

Inspiration: The Nuremberg Chronicle



Nuremberg Chronicle

In this activity sheet you will learn about one of the earliest encyclopedias, the *Nuremberg Chronicle*, which is featured on the Mirror of the World website. There's also a range of activities to help you learn how people in the Middle Ages tried to record the history of the world.

In the spotlight
Nuremberg Chronicle
Hartman Schedel
1493

Pages to visit

<http://www.mirroroftheworld.com.au/inspiration/printed/index.php>

http://www.mirroroftheworld.com.au/inspiration/printed/nuremberg_chronicle.php

The world as they knew it

The *Nuremberg Chronicle* was printed in Germany using the recently invented printing press. It was written by Hartman Schedel and was meant to be a history of the known world. It starts with the Christian creation of the world and continues until the late 15th century, when Schedel was alive. It then goes on to describe Judgement Day (the end of the world). It was compiled from many different histories, religious books, books of exploration and just plain tall tales.

Activity 1 - Get interactive!

Look at the world map in the *Nuremberg Chronicle* on the Mirror of the World website. Use the Zoom & Pan interactive link to take a close look at the illustrations. Notice anything weird about the drawings?

http://www.mirroroftheworld.com.au/inspiration/printed/nuremberg_chronicle.php

The *Nuremberg Chronicle* map shows the world as it was known to Europeans at the time, however, the map doesn't show the most recent discoveries of the day, such the discovery of America. So it was out of date as soon as it was printed. In fact there are many 'undiscovered' parts of the world missing from this map.

Many people believed that in far away southern lands, including the area where Australia is, that there were many strange creatures and beasts. The creatures thought to be living in the unknown parts of the earth are shown to the right of the map in the *Nuremberg Chronicle*, which describes them and the lands they come from. Many of them are from classical myths, as well as sailors' tall stories of encounters with 'monsters'.

The pictures in the book were added using carved wooden printing blocks made by artists. Notice how the pictures and text are dense and very close together – this would have been very difficult to do and it was groundbreaking for its time.

Activity 2 – Hear it from the experts

Return to the *Nuremberg Chronicle* webpage and click on the video link on the left-hand side of the page to see a short talk about the book. Listen carefully so you can answer the questions below. You can always read the transcript underneath which is a record of everything in the video:
http://www.mirroroftheworld.com.au/inspiration/printed/video_nuremberg.php

Question time

1. Approximately how many years before the *Nuremberg Chronicle* was published was the printing press invented?

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2. How many months did it take to complete the book?

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3. How many woodcut pictures were created for it?

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4. a) Which countries and continents do you recognise?

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b) Which countries and continents were yet to be discovered? Look at a modern map of the world to help find the answers.

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5. Why are these mythical beasts included in a factual history of the world?

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6. Consider the *Nuremberg Chronicle* as an information source. Do we believe everything in it? How much of it do you think is medieval superstition?

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a) Can we trust everything that is written in encyclopedias and history books today? What about the internet?

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b) In what ways do people today still fear the unknown? What do they believe?

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Activity 3 – The history of printing in a nutshell

Visit the History for Kids website below to learn more about the history of printing and to see a video on woodblock printing:
<http://www.historyforkids.org/learn/literature/printing.htm>

Activity 4 – Write like an explorer

Imagine you are an explorer sailing towards the unknown southern lands.

- Write about your contact with a strange new world and the creatures you encounter.

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- Describe the creatures and how you feel about this new land.

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- Will you stay in this new land or return home to Europe and sell your story?

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Activity 5 - Alphabetical encyclopedia race

Who can complete this alphabetical encyclopedia first? You might need an encyclopedia to help you.

- Name an ocean beginning with A
- Name a book beginning with B
- Name a city beginning with C
- Name a suburb beginning with D
- Name a mountain beginning with E
- Name a sport beginning with F
- Name a river beginning with G
- Name an animal beginning with H
- Name a country beginning with I
- Name a drink beginning with J
- Name a language beginning with K
- Name a place beginning with L
- Name a sea beginning with M
- Name a book beginning with N
- Name a fruit beginning with O
- Name a bay beginning with P
- Name a holy book beginning with Q
- Name a flower beginning with R
- Name a food beginning with S
- Name an Australian animal beginning with T
- Name a giant rock beginning with U
- Name a girl's name beginning with V
- Name a boy's name beginning with W
- Name a movie beginning with X
- Name a river beginning with Y
- Name a country beginning with Z

Did you know?

Today, copies of the *Nuremberg Chronicle* sell for up to A\$350,000.