossomed a millionfold into modern books and magazines. Yet now the electronic scroll has pushed back, and what we call “reading” has changed. In certain respects, illustration can be seen as a chapter in media history, now largely past. But viewed differently, illustration has simply become a dimension of late modern reading through comics and manga, sundry interfaces, informational arrays, and more. *Reading Pictures* should be understood as a double entendre: when the stress is on the first word, it conveys pictures that go with reading; if the second is emphasized, the phrase suggests decoding images. Today, both frequently apply.

It follows from a belief that illustrations serve as contributors to reading experiences that attention be paid to the presentation of language. Wherever possible, this book seeks to foreground the interaction between text and image. Or alternately: what the words say, how the words look, and what the picture does. This triad may be seen as a modern

# The project started as an effort to apprehend an unwieldy subject that had, through sheer ubiquity assisted by bias and avoidance, resisted definition.

cognate to the “three perfections” of Chinese painting, poetry, and calligraphy. The integration promised by the painter, poet, and politician Wang Wei during the Tang Dynasty, and realized by others in the Song, may readily be seen in illustrated printed matter. Admittedly, this is an interpretive jump from cultured literati to “vulgar illustration.” But the Western duality of word and image—solidified by Europeans’ embrace of Johannes Gutenberg’s cast metal movable type, which segregated type and illustration—may usefully be expanded by the Eastern triad. After a four-decade experiment, Japanese book and print designers rejected cursive *hirakana* movable type. From 1640 they re-embraced xylography (woodcutting text and image on the same block) to integrate illustration and calligraphy. Later, *ukiyo-e* prints inspired Parisian lithographic poster designers to do the same. During the twentieth century, the mongrel character of modern print, especially advertising, traveled the globe. But modern audiences began to acclimate to integrated reading and looking experiences as early as the 1820s.

*Reading Pictures* is not an encyclopedic survey of the illustration industry, nor an attempt to establish a new canon of people and works. The book has been designed to provide a thematic encounter with the history of illustration, itself a dimension of the history of reading. Each chapter presents an aspect of modern experience—the rise of consumer culture, the systemization of wartime propaganda, the development of children’s literature—exploring a relevant history of ideas, while highlighting how illustrators, authors, printers, and publishers played a role in those developments. The main chapter essays provide historical narrative, calling out particular people and projects for special notice. Discursive captions to copious images provide in-depth analysis of visual sources to support the chapter essays.

The project started as an effort to apprehend an unwieldy subject that had, through sheer ubiquity assisted by bias and avoidance, resisted definition. As work proceeded, my research came to highlight surprising fluidity between words and images during the early nineteenth century; explored text, type, and image as an ensemble toward the turn of the twentieth and after; and ultimately pointed to a synthetic vision of reading and looking that deserves further investigation. The book celebrates the field of illustration while acknowledging its plentiful historical misuses. If nothing else, during an epochal upheaval in media ecology, attended by rising fears of online surveillance, *Reading Pictures* holds up and defends the old intimacies, jointly textual and pictorial, of that stubbornly private redoubt, the codex.

I have sought to situate the printed image in the context of cultural production. It is important to consider how such images were conceived, planned, and executed, their intended effect, and how they were situated within, and altered by, textual contexts. The range of pictures and the motives driving them can be quite varied. The selection of illustrations reproduced in the book balances connoisseurship or “quality” with heterogeneity and thematic messaging. Easel paintings, photographs, murals, package labels, playing cards, and blotter calendars are presented as visual evidence. Offensive imagery and the question of why we look at examples of same receives attention. *Reading Pictures* also covers a range of early modern platemaking and printing processes: Woodcut, engraving, etching, and lithography are explained, and labor systems discussed. When relevant, photographic practices are covered as well. I hope that general readers, students, and scholars will gain knowledge and confidence to describe, analyze, and interpret illustrated printed matter, instead of relying on reductive approaches such as declaring what a picture allegedly “says.”



## Of Persons Named and Not

Jaleen Grove has written on canon formation in the history of Anglo-American illustration: Once an artist was included in Book A or B, the likelier they were to be mentioned in C or D or X and Y, to cumulative effect. As Grove noted, histories of the field predictably mentioned and reproduced men over women by exponential margins. Persons of color appeared in vanishingly small numbers for related reasons.

Because this book seeks to tell a thematic story concerned with how pictures in league with words have shaped modern life, canonical questions are not particularly relevant. I have kept audiences and communities of production and reception very much in mind, resulting in a focus on linked groups of publishers, illustrators, and authors. Inevitably, celebrated figures do appear, some repeatedly. Obscure or overlooked figures come briefly into view. And work by other illustrators and designers whom I admire deeply is not to be found among these pages, simply because it did not contribute to the story I sought to shape.

Publishers do not like to waste words. Left to my own devices, I would have included the notation "illustrator uncredited" or "illustrator unknown" for every image in the book, where appropriate. There are many such entries. I invite the reader to note the absence of a credit and quietly acknowledge that a person made the image in question. The sentries at the Tomb of the Unknown Illustrator will appreciate the nod.

▲ Spot illustrations for *Stormy Monday*, episode 63 of *Sam the Dog* by D. B. Dowd, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, August 15, 1998.



# **Setting the Stage: Early Modern Printing and Publishing**



Illustrations are inextricably tied to text. They inflect reading experiences by contributing color and atmosphere, underscoring meaning, and adding pleasure. And although the experience of reading has evolved, the venerable form of the codex, or book format, retains its appeal today.

The first codices were folded scrolls, initially an efficiency for administrative Romans, later a strategy for early Christians allowing more easy concealment when carrying forbidden texts. The bound codex followed quickly, supplanting then replacing the comparatively awkward scroll by 400 CE. A piece of parchment folded once produced a folio, or two-page spread, which extended to four pages by including the verso, or back, a structural advantage over the scroll. Folding a sheet twice produced a quarto, and three times an octavo. Modern codices include magazines of many sizes, booklets, broadsheet newspapers, informal eight-pager supplements, paperbacks, and hardbound books, among many others. More recently, the discarded ancient scroll has returned electronically on smartphones and tablets.

## On the History of Reading and Looking

As historian Alberto Manguel has observed, the act of reading has evolved consistently since writing was invented between five and six thousand years ago in ancient Sumeria. A pictographic system designed for record-keeping transitioned to characters and alphabets capable of capturing laws, instructions, poems, novels, and more. Because very few people could read, ancient scribes and medieval monks often transcribed to facilitate aloud readings of sutras and epistles: Written texts focused on aural not visual perception. Conventions of punctuation, even intuitive line breaks (*per cola et commata*, or the practice of dividing lines by clause and phrase favored by Romans), evolved slowly for this reason, in both East and West. Other motivations for reading aloud emerged: St. Benedict's *Rules* directed monks to recite scripture aloud to keep sinful thoughts at bay.

The earliest extant dated printed book, formatted as a scroll, was produced in Tang Dynasty China. It was created using xylography (from the Greek *xylon* for wood or timber), a method in which a wood block is cut to show text and image. The *Diamond Sutra* presents a canonical Buddhist text, a Chinese translation of the Sanskrit original, published in 868 CE. The elegant frontispiece woodcut presents Buddha in glory; text spools out to his left. The ideographic character of written Chinese posed challenges for a comprehensive system of

◀◀ *The Buddha in Glory*, frontispiece illustration for the *Diamond Sutra*, Tang Dynasty China, 868 CE. The world's oldest printed book to bear the date of its production is this 17-foot-long (5 m) scroll that reads from right to left. The sophistication of the frontispiece includes subtle management of visual density and open space to frame the Buddha and his pupil, Subhuti, at the lower left. The sutra itself is a six-thousand-word dialogue between teacher and student—one of the foundational texts of Mahayana Buddhism, which flourished in East Asia from the first century CE.

▶ *Healing of the Leper*, initial capital miniature, antiphony, Siena Cathedral, by Liberale da Verona, 1468–75. This exquisite miniature painting, framed by a capital R, is a decorative flourish in a large choir book in the cathedral of Siena. The struggle for dominance between the symbolic letterform and the captivating painted scene (Matthew 8:1–14) is not really a contest. Looking is more important than reading.



movable type; many thousands of characters would have been needed, precluding all but Imperial use. Experiments in China and Korea preceded Gutenberg's invention, but the comparative ease of typesetting texts in the twenty-six-letter Roman alphabet proved decisive for acceptance of the technique.

Johann Gutenberg published his forty-two-line Bible, so named for the number of lines of type that appeared in each column, in the 1450s. Printed from movable type on his newly invented relief printing press, the edition heralded epochal change. Previously, during the Middle Ages, hand-copied books of received texts had been produced in monastic scriptoria, transcribed in Latin, and devoted to religious concerns. A revolution in production methods altered more than logistics. As printing spread, so too did new ideas. Humanist teaching began to replace the scholastic mindset, a medieval holdover, in education. The latter focused on the confirmation of textual authority; the former, on probing it. The relationship between illumination and illustration provides a visual parallel. Singular painted illuminations layered gilt and decorative flourishes to glorify a divine dispensation; plural printed illustrations addressed an increasingly secular readership. In modern letters, the redoubt of the writer gave way to the responsibility of the reader, and a new, intimate, individualized form of private reading resulted. The early modern novel had a comparable effect in China and Japan.

Over time, printed Bibles replaced the monumental gospel books and massive antiphonaries fixed in situ with pocket-sized, portable, and direct access to Holy Writ. Gutenberg's book used St. Jerome's fourth-century Latin Vulgate translation of the Bible. Roughly a decade later, in 1466, Johannes Mentelin published the first German edition. The textual shift was complemented by a visual one. Fully illustrated xylographic devotional pamphlets and loose sheets, especially *Apocalypses* (presentations of the Book of Revelation) reached many. The portability of the Holy Book and its translation into a vernacular language—one spoken by the people—implicitly challenged the power of the Roman Catholic Church. For some, the nature of religious experience shifted from priestly authority to the *logos*, or word itself. Private scriptural reading helped prepare the ground for the Protestant Reformation, launched in 1517 by Martin Luther, who collaborated with illustrators to devastating effect. In time, private readings of published texts on other subjects would succor science, threaten empires, and launch revolutions of many stripes, in every case aided by printed pictures in league with words.

The illustrated mass culture of the nineteenth century has roots in early modern publishing in both Europe and Asia from the beginning of the fifteenth century. Loose print production, from playing cards to talismanic devotional pictures, came first, and book publishing followed, necessitating typesetting and binding as well as papermaking and printing.



◀ **St. Christopher Carrying Christ Across a Stream, German woodcut with hand-coloring, 1423.** Among the earliest dated woodcuts in Europe is this depiction of the patron saint of travelers. The design is transitional; the cutting goes beyond simple contour lines. Sets of parallel lines create optical grays suggesting shadowed passages. According to legend, Christopher began life as a gigantic pagan named *Reprobus* ("the Reject"), before he was baptized by a hermit. The large Christopher is shown crossing the stream with the young Jesus Christ, bearing the weight of the world. Christ blessed him and his heavy wooden staff, predicting it would sprout leaves, fruits, and roots—all visible in the woodcut.

▶▶ **Pictoris Operis: Heinrich Füllmaurer, Albrecht Meyer | Sculptor: Viet Rudolphe Speckle, by Albrecht Meyer for *De historia stirpium commentarii insignes* [Notable commentaries on the life of plants], by Leonhart Fuchs, 1542.** Found at the end of a nearly nine hundred-page book, these portraits show a rare visual documentation of individual workers and the creative process in the woodcut production system.

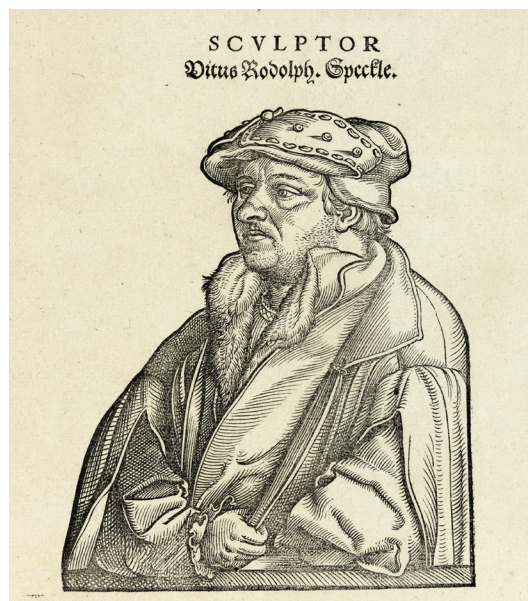
## A Labor System for Woodcut Illustration

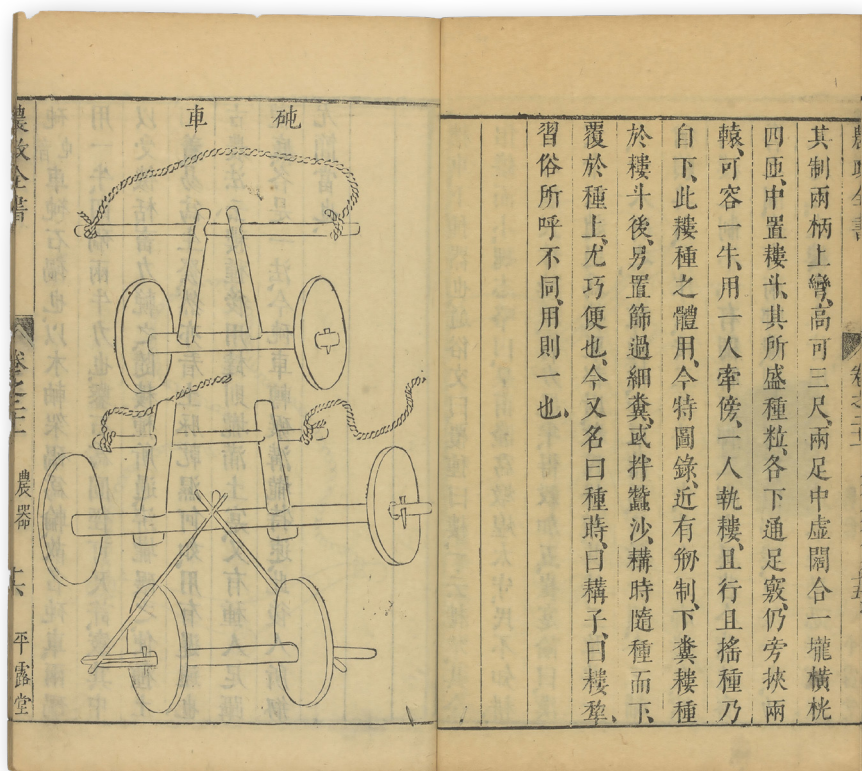
In 1542, Leonhart Fuchs published *De historia stirpium commentarii insignes* [Notable commentaries on the life of plants], a landmark illustrated plant book. Produced in the Swiss city of Basel (a printing center in the fifteenth century, and later known for the “Swiss style” of modernist typography in the 1950s), the work offers a glimpse into the lived experience of image production workers from four hundred years ago. A standing portrait of the learned Fuchs appears in the front of the book. But in the back, on page 897, three additional characters appear, the men who produced the volume’s 511 woodcuts: Albrecht Meyer, Heinrich Füllmaurer, and Viet Rudolph Speckle. A generous innovation on the part of the publisher Fuchs, this pictorial credit page captures the early modern labor system for large-scale woodcut production from the late fifteenth century. Three roles are represented: illustrator, transcriber/translator, and block cutter (or *Formschneider*, a subspecialist within the carpenter’s guild). Not shown are *Printschneiders*, the woodcut printers. These credits are reserved for those who prepared the image to print—generically termed platemaking.

Meyer appears in a brimmed hat bent over a drawing, lips lightly pursed. A flowering plant sits before him in a small two-handled vase, the apparent model for his work. He holds a brush in his right hand, his gaze fixed on the fluid contour line unfurling toward the bottom of his page. A pair of tiny ramekins

sit nearby, one for ink, the other water. Meyer’s task is to convert a three-dimensional object into a two-dimensional line drawing. Across from him, Füllmaurer props up a woodblock tipped at 30 degrees with his left hand, holding a weathered piece of paper (presumably Meyer’s last drawing) between his thumb and the block. He, too, is drawing, on wood, with a brush in hand, the same miniature ink and water pots beside him. A second smaller brush awaits employment, likely for detail work. The plant sits off-center, partially obscuring Füllmaurer’s block, yet enabling us to watch Meyer’s drawing develop. Speckle appears in a second, lower register, fingering his cloak, waiting. He will use knives and gouges to scoop out unneeded areas from the surface of that woodblock.

Consider the transparency of Meyer’s work, and the opacity of Füllmaurer’s: We see the plant being drawn, but its translation on to the wood is concealed. Print historians, especially the venerable William Ivins Jr., have noted the imposition of such visual translations on artists’ work, and the distorting effects that often resulted. Here, two steps are involved: transcribing the image and cutting it. Did the interventions of Füllmaurer result in distortion of the original work, or clarification and refinement? The cuts in *Stirpium* are unusually lucid, so it might well have been the latter. As the field of illustration developed, the interplay of roles in the production of a printed image collided with the myth of the isolated creative genius to raise needless questions of authenticity in a quintessentially team sport.





◀ *Illustration of a dunce (or dunzi), a stone roller for packing soil around seeds after planting, in Nongzheng quanshu [Comprehensive Treatise on Agricultural Administration], Volume 8, No. 592, by Xu Guangqi, 1639. This book is a descendant of Nong Shu [Book of Agriculture] by Wang Zhen, printed using movable type in 1303 and now lost. Xu's later compendium was printed xylographically.*

▶▶ *On the Plain of Kasuga, woodcut for Coming of Age, the first episode in the tenth-century classic Tales of Ise, published by Suminokura Soan, 1608–10. In this Japanese secular book, episodes (known as poem-tales) combine illustrated prose sections and poetry. Here, two deer signal proximity to the former capital of Nara. "Two beautiful sisters were living there, and the young man...glimpse[d] them through a crack in the fence." He writes and sends them a poem that mentions "riotous patterns," which are visible on the textiles, garments, and even on the deer. Hon'ami Koetsu's calligraphy was used as a source for the movable kana type.*

## Relief Printing: East and West

The term printing can be applied to many different processes. After all, three-dimensional printing has pushed the idea well past the transfer of ink from block or plate to paper. For many centuries, printing involved two complementary activities: platemaking, as noted above, involving the preparation of a matrix—the thing to be printed from—and inking, followed by a transfer under pressure onto a surface.

In contemporary digital printing the matrix isn't physical, but rather a set of electronic instructions. You select "print" on your laptop to generate a document, but such immateriality is quite recent. Things remained extremely concrete between 1400 and 1800 CE, a period during which little changed for platemaking. Then, prepping a surface to print meant assaulting its topography: knifing it, gouging it, scoring it, biting it with acid. Relief—or block—printing is a physiographic process, the simplest and oldest among them, involving rolling ink across a raised surface, from which nonprinting areas have been cut away.

## China

Woodcut block printing (xylography) was invented in Tang Dynasty China in the seventh century CE. But book printing in China did not advance quickly. There were considerable challenges in developing, using, and storing movable type to print written Chinese—typesetting the four classic Confucian texts, including the *Analects*, would have required multiple copies of approximately eight thousand characters. In addition, the cultural prestige of calligraphy and painting slowed the acceptance of printed texts among the elite. Manuscript books prevailed but xylographic book production achieved significant progress during the Song Dynasty (960–1279).

Wang Zhen's *Nong Shu* [Book of Agriculture] stands out as a useful illustrated book believed to have been produced with movable type. Designed to reach a wide audience, and published in 1303, the original edition is no longer extant. A xylographic edition of *Nong Shu* printed in 1530 survives today. The book is divided into three sections; the third, *Nong Qi tu Pu* [Illustrated Register of Agricultural Implements], features extensive illustrations of tools and processes. Composed during the

Yuan Dynasty, when the Mongol Empire ruled China, Wang's book advocates for the use of tools to ease the farmer's life, and underscores the civilized nature of agriculture, perhaps as a contrast to the lifestyle of the nomadic overlords.

Forms of popular literature began to emerge in China during the fourteenth century. *Pinghua*, or "illustrated plainly told tales," appeared in the 1320s, followed by the *cihua*, or "ballad tales" of the 1470s. These were butterfly-bound codices that, like all Chinese books, read right to left. In *pinghua*, illustrations ran across the top third of every page; by contrast, *cihua* used images to launch each text, sometimes every chapter. Text and images were divided between pages. The first extant printed novel in China dates to 1522. Prefaces from the mature novels published from the early seventeenth century onward often concede that the stories "aren't serious," and are intended for (wealthy) women and young boys, likely a fraction of their true audience. Although historical sagas dominated popular literature—nearly all with copious illustrations—some narratives suggest twentieth-century pulp fiction adventures. For example, Judge Bao stars as the "justice hero" in his own *cihua*, reliably cracking cases and dispatching wrongdoers (see page 30).

## Japan

Woodblock printing traveled from China to Japan in the eighth century and served primarily as a method for propagating Buddhist texts through xylography. In 764 CE, Empress Shōtoku commissioned one million printed *dharanis*, prayers to be read aloud. Each *dharani* was inserted into a miniature wooden pagoda and placed in a temple as an offering.

In the late 1500s, Jesuit missionaries brought printing equipment and movable Roman type to Japan, which briefly made an impact. Between 1600 and 1640, Kyoto calligraphers created wooden movable type in cursive *hiragana* phonetic script combined with *kanji* characters adapted from Chinese. An early celebrated example of the *Saga-bon* (books printed in Saga, west of Kyoto) is the first printed edition of *Tales of Ise*, a tenth-century text attributed to Ariwara no Narihira, an amorous grandee. The book is a collection of poems and prose narratives that explore court life, longing, and love. Published by Suminokura Soan, *Tales of Ise* is among the first illustrated secular books in Japan. A delightful effect is created by the elegant typeface, workmanlike woodcuts, and subtle colored papers.

As the Edo period (1603–1867) advanced, Japan developed a dazzling print culture (see Chapter 2). Movable type would lose favor, in part because Japanese print designers preferred to integrate type and image, rather than isolate them.





◀ *The Plague of Locusts (Exodus 10:12–15), illustration for the Cologne Bible, published by Henry Quentell, 1478.* Moses stretches his staff to launch the plague, assisted by the Lord. Locusts descend and the locals recoil. This example shows how colors were applied to printed books. In a holdover from medieval practice, workers called *rubricators* (from the Latin *ruber*, for “red”) penned initial capitals in color. Here, the red for the capital is a ruddy orange, a color that has also been used to hand-color the illustrated figures, joined by green, ocher, and faint purple. The opaque green and orange pigments mute the printed black beneath.

## Europe

A goldsmith versed in mechanics named Johannes Gutenberg altered the trajectory of reading. He engineered a system of book manufacturing through two major innovations: a variation on the screw press to enable mechanical relief printing, and a mold system to cast and set movable type, the latter developed without apparent knowledge of stalled Chinese and Korean efforts. Around 1450, Gutenberg set up shop in Mainz, the German city where he published the celebrated Gutenberg Bible, and later a two-color Psalter.

The Gutenberg Bible was not illustrated. Others would build on his system to integrate typesetting with woodcut illustrations, the earliest in 1461, when Albrecht Pfister published *Der Edelstein* [The Gemstone], a book of fables based on classical sources by Ulrich Boner (or Bonerius), a Dominican monk (see page 29). Of one hundred copies, exactly one survives. The author appears in each of the book’s many illustrations, plainly as a labor-saving device: Bonerius lingers on the left edge of the picture, contained by a rule, gesturing toward a horizontal rectangle that contains the illustration of a given fable. For every print, two woodblocks were placed on the press bed. As a practical matter, the monk stayed put, while variable scenes were swapped in and out. Notably, Bonerius wrote *Der Edelstein* in Middle High German: Vernacular texts—as distinguished from Latin—would become a critical development in the formation of European literature and especially the spread of literacy (see Chapter 2). *Edelstein* also provides an example of

hand-coloring in watercolor, a strategy for dressing up black-and-white printed matter, if also sometimes an excrescence.

Book printing on the Continent spread at a spectacular rate. In half a century, Gutenberg’s methods had reached most of Western Europe. Two hundred and five cities boasted printing houses in 1500, from Stockholm to Lisbon, Danzig to York. North of the Alps, printers were concentrated in German and Swiss towns up to the Low Countries, and several centers in France. England was a laggard. To the south, Italy bristled with printers, especially in Rome, Tuscany, and Venice. Books and printed ephemera from those five decades, 1450–1500, are known as *incunabula*.

Albrecht Pfister’s efforts were followed by other illustrated book projects, notably the Cologne Bible, published in that city by Heinrich Quentell in 1478. At 15.5 x 10.5 inches (39 x 27 cm), Quentell’s influential book is the scale of a modern, oversize magazine, if a great deal heavier. It included a suite of 123 well-fashioned, uncredited woodcuts, designed as horizontal rectangles extending across a two-column typesetting—a conceit descended from fourteenth-century illuminated manuscripts. In 1490, the Venetian publisher Lucantonio Giunta issued a Malermi Bible, an Italianate take on the Cologne program, integrating 386 refined cuts in a more reader-friendly page design, at three-quarter the scale of the Cologne Bible. The two-column typographic system was supported by illustrations stacked within it, rather than broken by them. As publisher and book historian David Bland observed, Italian

► **Zechariah, Satan, and the High Priest** (Zechariah 3:1–2), woodcut illustration with typesetting, the **Malermi Bible**, published in Venice by Lucantonio Giunta, 1490. Just like the designer of the book you are reading, Giunta used a two-column grid to which the woodcuts were subject along with Nicolas Jenson's elegant typography. Here, the strutting Satan—bearded, horned, bat-winged, and chicken-footed—plays an obnoxious prosecutor, badgering the witness and provoking an angry rebuke from the Lord.

(overleaf) Interior spread from the **Book of Psalms in the Cologne Bible**, published by Henry Quentell, 1478. On the left-hand page, the Lord speaks to three men in a camp below a fortified city. On the right-hand page, an aged King David—considered the author of certain Psalms, at least by conventional attribution—plays his harp. Despite their appeal, the pictures interrupt the reading experience by breaking two columns of text.

printers brought particular sensitivity to typography and page design, integrating illustration in support of the whole. Certainly, the Roman typeface designed by Nicolas Jenson in Venice compares favorably with Gutenberg's blackletter adopted by Swiss and German printers. Even when hand-colored, the Malermi Bible embraces the properties of printed books, rather than extending the manuscript tradition via reproduction. Named for its translator Nicolò Malermi, the project presented the first printed rendering of the Gospel in Italian.

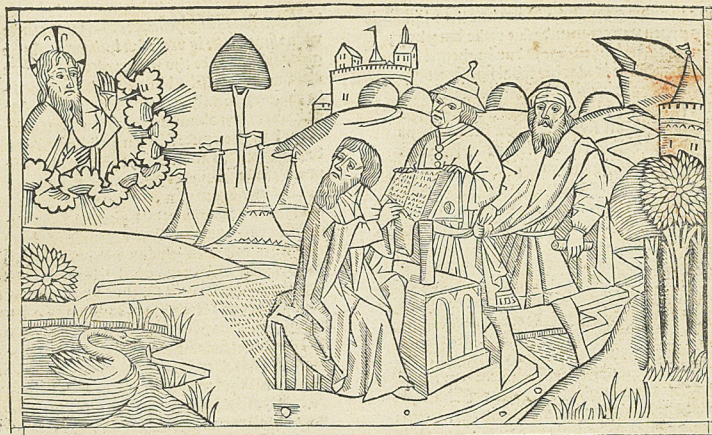
In 1492, just as Christopher Columbus's arrival in the Bahamas expanded the European universe, German publisher Anton Koberger and colleagues labored over a massive opus, *The Nuremberg Chronicle*—an intermingled sacred history, world geography, and humanist encyclopedia. Nuremberg was a city-state in the Holy Roman Empire, then an agglomeration of German palatinates, central European duchies, and northern Italy. Commissioned by city fathers to burnish Nuremberg's reputation, the book was written by Hartmann Schedel, a local physician with an enviable library. Michael Wolgemut and stepson Wilhelm Pleydenwurff designed, illustrated, and oversaw production. The book is crammed with woodcuts: 1,809 in all, printed from a total of 645 blocks with generous repeats, to no ill effect on the reading experience.

Simultaneously published in German and Latin in 1493, the *Nuremberg Chronicle* is justly regarded as a monument of book design and production. Wolgemut's page designs realize surprisingly fluid text and image relationships.

habitarafē ierufalem lenza naue: nel mezo de quella  
Et io gli faro in muro di foco per dintorno dice el  
fignor:& nel suo mezo fara gloria. O o fugete da la  
terra de aquilone dice el fignor. Imperho chio uho  
disperfi in quattro uenti del cielo dice el fignor. O  
syon laqual habiti appreffo la figliola de babylonia  
fugi. Imperho che queffo dice el fignor deli exerciti  
Doppo la gloria egli me ha mandato a le gente le  
qual ue fpogliorono ipho che qillo che ui toccara la  
pupilla del ochio mio ipho chio leuo la mano mia  
fopra qlli & lor farano i pda a qlli che li feruiano.&  
cognofcereti cōe el fignor deli exerciti me ha mada  
to. Lauda & ralegrate figliola de syon: ipho che ec  
co chio uēgo:& habitaro i mezo di te dice el fignor  
& i ql die corerano molte gēte al fignor:& lor a me  
farano in populo:& io habitaro in mezo di te.& fa  
perai cōe el fignor deli exerciti me ha madata da te  
& el fignor dio poffedera iuda:& la pte fua ne la ter  
ra fanctificata:& egli elegera iherufalē. Tacia ogni  
carne dela faccia del fignor: imperho che fe leuato  
dal habitaculo fancto fuo. lll.



**H**T mostrome il fignor iesu magno facer  
dote stante dinanci a l'angelo del signor  
& stauasi Sathā a la parte dextra sua per  
contradicerli: re prendati el signor o Sa  
tha: & re prendati el signor el ql ha eletto iherufalē.  
Or qsto nō e el stizo liberato dal foco & iesu era ue  
stito cō soze uestimēte: & staua dinanci ala faccia del  
angelo: el ql rispōse: & disti a qlli che stauano i psetia  
dicēdo: remouete da lui le soze uestimēta. & egli dif  
si a lui. ecco chi ho leuato da te la iniqua tua: & ho te  
uestito d' pāni mutaroni: & egli disse. ponete sopral  
capo suo la mitra mūda: li ql posero sopral capo suo  
la mitra mūda: & uestirlo de uestimēta: & stauace l'ā  
gelo del signor: & l'āgelo del signor prestaua a iesu di  
cēdo: qsto dice el signore deli exerciti. Se tu andarai  
ne le uie mie: & obieruarai la mia obseruātia. tu etiā  
iudicarai la casa mia & guardarai li mei portici. & da  
rote li andāti de qlli che hora stano qui p'senti. O di  
iesu facerdote magno: tu & li amici toi che habitāo  
in tua presentia che lor son homini a dimostrare le  
cose che hanno a uenire: imperho chio reducero el  
feruo mio oriente. che ecco la pietra laqual ho data  
in presentia de iesu: son ferte occhii fopra una pietra  
& ecco chio sculpiro la sua sculptura disti el signor  
deli exerciti: et in uno giorno remouero l'iniquita  
de la sua terra: in quel giorno dice el signore deli ex  
erciti chiamara l'huomo lamico suo sotto la uigna:  
& foito la fico; llll.



verberghen en sint. we is dusse de sinen rait he  
tet sunder kunste. **H**ir vinne hebbe ik dooly  
ken ghesproken. vnde dat auermatige genck  
bauen myne kunste. **H**ore vnde yck scal spre  
ken. yck schal dy vragen vnde antwoorde du  
my. **M**et den horen myne oren hebbe yck dy  
ghehoort. men nu seet myn oghe dy. **H**yr vin  
me berispe yck my suluers. vnde yck doen pe  
nitencie in vinken vnde in aschen. **A**ls ghed  
dusse woer ghesproken hadde tho **J**ob. do se  
de he tho elyphas van theman. myn toren ys  
vergrampt en teghen dy. vnde en teghen dijn  
rwe vrunde. wete ghy en hebber also gerecht  
lyken vor my nicht ghesproken als **J**ob myn  
knecht. dar vinne nemet mit uw seuen steie  
vnde seuen wedder. vnde gait tho **J**ob myne  
knecht vnde offert bernenden offer vor uw.  
wene **J**ob mijn knecht schall vor uw byde  
vnde yck schal sin anghesicht vntfanghen so  
dat uw dusse sotheyt nicht gerekent en wer  
de. wene ghy en hebber tho my wart mycht  
recht gesproken als **J**ob myn knecht. **A**ldus  
gheughen ewech elyphas van theman. vnde  
baldad van suich. vnde so phar van naamath. v  
de se deden alle en de here ghesecht hadde. v  
de de here vntfenc **J**obs anghesicht. vnde he  
te kerde sich tho **J**obs penitencie. do hee vor  
sine vrunde bat. vnde de here gaff **J**ob wedder  
dobbelt alle dat he ghebat hadde. vnde tho  
ome quamen alle sine brodere. vnde alle sine  
sustere. vnde alie de en tho voen kanten. v

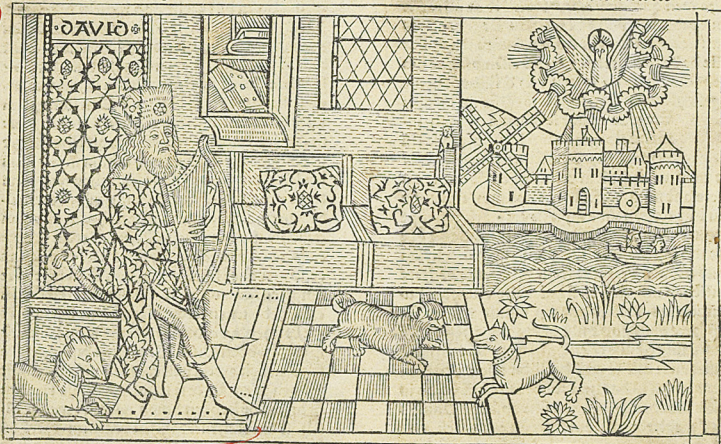
de se athen myt eme broyth in sinome huse.  
vnde se wegheden dat houet ouer en. vnde se  
troesteden en van allen quaden dat de here va  
en ghebrachte hadde. vnde een iuwelick gaff  
en een schape vnde enen gulden oerang. v  
de de here ghebenedyde **J**obs laetsen mer da  
syn begim. vnde eme worden vertye dufent  
schape. vnde sesduent camele. vnde sesduent  
ioek offen. vnde dufent deelynnen. vnde he had  
de seuen sone. vnde dzy dochter. vnde he had  
der eentre name **T**yna. vnde der ander name  
casia. vnde der drunder name cornusibij. **I**n  
alle den landen en vant men so schone wylier  
nicht als **J**obs dochtere wese. vnde er vader  
gaff en erfghetale vnder enen broderen. vnde  
na duffen gheselen. **A** leude **J**ob hundert  
vnde vertyc iaer. vnde he sach sijn kindere.  
vnde sijnre kinder kindere lath tho deme rit  
den ghelieckere. vnde he starff olt vnde vol va  
daghen. **C**hyr ghet rit **J**obs toke vnde  
hyr nauolghet de plater.

De psalter

Hier begint die wörede des propheten dauids auer den psalter.

**I**ck byn geweest die alder iugeste vnder mynen broderen vnde byn geweest der koenynghe iugelic in deme huysse mynes vaders Ick hebbe gewadet de schape mys vaders: myn hede hebben gemaect ene oigel vnde myne vinger hebben bereidet enen psalter. Vnde we is de de myne here heft verküdiget vñ gesacht van my: die here aller here siluec heft my gehoert: he heft gesant enen engel vñ heft my geuoert vnde ghenomen vande schapen myns vaders vnde he heft my gesaluet myt d saluen finer barmherticheit. Myne brodere weren gud vnde goet: vnde deme here en

was nicht en wolbuallen in en. Ick byn vth: gheganghen vnde byn enthegen komen dem heyden philisteo vnde hebberth getaghe d at swert van finer scheden vnde hebbe en aff geslaghen sijn hoet vnde also heb ick gheuoemen dat laster vnd de schande vanden kynden van israhel. Een ende hebbent de vorede vnd begit an de konynglike pphete dauid. De eersteitel des ersten psalmes. Do Saul gades gebot brack do sande he samuel dat he wgedede dauid eme to eme konynghe: do dat geschach do toech die hillige ghest vñ Saul. Vñ do me dauid sette vp des rikes stoel tho bethlehem do makede he dessen ersten psalmē wogod de rechtuerdighē vnde gudē ledet de sine weghe vnde sijn ghebet holden. vnd wo de bosen die en wrlaten werden wrladet



Beatus vir.

**A**lich is de man denicht en ghinck in den raed d' bosen: vnd in den weghe der sundere nicht en stot vnde in deme stole d' pestelencien edder der bespotter nicht en sat. Sūder in deme gesette des heren is sijn willer: vnde in sijn gesette denckz hedach vnde nacht. Vnde he schal sijn also dat holt dat geplanteet is by dem henlopeder watere dat sijne frucht ghijst in sijne tijt. Vñ de sijn blat en schal nicht afuleten: vnde alle de dynghe de he deyt de werden geluckich.

Nicht also gij bosen nicht also: sūder also dat gestubbe dat der wijnt werpet van deme angelichte der erde. Daer vmmē en staent nicht vp de bosen in deme ordelenoch de sundigen in deme rade der rechtuerdighen. Wente de here heft bekant de wech der rechtuerdighē vnde de wech der bosen schal vorderuen.

Desen salmen makede dauid do he struden scholde wedder amalech vnde wedder de philisteen de heyden. De ander ps.

Quare fremuerunt gentes.

**D**ae vmmē grimmēden de lude: vnde dat volck gedachte ydelheit. De koenynghe der erden stonden by en and: vnde de wolkē quetten te hope teghen de here vnd thegen eren gesalueden. Tho breken



Consider pages XX and XXI, the concluding episode of the Second Age of the World. An adeptly composed verso (left-hand page) shows genealogical information in Genesis 11: the line from Shem to his father, Abraham, starting with Serug as an array of characters in waist-up portraits, tethered by woody umbilical vines that flower into offspring. A contemporary viewer would have known the backstory: Abraham is uncle to Lot. According to Genesis 13, the two of them shared grazing land near Bethel but began to jostle over resources. They agreed to depart from one another, and Lot and kin settled near the towns of Sodom and Gomorrah. Much later, following a disagreeable incident at his home, Lot fled with his two daughters and wife (all unnamed). Furious, the Lord destroyed both towns in a fiery storm; famously, Lot's wife ignored a divine injunction ("Don't look back!"), and was immediately turned into a pillar of salt. Afterward, Lot and his daughters hid in a cave, where suitors were in short supply. Desperate, the daughters served Lot excessive amounts of wine

two nights running, resulting in two sons born to two daughters, Moab and Ammon. All of this is captured by word or image on page XXI, joined to the opposite page by a vine. The illustrative woodcut at the bottom conveys the destruction, with steeples toppling. Poor Lot's wife has indeed been transformed into a smooth, fixed column as the others escape to the right, escorted by an angel. On the following page begins a new episode, the Third Age of the World, starring Abraham and Sarah, at one hundred, the world's oldest parents.

In addition to his work on the *Chronicle*, Michael Wolgemut is remembered as Albrecht Dürer's teacher. After apprenticing in Wolgemut's woodcut and engraving shop from 1486–1490, Dürer traveled to Basel in the early 1490s as a journeyman. There he is believed to have worked on the first illustrated book of amusements, Sebastian Brandt's *Das Narrenschiff* [The Ship of Fools], published in 1494. Each brief chapter of Brandt's book explored an aspect or dimension of foolishness, pairing

◀◀ **Genealogical display from Genesis 11 with *The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah* (Genesis 19:24–25), illustrated by Michael Wolgemut and Wilhelm Pleydenwurff, on pages XX and XXI of the *Nuremberg Chronicle* by Hartmann Schedel, 1493.**

Schedel's personal copy of the creatively designed *Nuremberg Chronicle*, now in the Bavarian State Museum, is elaborately hand-colored. Modern sensibilities have tended to prefer the austerity of black ink on white paper, as shown on this copy.

▶ ***The Predestination of God*, woodcut illustration by Albrecht Dürer, from *Das Narrenschiff* [The Ship of Fools] by Sebastian Brandt, Chapter 57, 1494.** Dürer's treatment of the scene does more than it needs to: Beyond the fool and his lobster we see a grove of trees upper left, a particularized outcropping on the far side of a valley, the town and its steeple. These are all superfluous but lend authority to the image. In poorly realized knockoffs (such as John Cawood's English edition of *The Ship of Fools*, 1570), lazy copyists omit Dürer's landscape, generalize plants, and abbreviate the characters, compensating weakly with decorative borders.



moralistic but humorous verse with a woodcut illustration. Scholars have disagreed on how many of the book's 114 woodcuts were designed by Dürer, but as many as two-thirds of them are now believed to be his, including Chapter 57, which shows a fool riding a lobster. Brandt's verse caption (translated by Edwin H. Zeydel) reads:

"Who, lacking merit, seeks a prize  
And on a fragile reed relies,  
His plans go backward lobster-wise."

*Das Narrenschiff* was the first international bestseller, inspiring multiple European language translations in pirated editions. The legal concept of intellectual property did not exist at the end of the fifteenth century, so no recourse was possible.

Dürer, a central figure of the Northern Renaissance, was known for the precision and refinement of his line, which set a

new bar for printed image-making in Europe. His work spanned woodcut, engraving, painting, and writing. His woodcut work remains unsurpassed; a plate from his 1498 *Apocalypse with Pictures* appears in this chapter's image gallery (see page 35). Other noted Northern Renaissance woodcut designers included Lucas Cranach, whose dramatic compositions and political portraits would become closely associated with the Lutheran Reform (see Chapter 6) and Hans Holbein, best known for witty if grim illustrations for his version of *The Dance Macabre* (1523–25).

Connoisseurs of print have noted a decline in the quality of woodcuts after newer print media gained prominence. Assessments based on aesthetic value are one way of engaging cultural material. But woodcut remained an effective medium for several centuries, even when, as often, it was crudely employed. Because illustration is enmeshed in culture in many aspects, "the finest" isn't necessarily a criterion for inclusion or emphasis within these pages.



◀◀ *Six of Birds*, illustration by Master E. S.

for *The Large Playing Cards*, 1463. Fifteenth-century intaglio printmakers in German-speaking Europe not only produced plentiful devotional images but also sets of playing cards. The first refined copper engravings have been attributed to a nameless artist referred to as the "Master of the Playing Cards," between 1430 and 1450. His followers included Master E. S., known by his monogrammed plates. This card has been attributed to the latter artist, from a deck of four suits: Men, Hounds, Birds, and Shields. The irregularly arranged birds are inventively presented, charmingly drawn, and skillfully engraved.

## Etching and Engraving in Europe

A second physiographic printing process was known by printmakers as intaglio (silent "g," from the Italian verb *intagliare*, to engrave). In contrast to relief printing, in which ink is rolled onto the raised portions of the block and paper pressed against it, intaglio printing involves pushing paper into the recessed passages. The roots of intaglio lie in a metalsmithing practice called niello. Medieval jewelers and armorers engraved fine lines into silver and steel objects, rubbed a dense black pitch into the depressions, and buffed off the excess, leaving dark decorative lines to contrast with the polished metal. It wasn't a big leap to use the technique to engrave plates for the purpose of transferring the lines onto paper. Metal engraving appeared in Europe during the 1430s, but did not travel to Asia.

Copper engravers used tools called burins to score the plate with grooves. Using cross-hatched lines, it was possible to create rich tonal passages, as well as contours and edges. Depending upon the pressure applied to the burin, a groove might be deeper or shallower, reading as black or gray when printed. Very fine modulations were possible, as a card from a playing deck engraved by "Master E. S." shows. After the sixteenth century, copper (and later, steel) engravings were most often used to create reproductions of paintings and sculptures.

Etching emerged as a faster, more fluid method for producing an intaglio plate through chemical action. A waxy ground was applied to the plate and scratched through with a needle to create a drawn image. The copper plate was submerged in Dutch mordant, a hydrochloric acid solution, to be "bitten," or consumed. Longer and shorter bite times controlled the depth of the resulting groove, and the value (relative lightness and darkness) of the printed mark. Ambitious narrative scenes in multiple states designed by Rembrandt van Rijn like *The Entombment* (c.1654; see page 39) capture the speed and

flexibility of the medium. Impressively complex images and modulations of value appear in *The Views of Rome* (c.1756; see page 40) by Giambattista Piranesi. Etching was adapted for caricature (see Chapter 5) and experienced a resurgence in the modern period. The Welsh illustrator and muralist Frank Brangwyn became especially accomplished in the medium, using visceral approaches to platemaking including drypoint, deep line-etch, and scraping, in *The Tow-Rope* (1906).

Intaglio ink is dense and tacky. The printer smeared it into the scored and pitted recesses of the plate, then buffed the surface clean with effort. Soft wet paper was placed on the plate, covered with felt blankets, and pushed beneath a cylinder under pressure. After printing, the finished impression was set aside to dry. All told, intaglio printing was slower and more laborious than relief printing; worse, it wasn't compatible with printing metal type simultaneously. As a result, intaglio prints had to be separately tipped in (lightly glued) or bound into letterpress books, causing greater expense for the publisher or author.

Undeterred, eighteenth-century European publishers issued luxurious illustrated editions of the works of dramatists and poets—what David Bland called "learned productions"—replete with engravings: in France, Molière, Racine, and La Fontaine; in England, Shakespeare and the venerable Romans Virgil and Ovid.

As the eighteenth century came to a close, the way forward to industrially scaled printing and publishing was unclear. Book publishing with relief-printed woodcuts and movable metal type had sufficed since 1461, but woodcut had fallen out of fashion. Publishing was limited to print runs of just hundreds of illustrated books, or in certain cases a few thousand. The system was capped at artisanal levels by the longevity of materials: Blocks and plates simply wore out.

The short-term fix was to improve the matrix. Traditional woodcuts used soft plank woods, typically pear, cut along the grain and scooped out with u- and v-gouges. During the 1790s,

►► Three illustrations by Thomas Bewick (clockwise from top): *Walter Brown's Fables*, published 1884, using salvaged wood engraved blocks by Bewick for his own *Fables of Aesop and Others* (1818), issued ten years before his death; *The Elephant*, from *A General History of Quadrapeds*, 1790; *The Night-Jar*, from *The History of British Birds*, 1797. Bewick has been remembered primarily as a printer and naturalist on the strength of the *Quadrapeds* and especially his ornithological works. Art historians Charles Rosen and Henri Zerner have argued against this view, drawing on the vignettes as evidence of his significance as a Romantic artist. "His great evocative power...depended...on the expressive[ness] of the ornamental tailpieces, turning them into finely observed scenes... without relating them directly to the text." Charlotte Brontë offered a similar meditation on the opening of *British Birds* in the early pages of *Jane Eyre* in 1847.

Thomas Bewick, a British engraver, picked up on experiments by others in the trade. They cut wood across the grain, effectively rotating the block by 90 degrees to access the end grain face. In close-grained tree species such as Turkish boxwood, end grain faces are exceedingly hard and cannot be cut with gouges. Bewick used metal engraving tools to score boxwood as finely as in copper engraving for intaglio, but for a block print in relief. The result was referred to as "white line" engraving, to capture the difference; the engraved marks didn't print. Bewick's achievement was to bring refinement and consistency to the new approach, which in others' hands had produced crude results. In a stroke, several problems were solved. Boxwood was durable, and many more impressions could be pulled from a block. Engravers using burins could create highly refined images for relief printing, a cheaper process. Finally, end grain blocks could be cut to standard depth, permitting simultaneous printing of word and image. Quality, volume, and speed improved, and costs came down.

Several additional innovations in the early nineteenth century fed capacity. Stereotyping used plaster to create a mold from a press lockup (elements to be printed held in place inside a metal frame called a chase) of metal type and wood engraving. Molten metal was poured into the plaster mold

called a flong to create the new printing plate. Stereotypes were also known as *clichés*, terms that survived original usage to later convey thoughtless overuse. Invented by Charles Stanhope in England in 1802 and in use in the United States by 1820, the technique extended the life of wood-engraved images. Electrotyping achieved the same end more durably by midcentury, using copper with steel facing to cast plates. New pulp paper from wood (an improvement over cotton rag paper in both speed and cost) and the invention of the steam-powered cylinder press portended a dramatic increase in publishing to feed an ever-growing reading public.

Even so, none of these developments led directly to the emergence of illustration as a profession. The widespread adoption of wood engraving would take decades. Metal engraving and copper etching became fashionable for genteel gift books and remained so through the 1840s. Many such pictures were straightforward art reproductions, paintings after which engravings had been commissioned. Only gradually would images specifically designed for publication become common.

Ultimately, the emergence of the illustrator as a contributor to modern readership was not a mechanical or technical process, but a cultural one.



THE NIGHT-JAR.

GOAT-SUCKER, DOR-HAWK, OR FERN OWL.

(*Caprimulgus Europeanus*, Lin.—*L'Engouliventi*, Buff.)



THE ELEPHANT.

(*Elephas Maximus*, Lin.—*L'Elephant*, Buff.)



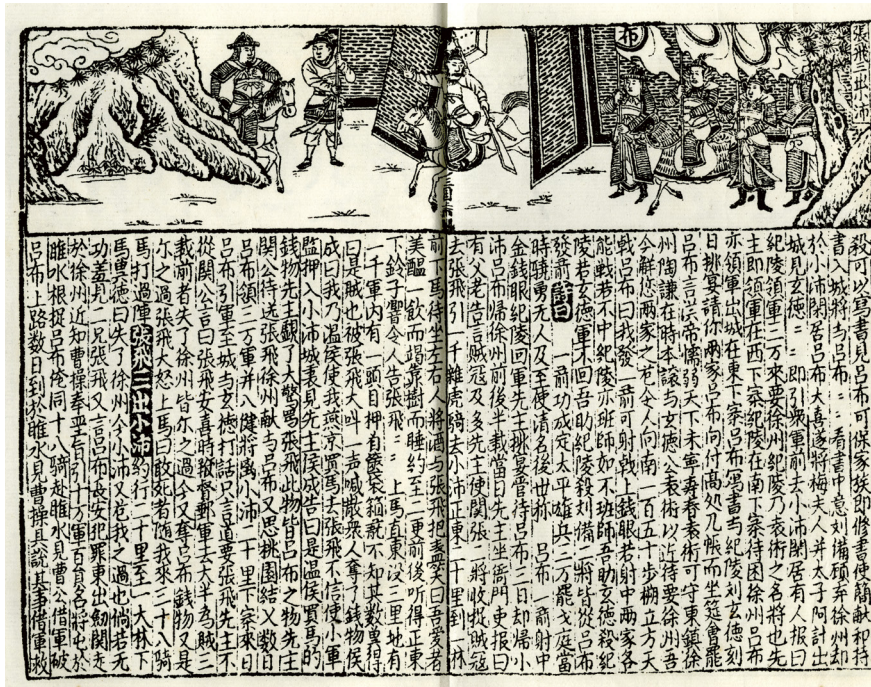
◀◀ *Madonna of the Fire*, large-format (roughly 16 x 20 inches [40.5 x 51 cm]), hand-colored woodcut, 1428. A tenderly realized Madonna and child are framed in an archway beneath a diminutive diorama of a crucifixion, bracketed by an annunciation and stacked pairs of saints. Printed in brown ink, the image was hand-colored in ocher, brick red, and a third hue that has now blackened with time. In February 1428 this particular impression—the only one extant—survived a terrible schoolhouse fire in Forlì, Italy, near Bologna. The endurance of the print was deemed miraculous. It came to be venerated as a holy object, and in 1636 was housed in a specially constructed chapel in the cathedral of Forlì. Over the centuries, imitations and tributes proliferated in many forms.

► *Of Two Pots: On Useless Company*, hand-colored woodcut illustration for Fable No. 77 in *Der Edelstein* [The Gemstone], by Ulrich Boner, c.1350, published by Albrecht Pfister, 1461. This edition of a vernacular text is an early example of combined illustration and typography, helping the spread of literacy to all classes. Albert Classen's translation reads: "Once a great river swelled up and overflowed, forging a huge new channel...the river took two pots with it...one being made of ceramic, the other out of cast iron." As they travel downriver, the ceramic vessel bobs on the surface, but the iron pot is swamped by water. The latter calls out, "Wait for me, I want to travel with you." But the ceramic pot knows better. It replies, "I cannot help it. If you were to get ahead of me, [and we were to collide] I would be dead... I can cope well without your company. Whoever bumps into the other, the harm will always be mine." The poor are advised to steer clear of the rich, and the lesser-ranked to avoid the higher. Inevitably, "the big one causes harm to the small one."

geltchen. Das muß ich fur war iehē. Er wolt mit  
kriege lebē. Her er ein pfening genu gegebenē. Er wer  
weder zu gelpote nach zu schaden. Kummten auff  
der prucken laden.

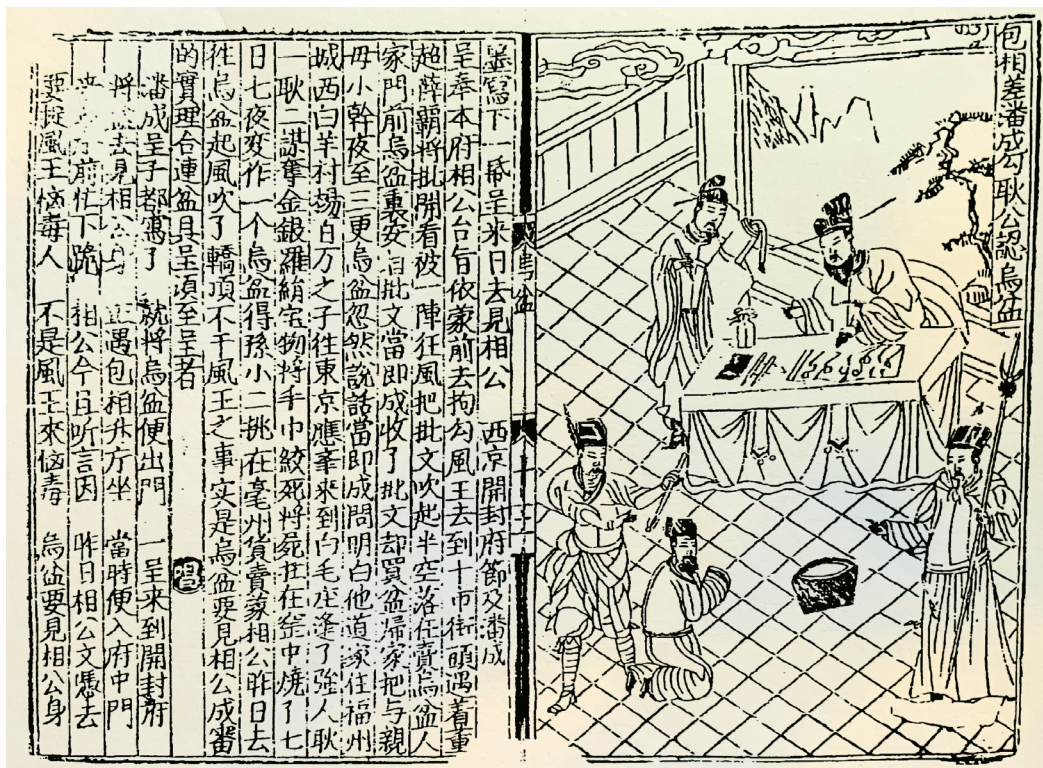


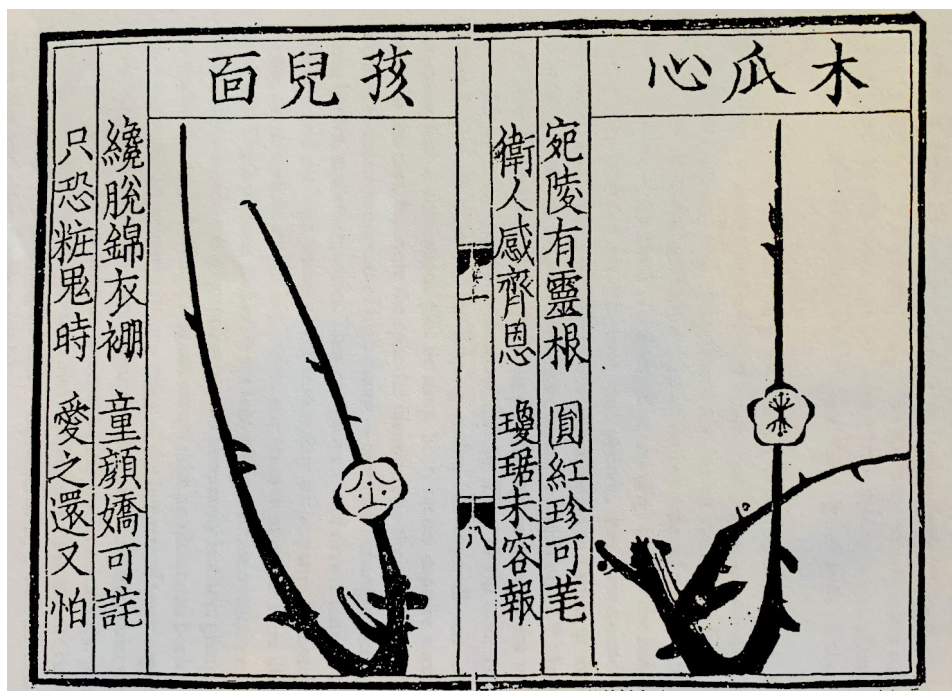
174  
Eins wals eŷ wasser das was groŷ. Auch sei  
nē gāge her floŷ. Dū nam ein ferrē schweif.  
Vnd furt hin was es begreif. Dū dē wasser auch  
man leit. Es wer groŷ lang und breit. Auch zwē  
hefen furt es hin. Mit kraft der eŷ was erdein. Die  
ander was mit speiŷ gegoffen. Die hefen kometen  
wilde gefloŷē. Als sie dis wasser her getummē. Das  
selb han ich mit verummē. Vnd das der erdein ha  
fen leichter was. Des weges schlumpft ym palz.  
Auch fur der erdein hin nach. Er sprach zum erdein



◀ *Han general Zhang Fei fights his way out of Xiaopei and seeks aid from Cao Cao in the Countryside, woodcut for Sanguo zhi pinghua [Plain Tales on the Chronicles of the Three Kingdoms], c.1330. This pinghua can be seen as a colloquial proto-novel, stitched together from a third-century CE historical account amply flavored by folkloric and legendary sources. Pinghua were designed in a scheme of thirds with text filling the bottom two-thirds of the spread, and an illustration running the full width across the top.*

▼ *Judge Bao Solves the Case of the Uncanny Chamberpot, a chapter-opening illustration for a collection of cihua, c.1480. The incorruptible Judge Bao lived a long life across Chinese media, and this colorful storyline, where wicked potters encounter a rich traveler and murder him for cash, is a recurring theme. To conceal the crime, they pulverized his body and mixed it into a batch of clay, from which many pots were made. Despite the dispersal of his remains, the dead man's spirit lived on in various vessels. Before long the disconcerted owner of an anguished talking pot had contacted Judge Bao (seated), who launched an investigation leading to the conviction and beheading of the killers.*

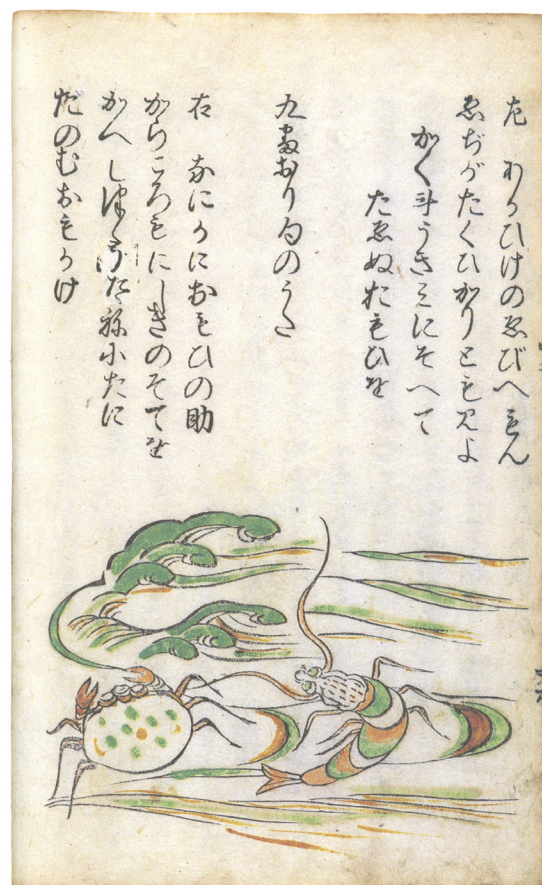




▲ Two pages from *Portrait of a Plum*, a meditation on plum blossoms, written and illustrated by Song Boren, 1240.

Song was an official and painter-poet during the Southern Song period, and contributed to a vogue of plum-painting among the literati. The verses capture a poet's reverie while gazing at blossoms, much as people ponder the forms of passing clouds. On the right-hand page, Song is reminded of a flowering quince, suggesting the advance of spring and fluttering of young love; on the left, he sees a child's face in the blossom. Despite the painted source material, the book is notably graphic in spirit, characterized by strong black shapes.

► "The Crab and the Prawn," an illustrated poem from *Shishō no Uta-Awase* [The Poetry Contests of the Four Living Things], Volume 2, an undated Kanei Era (1624–44) movable wooden type *tanrokubon* edition. *Tan* (orange-red) and *roku* (mineral green) gave "red and green books" their names. Hand-colored passages in *tanrokubon* illustrations were unconstrained by woodcut contour lines. This delightful compendium was "conceived" by the crawling creatures who organized a fourteen-round poetry tournament among themselves. In response the birds did the same, and the two groups collaborated to publish Volume 1. Contests among the water creatures and the beasts comprise Volume 2.





◀ *Quo vides in libro scribe* [What you see, write in a book], illustration showing John on the island of Patmos for folio 3R of *The Cloisters Apocalypse*, an early fourteenth-century French illuminated manuscript.

The spectacular imagery and poetic vision of sacred history in the Book of Revelation—the prophetic last book of the Bible—ensured periodic surges of interest during the Middle Ages. Here, the page comprises a horizontal illustration of the recumbent John placed above a two-column text. This formal conceit from the manuscript tradition recurred in early printed illustrated books, notably the Cologne Bible (1478).

▶ *Opening of the third seal: The rider on a black horse (Revelation 6:5) and Opening of the fourth seal: the rider on a pale horse (Revelation 6:7); folio 7R of Life and Acts of St. John the Evangelist, a xylographic book produced in Germany, c.1465–70.* A focus to the point of fixation on Gutenberg's invention of movable type tends to obscure the use of xylography in European book production during the incunabula period. The production of block books, as they are called in the West, enabled integration of lettering within the image area. The episodes from the Book of Revelation shown here present two of the famous "four horsemen" of the Apocalypse.



# Index

Page numbers in *italic* type refer to reproductions or their captions.

## A

Abbey, Edward Austin 60, 63, 186  
 Abstract Expressionism 355, 360  
 abstraction 189, 190, 205, 265, 332  
 Achebe, Chinua 384, 384  
 Ackermann, Rudolf 44, 53, 59, 219  
 Adams, Cassilly 280  
 advertising 13, 66, 110–36, 156, 176, 187, 190, 207, 216–17, 348, 362, 367, 388  
   aimed at women 111, 118, 120, 124–5, 124, 125, 135, 210, 223, 229  
   branding 348–9  
   calendars 230, 231, 242, 379  
   cartoons 308  
   catalogs 118  
   magazine revolution 120, 121, 121  
   myths and mythmaking 299  
   posters 114–17, 132, 187, 210, 221, 229, 261  
   sexuality in 216, 231–2  
 Aesthetic movement 214–16, 231, 234, 235  
*affiches* 8, 114, 115, 132, 210  
 African Americans 253, 260–1, 262–5, 274, 275, 297, 309, 312–13, 320–2, 326, 327, 346, 353, 353, 356–9  
 agencies 348  
 album covers 350, 350, 364, 370  
 Alcott, Louisa May 324  
 Alison, Alexander 101  
*All-Story Magazine* 267  
 Allward, Walter Seymour 202  
 American civil rights 300–1, 344, 346, 353, 356–9  
 American Civil War 80, 84–9, 100–1, 293, 298, 299, 301  
*American Humorist* 156  
*The American Magazine* 347  
 American Puritanism 217  
 American regional painters 194  
 American War of Independence 293  
*American Weekly* 227  
 Andrews, Joseph 290  
 Anglo-Chinese War 83  
 animation 147, 156, 186, 193, 321, 364  
 annuals, literary 53–4, 59, 147, 211, 220, 378  
 anti-Semitism 282–8, 304  
 Arendt, Hannah 176, 189, 193, 246, 282  
*The Argosy* 59  
 Arroyo, Antonio Vanegas 82  
 Art Deco 64, 126, 127, 150, 265, 349  
 Art Nouveau 132, 133, 235  
 artificial intelligence (AI) 381–3  
 Arts and Crafts Movement 64, 76, 219, 329  
*Asahi Journal* 352  
 Ashcan School 96, 97, 148

*L'Assiette au Beurre* 182  
 Atlanta Race Riots 300, 301  
 Austen, Jane 53, 56, 57  
 Ayer, Jacqueline 333, 340

## B

Bailey, Alice Cooper 333  
 Bakin, Kyokutei 47, 68  
 Baldini, Baccio 37  
 Baldwin, James 352, 352  
 Balzac, Honoré de 55, 130, 354  
*bande dessinée* 344, 375  
 Bank Street Writers' Lab 328  
 Bannerman, Helen 312  
 Barns, Cornelia 191  
 Barnum, P. T. 83  
 Barruel, Abbé 284  
 Baudelaire, Charles 80, 91  
 Bauhaus 332  
 Baum, Frank 334  
 Bazin, André 88–9  
 Beardsley, Aubrey 214, 215, 235  
 Beaux-Arts tradition 263, 332  
 Beccafumi, Domenico 34  
 Becker, F. Otto 280, 280  
 beefcake images 232–3, 233, 243  
 Bellows, George 96, 97, 148, 151  
 Benda, W. T. 260  
 Benett, Léon 334  
 Bennett, James Gordon 82, 115  
 Bentley, Richard 57  
 Bernhaus, A. 89, 104  
 Bernhard, Lucian 126, 127  
 Bewick, Thomas 26, 27, 83, 382  
 Bi Wu 134  
 Bibles, printed 13, 18–22, 18–22, 32, 35  
*Bilderbogen* 152, 170  
 Billings, Hammatt 320, 321  
 Black, William 63  
*The Black Flame of the Amazon* 297  
*Black Panther* 358–9, 358, 359  
 Blake, Quentin 389  
 Blake, William 160, 321  
 Bok, Edward 223, 227  
 Bolton, Thomas 95  
 Boner, Ulrich 18, 29  
 Bonnard, Pierre 116, 117, 269  
 Botticelli, Sandro 37  
 Bouguereau, William-Adolphe 231  
 Bourke-White, Margaret 353  
 Boydell, John 41  
 Boylan, Grace Duffie 321  
 Boz See Cruikshank, George  
 Bragdon, Dudley A. 166  
 Brandt, Sebastian 22–3, 23, 36  
 Brandywine School 63, 64, 74, 75, 291, 356  
 Brangwyn, Frank 25, 77, 184, 201  
 Brey, Laura 183  
 Briggs, Austin 355  
 Brinkley, Nell 212, 224, 225  
 broadsheets 83, 103, 146, 150, 152, 170, 178

broad-sides 54, 82, 82, 98, 99  
 Brock, Charles Edmund 67  
 Brontë, Charlotte 27  
 Brown, Hilda Wilkinson 312, 327  
 Brown, Joshua 86  
 Brown, Margaret Wise 328  
 Browne, Hablot Knight 45, 45, 57, 57  
*The Brownies' Book* 312, 327  
 Bruce of California 243  
 Brunetti, Ivan 378  
 Buck, Pearl S. 260, 272  
 bullpen 86  
 Burne Jones, Edward 64, 64  
 Burroughs, Edgar Rice 156, 267, 267  
 Busch, Wilhelm 152, 170  
 Buss, Robert 45  
 Byfield, Mary 99

## C

Cadell, Thomas 55, 55, 147  
 Cahén, Oscar 288, 289, 304  
 Caldecott, Randolph 312, 313, 323  
 Calkins, Earnest 111, 126, 217  
 calligraphy 8, 158, 159–60, 173, 288, 288  
 Câmara, Tomás Leal de 182  
 Camille, Albert 268  
 Campbell, E. Simms 272, 275  
 Caniff, Milton 260  
 Cao Xueqin 49–50, 69  
 caricature 25, 143–8, 143–7, 154–5, 162–3, 180–1, 180, 182, 198–9, 360, 361, 369  
*La Caricature* 146  
 Carle, Eric 332  
 Carroll, Lewis 147, 334, 339  
 cartoons and comic strips 148–57, 160–1, 166–71, 180, 181, 225, 255, 260, 271, 288, 307, 308, 332, 338, 344, 374–7  
   graphic novels 344, 377, 377, 380, 381, 387  
   propaganda 187, 196–7, 206  
 Catnach, James 98  
 Cello-Tak 349  
*The Century* 121  
 Cervantes, Miguel de 58, 59, 329  
 Chalon, Alfred Edward 211  
 Cham 146, 152  
 Chapman, Edward 44–5, 57, 147  
*Le Charivari* 112, 146–7, 152  
 Chéret, Jules 115, 116, 210, 212, 269  
 Chermayeff & Geismar 348–9, 348  
*Cherokee Phoenix* 294  
 Cherokee syllabary 52, 294–5, 388  
 Chester, George Randolph 266  
*Children's Playmate* 291, 291  
 children's publications 312–41  
*China Punch* 154  
*China Weekly Review* 196  
 Christy, Howard Chandler 183, 212  
 Church, Frederick S. 262, 263

Chwast, Seymour 288, 349, 354, 356, 357, 360, 361  
*cihua* 49  
*Cincinnati Enquirer* 266  
 Clarke, Joseph Clayton 57  
 Clarke, René 111  
*clichés* 26  
 clip art 381  
 Cober, Alan 355  
 codex 12, 54, 387  
 Cold War 190, 197, 207, 258, 268, 344  
 collage 188, 304  
*Collier's Weekly* 74, 95, 121, 193, 224, 226, 243, 324, 347  
 colonialism 80, 83, 246, 252, 256, 264, 290–7, 305, 312, 333  
 color 323  
   *à la poupée* inking 220  
   four-color separation 63  
   hand-coloring 14, 18, 18, 19, 28, 29, 31, 32, 113, 145, 162, 180, 219, 220, 252  
   lithography 111, 112–13  
   machine-shading 151  
   newspaper supplements 148  
   printed 34  
   two-color halftone 74  
   woodcuts 46, 48, 50, 80–1  
 Combe, William 44  
 Comenius, Johann Amos 317, 317  
*Comic Almanack* 147, 164  
 Comics Code Authority 231, 232, 242, 375  
 Comte, Auguste 188, 249  
 Condak, Cliff 355  
 Conrad, Joseph 267, 384  
 Coolidge, Calvin 110  
 Cooper, Charles E. 348  
 Cooper, James Fenimore 72  
 copyright 140, 142, 156  
 Cornwell, Dean 278–9  
 corporate identities 348–9, 348  
*Cosmopolitan* 121  
 counterculture 344–71, 377  
 Cowper, William 313  
 Cox, Kenyon 121  
 Cozens, Henrietta 324  
 Crabapple, Molly 385  
 Craig, Edward Gordon 76  
 Cranach, Lucas the Elder 23, 178, 179, 180, 389  
 Cranach Press 76  
 Crane, Stephen 148  
 Crane, Walter 64, 160, 173, 315, 323, 323, 329, 330–1  
 Creel, George 186, 187  
 Crimean War 80, 83, 83, 102  
*The Crisis* 254, 255, 265  
 Crowe, Joseph Archer 83  
 Crowell, Henry P. 118  
 Cruikshank, George 44, 66, 144, 147, 164  
 Cruikshank, Isaac 144, 144  
 Crumb, Robert 377  
 Cubism 204, 264, 304

Cullen, Countee 327  
cultural memory 278–83, 290–7, 303  
Cultural Revolution 197, 376, 377  
Currier, Nathaniel 113  
cut paper work 197

## D

Dadaists 188, 188  
Daguerre, Louis 80  
Dallas, Hilda 222  
*La Danse Macabre* 33  
Dante Alighieri 37, 59  
Darley, Felix Octavius Carr 59, 72  
Darly, Matthias and Mary 143, 144  
Darwin, Charles 188, 214, 240, 248, 249, 256  
Daumier, Honoré 112, 113, 131, 146–7, 146, 181, 388  
Davis, Stuart 96, 126, 190, 207, 212, 213  
Davis, Theodore 86  
Day, Benjamin 82, 151  
De Cora, Angel 294, 295  
Decadents 214, 215, 216, 234  
DeCarlo, Dan 242  
“decisive moment” illustrations 63  
decolonization 384  
Defoe, Daniel 55, 140  
Dekk, Dorrit 288, 304  
Delacroix, Eugène 184  
*Delineator* 120, 121, 125  
DeMers, Joe 348  
Denslow, W. W. 151, 166, 334, 338  
Derain, André 264  
Descartes, René 60  
*Dianshizhai Huabao* 91, 91  
Dick, Alexander L. 211  
Dickens, Charles 44–5, 45, 47, 53, 55, 57, 57, 59, 67, 140, 147  
Dickson, Gayle “Asali” 359, 359  
die-cutting 220, 323, 332, 357  
digital media 374, 378, 381–7, 389  
dime novels 59, 73  
Ding Cong 376  
Dirks, Rudolph 152  
Disney 63, 74, 147, 382  
Disney, Walt 156, 321, 376  
Disneyland 63  
Dodge, Mary Mapes 324  
Doré, Gustave 58, 59, 146, 268  
Doucet, Julie 381  
Douglas, Aaron 264, 265, 265, 274  
Douglas, Emory 358–9, 358  
Douglass, Frederick 298, 309, 388  
Dowd, D. B. 9  
Dreiser, Theodore 96, 97, 148  
Dryden, Helen 124–5, 125  
drypoint 25  
Du Bois, W. E. B. 255, 265, 301, 312, 327  
Duke, James Buchanan 118  
Dulac, Edmund 336  
Dumas, Alexandre 53  
Dunn, Harvey 63, 199  
Dürer, Albrecht 22–3, 23, 35, 36, 38  
Đường Ngọc Cảnh 269  
Duval, Marie 152, 153

## E

Eakins, Thomas 95  
Eastman, Elaine Goodale 294  
Eastman, Ruth 235  
editorial illustration 360, 361  
educational publications 312, 314, 316–18, 324  
Ehse, Hanno 180  
Eisner, Will 152  
Eksell, Olle 363  
electrotypes 26, 83  
Ellison, Ralph 370  
embellishments 219, 220, 220  
embossing 220  
Engels, Friedrich 284  
engraving 25, 26  
Enlightenment 60, 125, 314  
Erler, Fritz 200  
Erté 127  
*Esquire* 272, 354, 355, 356, 356, 362, 368  
etching 25, 26  
*Eye* 371  
*Eye-ful* 231, 232

## F

fadeaway girl 124, 212  
Fairbanks, Douglas 62  
Fairy-Tale War 328  
*fait divers* 82  
Falls, C. B. 97, 274, 337  
*Family Circle* 226  
fascicle sets 54, 57  
Fausel, Daniel 113  
Fauset, Jessie 327  
Feininger, Lyonel 167  
Feitler, Bea 367  
Felker, Clay 354  
Feng Zikai 196  
*FeyYinGe Huabao* 91  
Fielding, Henry 55  
Finden, Edward 53  
Fish, Anne Harriet 137, 237  
Fisher, Harrison 212  
Flagg, James Montgomery 184, 203  
Flaubert, Gustave 55, 354  
Flora, Jim 350, 364  
*Flugschriften* 178  
Flynn, Errol 63  
folded paper codex 146  
Fontaine, Matthew 249  
Foote, Mary Hallock 160  
Forbes, Edwin 86  
*Forget-Me-Not* 53, 53  
Formisyn, A. 184  
*Fortune* 190, 190, 191, 191  
Fox, Lorraine 348  
*Fraktur* 52  
*Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* 83, 85, 94, 94, 103, 104, 106  
Fraser, Alexander 55  
Fremez (Jóse Gómez Fresquet) 365  
Freud, Sigmund 188  
Friedan, Betty 124, 226, 227, 346, 358

Frost, A. B. 263  
Fuchs, Bernie 125, 136, 367  
Fujita, Neil 350, 350  
*fumetti* 367  
*furikana* 68  
Fuseli, Henry 41  
*fusilamientos* 82, 82

## G

Gangel, Richard 355, 356  
Gardner, Alexander 88, 88, 89  
*Garo* 377  
Gass, William 387  
Gavarni, Paul 130  
Gelbert, Hugo 204  
*Géographie Universelle* 268  
German Expressionism 188  
Gibson, Charles Dana 186, 202, 212, 223–4, 224, 324  
Gibson, James F. 88  
Gill, Eric 64, 76  
Gillespie, Jessie 201  
Gillray, James 144, 145, 163, 180–1, 180, 360  
Giraud, Jean 375  
Giusti, George 190, 190, 363  
Glackens, William 96, 105  
Glaser, Milton 349, 349, 354, 371  
global imaginaire 80, 333  
Goddard, Morrill 148, 151  
*Godey's Lady's Book* 219, 220, 236, 291  
*The Godless One* 285  
Goedsche, Hermann 284  
*gokan* 47, 68  
Golden Age 312, 323, 332, 334  
Golden Cockerel Press 76  
Golden Haggadah 283  
*Good Housekeeping* 156, 226, 324  
Goodrich, Samuel Griswold 53  
*Graham's Magazine* 219, 219, 220, 236  
Grandville, J. J. 147, 147, 164, 165  
graphic novels 344, 377, 377, 380, 381, 387  
*Graphis* 363  
Graves, Robert 55  
Greatbatch, William 56  
Green, Elizabeth Shippen 75, 223, 324  
Greenaway, Kate 312, 323  
Greenberg, Clement 140, 156, 355, 388  
Griffith, D. W. 298  
*grisaille* 105  
Gruelle, Johnny 156, 167, 312, 322, 322, 336  
Gunn, Archie 148  
Guston, Philip 360, 369  
Gutenberg, Johannes 8, 13, 18, 389  
Guys, Constantin 80, 354

## H

Habermas, Jürgen 140  
Hale, Sarah Josepha 219, 291  
halftone 63, 74, 105, 121, 302  
Hall, William 44–5, 57, 147  
Hanbei, Yoshida 46

Haring, Keith 345  
Harlem Renaissance 264–5, 274, 275, 297, 327  
*Harper's Bazaar* 127, 368  
*Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 59, 60, 63, 75, 121  
*Harper's Weekly* 83, 84, 85, 87, 88, 181, 324  
Harrington, Ollie 327  
Harris, Joel Chandler 262–3, 312  
Harris, R. G. 375  
Hatch, George W. 54  
Hausmann, Raoul 188  
Hawkins, Marcellus 327  
Hearst, William Randolph 148, 151, 152, 156  
Heath, Charles 303  
Held, John Jr. 125, 137, 231, 237  
Heming, Arthur 158, 160  
Hemyng, Bracebridge 73  
Hendrix, John 386, 387  
Henri, Robert 96  
Hergé 375  
Herriman, George 374, 374  
Hibbs, Ben 194  
hierarchy of genres 84  
Hintermeister, J. H. 379  
Hiroshige, Utagawa 48  
Hogarth, William 140–3, 141, 142, 152  
Holbein, Hans 23  
Holden, Ralph 111  
*Holiday* 363  
Holling, Lucille W. and H.C. 333, 341  
Homer, Winslow 86, 86  
Hopps, Harry R. 184, 185  
Howard, Tom 95, 104  
Hubley, John 350  
Hughes, Langston 264, 265, 301, 307, 327  
Hume, David 60  
Hurd, Clement 328  
Hurston, Zora Neale 264  
Huysmans, J. K. 214, 216

## I

Ikku, Jippensha 46, 47, 48  
illuminated manuscripts 13, 13, 32, 283, 303  
*Illustrated London News* 80, 83, 83, 91, 102, 114, 116, 154, 202  
*Illustrated News* 83  
*Illustrirte Zeitung* 83, 270  
Imbert, Anthony 252  
*incunabula* 18  
Indigenous Americans 278–81, 289–97, 305–9, 314, 320, 333  
Ingram, Herbert 83, 114  
Inman, Henry 54  
intaglio printing 24, 37

## J

*Jack and Jill* 333, 333  
James, Henry 63  
*Japan Punch* 154, 154  
*Japonisme* 116, 117  
Jenson, Nicolas 19  
*Jet* 353  
Jihe, Ogawa 155  
Johnson, James Weldon 265, 274  
Johnson, William H. 309  
Joly, Maurice 284  
Jones, Lois Mailou 326, 327  
*The Journal of Current Periodical* 154  
Joze, Victor 132  
*Judge* 147, 148, 272  
*Judy* 152, 153  
*Jugendstil* 133, 349  
Julian, Paul 364

## K

Kakizaki Hakyō 246  
*kana* syllabary 47, 68  
*Kangzhan Manhua* 196  
*kanji* characters 17, 47, 68, 352  
Kant, Immanuel 60, 125  
*kasutori* 351, 351  
Katsura Yuki 352, 352  
Kaufer, E. McKnight 370  
*kawaii* 352  
*kawaraban* 92, 92  
*The Keepsake* 211  
Kelmscott Press 64, 64, 329  
Kent, Corita 366  
Kent, Rockwell 64, 65  
Keppler, Joseph 147, 177, 177  
Kessler, Count Harry Graf 76  
*kibyoshi* 46  
King, Frank 263  
Kipling, Rudyard 324  
Kitazawa, Rakuten 154  
Kiyochika, Kobayashi 92, 93, 105  
Kiyonaga, Torii 46  
Kleist, Heinrich von  
*The Broken Jug* 59  
Knackfuss, Hermann 270  
Knapp, Louisa 223  
Krafft-Ebing, Richard von 214, 231  
Krug, Nora 383, 383, 389  
Kugler, Franz 71  
Kunichika, Toyohara 117  
Kunisada, Utagawa 68  
*kurobon* 318  
Kurz, Louis 101  
Kyd See Clarke, Joseph Clayton

## L

*Ladies' Companion* 211  
*Ladies Graphic* 228, 240  
*Ladies' Home Journal* 156, 157, 187, 206, 210, 219, 223, 226, 272, 347, 388  
*Ladies' Mercury* 219

Lakota Winter Count 305  
Lam, Caspar 159  
Larmessin, Nicolas II de 38  
Lawrence, Jacob 301, 301  
Lenin, Vladimir 189  
Leslie, Frank 83, 347  
*Leslie's Magazine* 220  
Leyendecker, J. C. 111, 119, 187, 216–17, 216, 224, 233, 233, 243, 247, 348  
Li Binsheng 376  
Liang Qichao 257  
*lianhuanhua* (LHH) 155, 167, 376, 376  
Liao Bingxiong 196  
*The Liberator* 191, 204  
*Liberty* 184  
*Life* 147, 148, 201, 202, 212, 236, 353, 353  
*L'illustration* 83  
Lincoln, Abraham 84  
Lind, Jenny 83  
Linnaeus, Carl 248, 249  
Linton, W. J. 382  
Lionni, Leo 191, 332  
Lissitzky, El 189, 190, 205  
lithography 51, 112–13, 122, 146–7  
chromolithography 111, 113–14, 113  
color 107, 164  
hand-tinted 113, 220  
photolithography 90, 91  
Locke, Alain 264, 264  
Locke, John 140, 314  
Loewy, Raymond 124, 136  
Lois, George 356, 356  
Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth 306  
*Look* 353, 354  
Lowell, Orson 236  
Luard, John Dalbiac 102  
Lubalin, Herb 347, 347  
Luce, Henry 147, 191, 353, 354  
Luks, George 96, 151  
Luo Guanshong 48, 49  
Luther, Martin 13, 23, 178, 179, 389

## M

*McCall's* 125, 226, 226, 227, 235, 347, 388  
McCardell, Roy 148  
McCarthyism 350  
McCay, Winsor 150, 151, 167, 186, 193, 263, 266  
*McClure's Magazine* 105, 121, 121, 151  
Machiko, Hasegawa 375  
McKay, Claude 327  
*Maclean's* 304  
McManus, George 154  
McMein, Neysa 226, 235  
magazines See newspapers and magazines  
Major, Ernest 91  
*The Male Figure* 243  
Malte-Brun, Conrad 268  
manga 46, 154, 155, 344, 374–7  
*manhua* 154–5, 196, 229, 376  
Marchant, Guyot 33  
Martin, David Stone 370

Martin, John 53  
Marvel Comics 267, 288  
Marx, Karl 188, 284  
Masereel, Frans 170  
*The Masses* 107, 191, 199, 212, 213  
Master E. S. 24, 25  
Matter, Herbert 349, 362  
Maury, Matthew F. 252, 253  
Meissonier, Jean-Louis-Ernest 60, 70, 85, 294  
Mellen, Grenville 54  
Melnikov, Dmitrii 189  
memes 378–9  
Mendel, Gregor 249  
Menzel, Adolph von 59, 59, 60, 71, 85  
Messmer, Otto 154  
Meunier, Suzanne 237  
Meyer, Albrecht 14  
Meyer, Henri 181, 198  
*Meyers Konversations-Lexikon* 273  
mezzotint 220  
Millais, John Everett 129  
Mills, J. Harrison 94  
Milne, A. A. 329  
Minor, Robert 199  
Mitchell, Lucy Sprague 328  
Mitchell, Margaret 298  
Mizer, Bob 232  
*Modern Sketch* 155, 155  
modernism 117, 126–7, 189, 207, 264–5, 304, 332  
Modigliani, Amedeo 264  
Moll, Albert 214  
Moncrieff, William Thomas 57  
Moor, Dmitri 285  
Moore, Anne Carroll 328  
Morgan, Ike 321  
Moronobu, Hishikawa 46, 218, 241  
Morris, William 64, 77, 329  
Morris Columns 115  
Moscoco, Victor 377  
Mozert, Zoë 242  
*Ms.* 367, 368  
Mucha, Alphonse 116, 132  
Munari, Bruno 332  
Munsey, Frank 59, 121, 267  
*Munsey's Magazine* 121  
*musha-e* 93  
mutoscope cards 231  
myths and mythmaking 278, 280, 291–3, 294, 296–301

## N

Napoleonic Wars 60, 70, 83, 85, 144, 145, 180–1, 180, 282  
Nast, Thomas 181, 181, 203  
*The National Era* 320  
Neill, John R. 335  
Nelson, Kadir 384  
Neo-classicism 84  
Nessim, Barbara 368, 381  
Neuville, Alphonse de 335  
New Journalism 344, 354, 355, 356  
*New Masses* 191, 204  
New Negro Movement 264–5, 327

*New York Amsterdam News* 275  
*New York Daily News* 95, 104  
*New York Evening Journal* 224  
*The New York Herald* 82, 115, 150, 167, 171, 266  
*New York Herald Tribune* 96, 355  
*New York Illustrated News* 85  
*New York Journal* 148, 148, 151, 152, 166  
*New York Magazine* 354  
*The New York Times* 360, 361  
*New York World* 148, 149, 151  
*The New Yorker* 289, 378  
Newbery, John 314, 318  
newspainters 80–7  
newspapers and magazines 82–3, 111, 121, 122, 212–13, 346–7, 354–5  
advertising in 121–2  
broadsheets 83, 103, 146, 150, 152, 170, 178  
broadsides 54, 82, 82, 98, 99  
cartoons See cartoons and comic strips  
comic journals 146–7, 148, 152, 154–5, 165–7  
*fait divers* 82  
family house magazines 60, 63, 121  
*Flugschriften* 178  
*fusilamientos* 82, 82  
literary magazines 59, 60, 63, 147, 387  
microcomics 381  
muckraking journalism 121  
newspapers as entertainment 148–51, 166–71  
Philadelphia Pictorials 219–21, 223  
photography 80, 84, 88–9, 94–6  
pulp magazines 59, 73, 210, 231–2, 375, 375  
reforming reportage 96, 96, 97  
sensationalist journalism 94–5, 94, 104, 106, 107  
serialized publications 154, 220, 260, 334  
Shanghai pictorials 90, 91, 91  
“special artists” 80–7  
syndicated cartoons 154–6, 225, 308  
tabloid journalism 82  
war coverage 80–7, 100–2  
women's magazines 111, 118–22, 135, 210–13, 219–29, 235, 240  
wood engravings 80, 83–7, 94, 102–4, 106  
Newton, Isaac 60  
Ni Gengye 135  
*niello* 37  
Niemann, Christoph 383, 383  
Niépce, Nicéphore 80  
Nishikawa Joken 270  
Nixoniana 360, 361, 367, 369  
nostalgia 263, 315  
novels 44, 53, 55–63  
children's literature 63, 73  
China 49, 49, 51, 69  
dime novels 59  
fantasy 68

historical 60–3, 70–2, 74  
Japan 46–7, 47, 68, 218  
penny dreadfuls 59, 73  
realism 60  
serialized 57, 59, 63, 73, 147, 220, 221, 334  
Nowlan, Philip Francis 334  
*Nuremberg Chronicle* 19, 283

## O

Oakley, Violet 75, 223, 324  
Ochiai, Yoshiiku 319  
Okubo, Miné 261, 261  
One Bull, Henry Oscar 280, 281  
O'Neill, Rose 128, 156, 157, 238  
*Opportunity* 255  
Orwell, George 388–9, 389  
Outcault, Richard Felton 148, 148, 149, 151–2, 156, 156, 166, 171

## P

packaging design 156, 156, 263  
Painters Eleven 304  
Park, YuJune 159  
Parker, Al 206, 226, 227, 227, 272, 346, 348, 355, 388  
Parker, Robert Andrew 355  
Parks, Gordon 353, 353  
*Die Parole der Woche* 284, 284  
Parrish, Maxfield 95, 95, 187, 324, 379  
Patterson, Russell 231, 237  
Paul, Frank R. 334  
Peat, Fern Bisel 291  
Pennell, Joseph 77, 200  
Pennsylvania Dutch 52  
Perry, Matthew 92, 92  
persuasive media 176–87  
*Peterson's Magazine* 220, 221  
*Le Petit Journal* 300  
*Le Petit Journal Illustrée* 181, 198  
Pfister, Albert 18, 29, 159  
Philadelphia Pictorials 219–20, 221, 223  
Philipon, Charles 146, 146, 147, 181  
Phillips, Coles 111, 124, 124, 125, 187, 187, 212, 212  
Phiz See Browne, Hablot Knight  
photo-etching 63  
photography 95, 227, 279, 356, 387  
digital editing 381, 382  
experimental 349  
halftone process 105, 121  
newspapers and the press 80, 84, 88–9, 94–6  
stereographic 89  
wartime 202  
photojournalism 353, 353, 355, 358–9  
photolithography 90, 91  
*Physique Pictorial* 232, 233  
Picasso, Pablo 264  
Pickering, Frederick 56, 57  
pictographs 294  
*Pictorial Review* 201  
pin-ups 230, 231–2, 242  
*pinghua* 49

Piranesi, Giambattista 25, 40  
planographic printing 112  
Plastic Club 223  
*Playboy* 232, 233, 346  
Pleydenwurf, Wilhelm 19  
*Poetical Magazine* 44, 44  
Pollock, Jackson 355  
Ponchin, Jos-Henri 269  
Pop Art 355  
Porcellino, John 381  
Posada, José Guadalupe 82, 82  
posters 269, 289, 366  
advertising 114–17, 187, 221, 229, 261  
*affiches* 8, 114–17, 115, 117, 132, 210  
film 271  
magazine tear-outs 371  
propaganda 180–91, 200, 203–5, 269, 366  
theatrical 210, 247, 286  
Potter, Beatrix 312  
Prang, Louis 113, 113, 116, 116  
pre-Raphaelites 64  
press See newspapers and magazines  
Price, Garrett 307  
primitivism 264  
propaganda 176–207, 376, 389  
Protestant Reformation 13, 23, 52, 178, 179, 180, 314  
Puck 147, 148, 154, 177, 177  
Pulitzer, Joseph 148, 148, 151  
pulp fiction 59, 73, 267  
*Punch* 147, 154, 160, 165, 339  
Push Pin Studio 349, 354, 357  
Pyle, Howard 60, 62, 63, 64, 74, 75, 160, 186, 291, 294, 295, 302, 312, 324, 328

## R

Rackham, Arthur 324  
Rand, Paul 332  
Raymond, Alex 271  
Red Rose Girls 75, 223, 324, 325  
*Redbook* 226  
Reese, Emily Shaw and Walter 111, 118  
Reiss, Winold 264, 265, 297  
relief printing 12, 16–17  
Rembrandt van Rijn 25, 39  
Remington, Frederic 306  
Renaissance 23, 34–7, 60  
Reynolds, Joshua 84, 144  
rhetoric, visual 176–83  
Richardson, Frederick 337  
Rideout, E. G. 59  
Riis, Jacob 96, 96, 148, 151  
Riou, Édouard 335  
Rivera, Diego 82, 190, 191, 191, 203, 261, 308  
Robertson, Morgan 74  
Rockwell, Norman 194, 195, 217, 347, 347, 348, 356, 388  
Rodríguez, Edel 384, 389  
Rohmer, Sax 260  
Romantic Movement 27, 60

Rothermel, Peter Frederick 290  
Rousseau, Jean-Jacques 314  
Rowlandson, Thomas 44, 44, 144, 162, 360  
rubricators 18  
Ruffin, Reynolds 349  
Ruskin, John 60, 64, 210, 382  
Russian Revolution 189, 190, 191, 205, 284, 388

## S

*Sachplakat* 126, 127  
Saikaku, Ihara 46  
St. Nicholas 324  
Salinger, J. D. 378  
*San Francisco Examiner* 151  
Santoro, Frank 380  
Sartain, Emily 223  
*Sartain's Magazine* 220, 220  
satire 140–7, 154–5, 180–2, 188, 193, 198–9, 360  
*Saturday Evening Post* 194, 217, 226, 235, 247, 291, 347, 348, 356, 367  
*The Savoy* 214  
Schell, Francis 86  
Schneirov, Matthew 121  
Schomburg, Alex 206  
Schongauer, Martin 38  
sci-fi 271, 334, 382  
Scott, Walter 53, 55, 57, 60–1, 63, 66, 147, 282, 303  
*Scribner's Magazine* 59, 60, 324, 325  
Seibold, J. Otto 381  
Selznick, Brian 387  
Senefelder, Alois 112–13  
Senka, Ryuutei 68  
*sensō-e* 80–1, 93, 93  
Sequoyah 294, 294, 295, 388, 388  
serialized publications 44–5, 47, 47, 63, 73, 147, 154, 220, 221, 334, 377, 387  
Seth 377, 377  
settler narratives 290–3  
Seven Years' War 84, 85, 293  
sexology 214, 231, 346  
Seymour, Robert 44–5, 59, 67, 140, 147, 160, 163  
Shahn, Ben 288, 288, 344, 355, 370, 388  
Shakespeare, William 41, 76, 177, 180, 286, 287, 336, 349  
*Shanghai Charivari* 154  
*Shanghai Manhua* 155, 229  
Shanghai pictorials 90, 91, 91  
Sheldon, Myrtle 327  
Shen Zhou 159, 160  
*Shenbao* 90, 91  
Shepard, E. H. 329  
Shephard, Esther 65  
Shigemasa, Kitao 241  
*Shinyeoseong* 228  
*Shojo Sekai* 340  
*shunga* 218  
Shunsho, Katsukawa 241  
Shuster, Joe 288  
Siegel, Jerry 288

silhouettes 201, 274, 332  
Simon, Peter 41  
Skillern, Chris 388  
"slicks" 226, 231, 375  
Sloan, John 96, 107  
Smalley, Jane 333  
Smillie, James 72  
Smith, Adam 122  
Smith, Albert 327  
Smith, Jessie Willcox 75, 110, 187, 223, 226, 324, 325, 327  
Snyder, Timothy 389  
social media 378–9, 389  
social realism 190, 194, 204, 288  
Society of Illustrators 187, 231  
soft-porn 230–3, 242  
Soglow, Otto 308  
Song Boren 31  
Sorel, Edward 349  
*Le Sourire* 237  
"special artists" 80–7  
*Sports Illustrated* 125, 354–5, 354, 356  
spot illustrations 115, 146, 329, 387  
Stalin, Joseph 190, 192, 197  
*The Standard Magazine* 289  
Stanhope, Charles 26  
Stephens, Alice Barber 223  
stereotypes 26, 334  
Sterrett, Cliff 154  
Stevenson, Robert Louis 63  
storytelling 278–309, 332  
Stowe, Harriet Beecher 53, 263, 320–2, 320, 321  
Streicher, Julius 284, 287  
*sugoroku* 318, 319  
Sullivan, Pat 154, 156  
*Sun* penny paper 82  
Sundblom, Haddon 230, 298, 299  
*Survey Graphic* 264, 265  
Swift, Jonathan 140, 147, 165  
Swinnerton, James 151  
syndicated cartoons 154–6, 225, 308  
Szyk, Arthur 193, 193, 288, 303

## T

Taipung Rebellion 256  
Talese, Gay 355  
Tamura, Tajirō 351  
*tanroku-bon* 318  
Tarry, Ellen 327  
*Taschenbuch* 53  
television 346, 346, 356  
Tenniel, John 147, 165, 334, 339  
*The Terrific Register* 82, 99  
text and image integration 19, 47, 64, 159–61, 171, 226  
advertising 66, 114  
*Fraktur* 52  
Tezuka Osamu 375, 376  
Thompson, Hunter S. 355  
three perfections 8, 159–61, 226, 383  
*Today's Housewife* 235  
Tōkaidō guidebooks 49  
*The Token* 53, 54  
*Tokyo Puck* 154

Tom of Finland 233, 233  
Toomer, Jean 327  
Töpffer, Rodolphe 152, 152, 374  
Toshikata, Mizuno 80–1  
Toulouse-Lautrec, Henri de 116, 132  
toy books 323, 323, 330  
Toyonobu, Ishikawa 218  
Tracy, Eleanor 191  
transfer lettering 359  
*Trek* 261  
True, Allen Tupper 293  
*Truth* 148  
Twain, Mark 263, 263, 324  
typography 226  
    blackletter type 19, 159  
    International Style 349, 362, 363  
    movable type 8, 13, 17, 18–19, 31, 159  
    wooden type 114

## U

*ukiyo-e* 8, 46–51, 46, 48, 111, 116, 117, 218, 218, 318  
*ukiyo-zoshi* 46  
*Union Magazine* 220, 223  
Upham, C. 89, 104  
Upton, Florence Kate 312, 313  
Utagawa Yoshiiku 249, 250–1  
Uzanne, Octave 115

## V

Verne, Jules 334, 335  
Vico, Giambattista 249  
*La Vie Parisienne* 239  
vignettes 329  
Vincent, René 239  
*Le Vingtième Siècle* 375  
Volikov, V. 207  
Volland, P. F. 337  
Voltaire 60, 125  
Vonnegut, Kurt 387

## W

Wagner, Rudolf 80  
Wampum belts 292, 292, 294  
Wang Fuyang 376  
Wang Wei 8, 159, 226  
war journalism 80–1, 83–93, 100–2  
war propaganda 176, 182–7, 192–6, 199–207, 366, 376  
Ware, Chris 377  
Warhol, Andy 355  
Waring, Laura Wheeler 254, 265, 327  
Waud, Alfred Rudolph 84, 85–6, 87, 88  
Weaver, Robert 354–5, 354, 355, 356, 362  
Wells, H. G. 334  
West, Benjamin 84–5, 85  
Westall, Richard 60  
Westport School 227, 348, 356  
White, Charles 309  
Whitmore, Coby 348

Wilde, Oscar 214, 215, 216, 217, 234  
Wilson, S. Clay 377  
Wirgman, Charles 154, 154  
Witzel, Josef Rudolf 133  
Woggon, Elmer 255  
Wolfe, Tom 355  
Wolgemut, Michael 19, 20  
*Woman's Home Companion* 156, 235, 347  
women 344  
    advertising aimed at 111, 118, 120, 124–5, 135, 210, 223, 229  
    cover girls 212–13, 223–4  
    domestic role model 324  
    literary annuals 53–4, 147, 211, 220  
    magazines 111, 118–22, 135, 210–13, 219–29  
    New Woman 210, 212, 212, 222, 223–4, 225, 227–9, 236, 324  
    women's magazines 235, 240  
    women's rights 191, 210–14, 222–3, 228, 238, 324, 358, 367, 368  
    *xinnuxing* 228, 228, 229  
Wood, James 354  
wood engraving 26, 63, 80, 83–9, 95, 102–4, 106, 146, 165, 268  
    revival 64, 65, 76, 219  
    stereotypes of 334  
    white line 26, 27, 83, 382  
woodcuts 12, 14–18, 25, 170, 179, 292, 295  
    broad-sides 82, 98, 99  
    China 12, 16, 16, 30, 31, 49, 50, 51  
    color-printing 34  
    Japan 8, 17, 17, 46, 46, 47, 48, 68, 80–1, 93, 93, 105, 116, 117, 241, 250–1  
    Medieval Europe 14, 15, 18–23, 28, 29, 32, 33, 35, 36, 283  
Wordsworth, William 114, 388  
World War I 176, 182–9, 192, 199–203, 206, 212, 217  
World War II 193–7, 213, 261, 288  
writing systems 12–13, 16–17, 52, 294–5  
Wu Youru 90, 91, 256  
*wuxia* 228  
Wyeth, N. C. 63, 296

## X

Xiao Hu 228  
*xinnuxing* 228, 228, 229  
Xu Ling 366  
xylography See wood engraving; woodcuts

## Y

Yamamoto, Tadashi 351, 351  
Yan Liben 256  
Ye Qianyu 155, 196  
Ye Xiaoqing 91  
*Yellow Book* 214, 234, 235  
Yi Lingfeng 229  
Yohachi, Nishimura 46

*yomihon* 47  
*yuefenpai* 122, 134

## Z

Zabel, Lucian 234  
*Zap* 377  
Zeng Guofan 122  
Zhang Bi 158, 159  
Zhang Guangyu 155, 155  
Zhao Guangfu 258–9  
Zhao Mengfu 159–60, 161

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