



A Treasury of Hours: Selections from Illuminated Prayer Books

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During the Middle Ages, kings and nobility frequently commissioned the greatest artists of their day to illustrate-or "illuminate"-their personal prayer books. Intended for private reading and meditation, these so-called "books of hours" were arranged, in keeping with the practice of the Church, so that particular prayers were read at specific times of the day. To our enduring enchantment, the artists who illustrated these books entwined delicate flowers, beautiful fruits, and fanciful creatures with depictions of activities appropriate to each month of the year and with moving illustrations depicting stories from the lives of Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and the saints.

Presented here are carefully selected pages from over a dozen precious fourteenth- and fifteenth-century manuscripts-most of which have never been published before-found in some of the world's leading museums and libraries. Arranged and described to guide the viewer's eye, these delightful and colorful illustrations invite readers, young and old, to immerse themselves in the medieval imagination.

Also included are a glossary and a short history of the noble personages who commissioned the works and the artists who produced them.



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