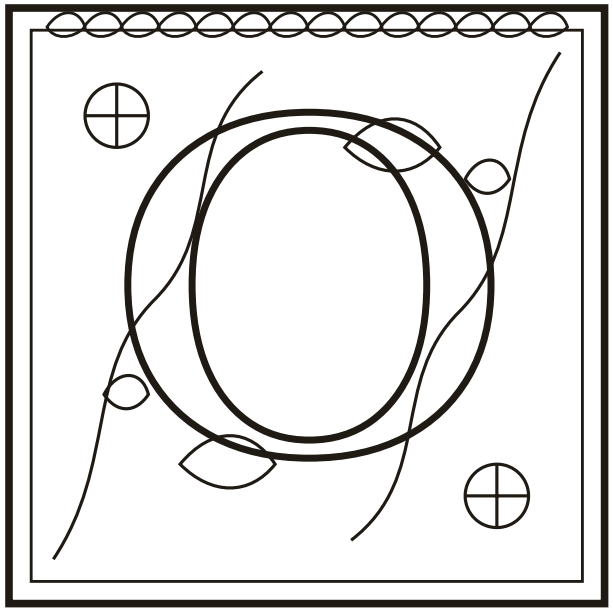


The Illuminated Initial

Colour the great letter, then copy Saint Augustine's words in your best hand.

"Our heart is restless until it rests in you."

SAINT AUGUSTINE · CONFESSIONS, BOOK I

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Making gold look like gold

The monks who made illuminated manuscripts used real gold leaf. You can get surprisingly close with a pencil.

1. Start with yellow

Colour the whole letter in a soft, even yellow. Press lightly, and go over it twice rather than pressing hard once.

2. Add the shadows

Choose one side to be the shadow side (most illuminators chose the bottom right). Go over that edge of every stroke with orange, then a little light brown.

3. Leave the shine

Gold looks like gold because of the bright spots. Leave a thin line of plain yellow, or even white paper, along the top left of each curve.

4. Outline in dark

Finish with a fine dark brown or black outline. It makes the colours glow, just as it does in stained glass.

5. Fill the background

Medieval artists loved deep blue and rich red behind their letters. Try blue inside the O and red around the outside, with the vines left light.

A word about Augustine

Augustine wrote his *Confessions* around the year 400. They begin with the line on this sheet. More than sixteen hundred years later, people still copy it out by hand.

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