

# The Printing Press

Even though the Renaissance began in Italy, Renaissance culture soon spread throughout Europe. A remarkable new process – printing – helped spread Humanism and the other ideas of the Renaissance.

Hundreds of years earlier, the Chinese had learned how to carve writing or pictures into wooden blocks. Printers put ink on the blocks and then pressed them into paper. Then more ink was added on the block, and the process was repeated again. In this way the block could be reproduced many times. The Chinese had also learned how to assemble blocks from many separate pieces that could be reused. These pieces could be positioned to print one page and then repositioned for a new page. This was the beginning of moveable type.

It was during the Renaissance that the idea of printing using moveable type first appeared in Europe. The European invention of moveable type appears to have been independent of the Chinese discovery of the process. Historians believe that in about 1450, Johannes Gutenberg of Germany became the first European to use moveable type to print books. With the introduction of this new technology, Europeans were now able to quickly and easily pass large amounts of information throughout



the continent. And what did Johannes Gutenberg choose as the subject of his first printing? Gutenberg used his press to print copies of the Bible.

Not all Europeans were enthusiastic about Gutenberg's invention. Some complained that books printed on paper would not last as long. Others noted that hand-copied manuscripts were far more beautiful than printed books. Scribes, who made a living by hand-copying manuscripts realized that the printing press threatened their profession. However, Gutenberg's printing press made it easier and faster to spread information. The impact of Gutenberg's invention was economic as well as social and technological.

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# Printing Press Assignment

**Task:** Read the passage entitled "The Printing Press". Then answer the following questions in complete sentences. This assignment is worth 10 points.

1. What group first pioneered the process of wood block printing on earth?
2. What European is credited with inventing printing with moveable type in Europe?
3. *Think Question* - Why do you think Gutenberg choose the Bible as the first book he printed?
4. Why were some people opposed to the use of printing and moveable type? Name TWO reasons.
5. *Think Question* - Why was moveable type so influential for Europe? Explain your answer.