

# MATERIALITY ANALYSIS

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English 181

Materiality Analysis

## Analysis of *The Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux*

During the medieval era, books had a different value than they do now. Books were signs of wealth, and mostly covered religious texts. *The Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux* is a prayer book from this medieval era. It was finished in the year 1328 A.C. It is a prayer book (A Book of Hours) that was commissioned and owned by Jeanne d'Evreux, the former Queen of France. Through the material, size, content, and background information, we conclude that the manuscript was a very expensive book, and was used in a personal religious context.

*The Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux* was printed on vellum, showing its monetary value. Vellum is a membrane made from calfskin. The process of preparing vellum for transcription is tedious as it involves the raising and butchering of the calf, treatment of the skins with lime, removal of the hair, stretching of the skin, and the cutting of the vellum into uniform size pieces. The process of transcription was also difficult. It involved copying text using a quill and ink onto the vellum. If any mistakes were made, the area had to be scratched out to remove the error. Additionally, the only non-solar source of light would be candlelight, which is extremely difficult to write as it flickers causing a relatively dim light. As the process was difficult, vellum was very expensive and as *The Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux* was printed on 209 folios of vellum, we can conclude the cost of just the materials of the book were large. Additionally, the process of making these manuscripts also contributes to its value.

Manuscripts during the medieval period were all transcribed and illustrated by hand, further contributing to their high value. Manuscripts were initially written by hand, taking years of writing, with writing being the employment of these scribes, in order to produce just the text of one manuscript. After the text was finished, an illustrator would illustrate the book with tremendous detail. *The Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux* took four years to be completed and includes twenty-five full-page paintings and approximately seven hundred illustrations. Each of these illustrations is intricate and complex. Each would require careful detail, adequate time, and many illustrations that contain expensive ink and gold leaf. Differences in color saturation draw attention to and away from different parts of the page. The green of the book brings our attention to the book. The below page is one of the full-page illustrations found in the book within the folios 154v-155r. This page consists of over four different colors and is gradated. As the illustrator had to go through the laborious process of making each dye, we are further indicated that the manuscript was a high price. Also, performing a gradation with ink is a difficult process, so the hired illustrator would have had to be specially trained. The commissioner of the book, Jeanne d'Evreux, had to pay for this labor in addition to the cost of these materials of the book, proving the book to be of high value. The Queen of France commissioned the book at that time so the high commission value of the manuscript could be expected to be paid by such royalty.



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On the above page, the artist uses four different color inks: black, gold, red, and green. Also, the artist blends these different colors to create depth and shadow. In the top right corner above the halo, the black, gold, and red inks were blended. This small corner of the page requires a large amount of both pain and detail, and thus requires a lot of time to create, reinforcing the book's value. This illustration uses these intense colors to draw attention to certain parts of the photo. The surroundings of the photo are uncolored. The artist wants readers to disregard these uncolored parts of the photos. Opposing, the part of the photo with the most color contrast is where the two figures are found. This is the only region of the page with the color green. As the book is green, our gaze is drawn to it, emphasizing that part of the image, showing its importance. One's eyes then travel from the book to the surrounding figures as their white color contrasts the deep red of the building behind them. The surrounding building frames the two figures preventing our gaze from leaving the figures showing that the figures and the books are the focus of the picture, and emphasizing that they are the subjects of the accompanying story.

A second image, as can be seen below, also found within folios 159v, uses less color, but more detail. While in the first image color is used to draw attention to specific parts of the page, additional detail draws attention to specific parts of this second image inflicting certain emotions. The largest source of detail was the sack of skulls. Skulls imply death and have sad associations thus instilling feelings of sadness. The second largest source of detail also aids this emotional manipulation. The faces of the figures, with the exception of the figure with a halo, are all turned away and have sad expressions, generating sadness in the viewer. The greatest source of detail contrast is between the halo and the face of the figure within the halo. This is the only part of the image where there is significant contrast in detail, thus separating that figure from the rest of the figures. We acknowledge he is different, and based on other queues such as the presence of the halo, and his larger size, we can conclude this figure is a person of power and of faith.



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The small size of the book is evidence that *The Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux* was intended for private use. As vellum was extremely expensive, smaller folios were more often preferred for personal reading. Larger manuscripts were large for the purpose of displaying wealth and class. Although, we know from the number of pages and illustrations that the manuscript was expensive its size would indicate that the *Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux* was not intended for display but for personal use. The manuscript measured three and five eighths by two and seven eighths inches while manuscripts used for display were typically significantly larger. This small size would have allowed for the book to be easily transported, and be less expensive.

*The Hours of Jeanne d'Evreux*, much like most manuscripts, was a religious text. This text was a copy of *The Book of Hours*, a prayer book. During the medieval era, most scripture was religious based as most scribes lived in monasteries. Religious education was one of the most popular forms of education at the time so many of the ones who were literate were either a practicing Christian or a Christian leader. The book was produced in France, and at the time France was significantly Roman Catholic, and life centered around religion so the religious nature of this book is expected.

Reflection:

Overall, I had the most difficulty on both writing and revising this paper. I felt as if I did not have antique information to describe the manuscript in 750 words, let alone 1250. Reaching the limit was stretch to me. One of Professor Bledsoe's suggestions was to analyze some of the images in the manuscript. I took her suggestion and did two small visual analyses to expand on my previous paper. Their contribution to my central argument in small but they are a valid part of a complete materiality analysis. Additionally the amount of information the website provided was minimal. Although I felt this paper was one of most difficult to write, I enjoyed it the most. I had to learn about manuscript production, something I will most likely never do again as I plan to take a biological science centered course load. I enjoyed seeing the manuscript at the Rose Lirbray/ MARBL and found value in writing with quill on vellum and reading under candlelight. These practicals gave me a better understanding for the difficulty in producing these manuscripts. Overall I found this assignment to be the most difficult yet the most rewarding and most interesting assignment I did in this class.