



Ink Talks:

**A MOBILE WORKSHOP FOR THE
CLASSROOM, LAB, AND ARCHIVE**

INFORMATION:

Ink speaks in volumes. The artists and artisans of history collaborated with nature to craft pigments and dyes, harnessing nature and capturing invaluable knowledge. Exploring their age-old techniques not only illuminates texts for readers and students, it also enhances our ability to safeguard them.

Workshop Abstract

By experiencing some of the material processes of manuscript creation, students and scholars develop an appreciation for and an understanding of the unique characteristics of historical image-making technologies. This workshop provides an in-depth and hands-on exploration of pigments, dyes, parchment, and other media related to the making of manuscripts in the medieval and Early Modern periods. We begin with a discussion of materials used across medieval Eurasia and the Americas and their implications for the texts they represent visually. We then explore (with samples) the pigments and ingredients that were fundamental to the preparation, construction, and preservation of manuscripts during the Middle Ages and Early Modern periods. Learners create their own vials of medieval iron gall ink and demonstrate the ink's usability with quills and paper. The workshop concludes with a roundtable discussion and a question-and-answer session. Through our explorations of ingredients, media, and processes of manuscript composition, participants understand more deeply the meanings and significance assigned to the media they work with.

Learning Objectives and Curricular Tie-Ins

This workshop introduces students to the materials and methods used by premodern and Early Modern writers and artists across several cultures. Participants gain hands-on experience with historical inks and writing practices, connecting chemistry with artistic and literary production.



Learning Objectives:

- Explore, use, and discuss early modes of visual communication
- Analyze how material forms shape art and literature
- Approach texts through book history and material culture lenses
- Deepen interpretations of historical texts and concepts of authorship

Curricular Tie-Ins:

Art • History • Chemistry • Literature • Archival Studies



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visit <https://aub.ie/inktalks>

Age/ Grade Suitability

This workshop is customizable to be appropriate at the high school, amateur, college, graduate, and instructor levels. The instructor has several years experience teaching at each of these levels.

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Pricing

Tier:	Estimated Price:	Includes:
Basic Workshop (50 +65 min)	\$150 + travel	Use of all hands-on materials
Extended Workshop (90 min-120 mins)	\$175 + travel	Use of all hands-on materials, additional time for writing or deeper discussion
Basic Workshop + Take-Home Quills	\$180 + travel (\$25 extended workshop fee applies to classes 90-120 mins)	Includes hand-cut quills for all students to keep.
Basic Workshop + Take-Home Quills + Inkpots	\$215+ travel (\$25 extended workshop fee applies to classes 90-120 mins)	Premium version with hand-cut quills and sealable inkpots.

What Students Are Saying:



"Of course, the best part of this week was definitely the ink making. When I think of ink I always just think of chemicals. While there are chemical reactions, most of what goes into ink is natural in some form. Not only was the presentation educational, but it was also fun to make the ink."



"My favorite thing this week was absolutely the ink-making presentation. The past comes alive (and literature like Gerard's Herball comes more alive) when you get to put your hands on novel materials that were 'old hat' to the people of that time period.... To write was a very material, almost earthy thing, as you were using materials directly seen in nature, sometimes even made by your hand, like paper and galls."



"I loved the hands-on learning that we got to experience. It seemed so relevant to what we have been reading in class. Getting to see the process really made me realize how special writing was in that time because ink was so precious to so many people."

About the Instructor:

Elizabeth Brissey received both her master's degree and PhD from Auburn University, where she currently teaches. Her dissertation research explored how medieval authors navigated and portrayed spatial distance through forms such as epistolarity, cartography, and textual circulation. Her chapter on letters was recently published in *The Routledge Companion to Global Chaucer*, and she is currently working on an article examining literacy and public drama in medieval York. Her work investigates the material and conceptual intersections between text, medium, and reader across premodern literary cultures.