ANSELM OF CANTERBURY STUDY GUIDE
By Simonetta Carr



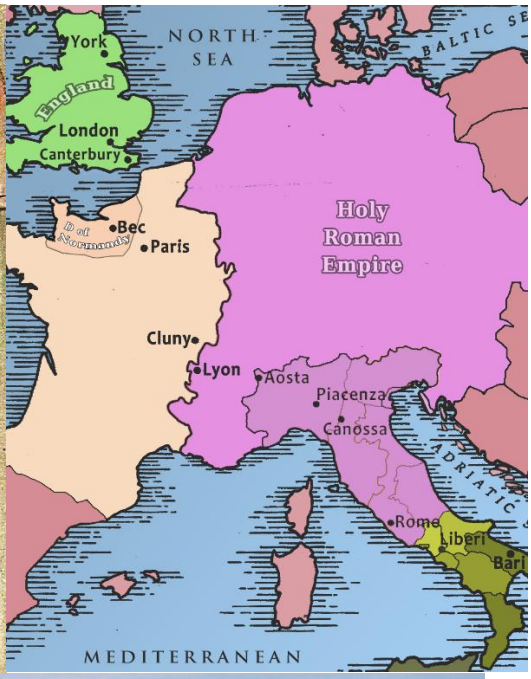




Photo on top left: This portrait was painted during Anselm's lifetime, but we don't know if it is accurate because few artists at that time tried to catch the exact looks of a person. We don't even know if this artist met Anselm. Photo by the Admont Benedictine Library and Museum

Photo on top right: A map with some of the places mentioned in the book. Map by Tom Carroll.

Photo bottom: In 1909, on the nine-hundredth anniversary of Anselm's birth, the people of Aosta had this monument built in the center of town. Photo by Enea Fiorentini.

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CHAPTER ONE
A Boy with a Dream

What do you remember?

What did Anselm dream as a child?

_____

Why did he think God lives on the Alps?

_____

What were the names of Anselm's parents?

_____

Why did Anselm want to become a monk?

_____

Why did Anselm's father oppose his desire to become a monk?

_____

Why did Anselm leave home?

_____

Why did Anselm start to eat snow during his trip?

_____

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Geography
Aosta

Aosta is now the main city in an Italian region called Valle d'Aosta (Aosta Valley). This is an autonomous region, which means that while it follows the laws set by the Italian government, it has more freedom than other regions in making certain laws. For example, by law, all children in the Aosta Valley have to study both Italian and French, and all street signs have to be in both languages. Also, instead of giving all their tax money to the Italian government, the Aosta Valley can keep most of it to fix its own roads, build its own schools, and run its own hospitals.

The Alps near Aosta include Mont Blanc, which is the highest mountain in Europe. To cross the Alps, Anselm chose to go through Mount Cenis, which today is in the Italian region of Piedmont. This might be because the route through this mountain, known as Via Francigena (or "The Frankish Route") was a busy route, making the trip safer for a young man traveling alone with a servant. Also, on that route there were monasteries that were meant to welcome travelers, offering protection from robbers, a hot meal (such as soup and bread and cheese), and some straw for sleeping.



Photo: Mount Cenis. Photo by Francois, Wikimedia Commons

Different Times

Why do you think white bread was reserved for the rich? How do you get white flour? Research the subject, then write your answer.

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Why is whole grain flour more expensive than white flour today?

Imagine

Imagine you were back in the eleventh century, with no internet, television, radio, or newspapers and very few books. Imagine you wanted to get a higher education, like Anselm did. How would you find where to go? How do you think Anselm learned about the excellent teachers in the monastery at Bec? (Hint: Think about who traveled from town to town in the Middle Ages—who carried news from faraway places?)

Now imagine you were a young person who wanted to travel around Europe looking for good schools. Imagine you had a friend traveling with you. How many bags would you take and what would you put inside them? What would you wear? (Remember: You can only pack and wear things that existed 1,000 years ago—no zippers, no plastic water bottles, no sneakers, and no flashlights).

Anselm used a donkey to take him over the Alps, but he probably switched to a horse once he got on the other side. Many travelers rented a donkey or mule on one side from specialized merchants and returned it on the other side to similar merchants who would later rent the same animal to people going the opposite way. Look up the difference between donkeys and mules. Which would you take if you were traveling across the Alps?

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Just for Fun

Look at the sculpture below and imagine what some of these students might be thinking.



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CHAPTER TWO
From Student to Teacher

What do you remember?

Why did Anselm think again of becoming a monk?

_____

Why did he realize that his motivation was wrong?

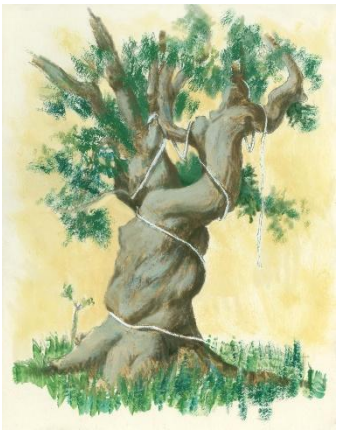
_____

Why were some monks angry when Anselm became a prior?

_____

What is a prior?

_____



Why did Anselm avoid giving harsh punishments to his students?

_____

_____

What did Maurilius tell Anselm about his desire to find peace and calm?

_____

_____

_____

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Think About It

Do you think Maurilius's advice can help you when your parents give you tasks that you don't particularly like and you wish to be left alone? Explain your answer:

_____

_____

_____

Writing

Write Like Anselm!

- **Step 1 (The First Draft):** Choose to write a prayer or a letter about any subject you like. Write it quickly, without worrying about mistakes. Place your paper in a folder or drawer where you can find it later. We will call this your **first draft**.
- **Step 2 (Thinking Time):** Take a day or two to think more carefully about what you want to say. You don't have to sit still while you think! You can think while you walk, play, or do chores. Keep a small notebook or scrap of paper nearby to jot down good ideas as they pop into your head.
- **Step 3 (The Second Draft):** Once you have a clear idea of what you want to say, write a **second draft** on a fresh sheet of paper.
- **Step 4 (The Final Draft):** Wait another day or two, then read your second draft again to see if you are happy with it. Make any changes or corrections you need, then neatly copy your finished version onto a clean page. This is your **final draft**.

Compare & Reflect

Take out your first draft and put it side by side with your final draft. Can you see any advantages in taking the time to think and write carefully? Explain your answer!

Note for Parents and Teachers:

Because this activity stretches across several days, it works great as an ongoing "background project" while you move forward with other lessons.

- **For younger children:** Keep this to a few sentences, depending on their level. Young children can even dictate this to you at this stage.
- **For older children:** Encourage them to look beyond spelling, grammar, or punctuation. Ask them questions like: "Do you think your final draft is clearer, or adds better examples?"

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CHAPTER THREE
The Will of a King

What do you remember?

Why did William the Conqueror choose Lanfranc to be archbishop of Canterbury?

_____

What did Anselm's comparison about chasing colorful butterflies mean?

_____

Why was Anselm afraid to become archbishop of Canterbury?

_____

How did the bishops make Anselm accept the archbishop's staff?

_____

What did Anselm mean when he compared himself to an old sheep and William to an untamed bull?

_____

Why did Anselm want to travel to Rome and receive the pallium from the pope?

_____

What happened when a hare sought safety under Anselm's horse, and what lesson did Anselm draw from it?

_____

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History

The Momentous 1066

1066 was a life-changing year for the people of England. In January, King Edward the Confessor died, leaving no children to take over his throne. So, three different men stepped forward, each claiming their right to the throne.

Harold Godwinson, the local hero, was a powerful English noble. The other English lords voted for him to be king, so he quickly grabbed the crown.

But a fierce Viking, Harald Hardrada claimed an old ruler had promised him the throne.

At the same time, William of Normandy, a duke from Normandy (northern France), claimed his right to the throne as King Edward's cousin. He insisted that Edward had promised him the crown years ago.

Now Harold had to defend his new crown from two invasions.

First, Harald Hardrada's army attacked from the north. King Harold met them at the Battle of Stamford Bridge and won.

Just as that battle ended, William and his French army landed on the south coast of England, and Harold's army had to meet them there. They met on October 14, 1066, at the famous Battle of Hastings. Harold lined up his soldiers on top of a hill, locking their shields to make a giant wooden wall. The French army pretended to run away in fear. The English soldiers thought they were winning, broke their wall, and chased them down the hill. But it was a trap, and the French turned around and surrounded them. King Harold was killed during the chaos.

Two Interpretations

For a long time, history books said the English army marched more than 200 miles from the north of England, arriving at the Battle of Hastings already exhausted. In 2022, historian Tom Licence stated that King Harold gathered instead England's navy and sailed his army down the coast. This allowed him to move a large force much faster than anyone expected.

Licence built his theory by studying eleventh-century texts. He noticed that there was no mention of an army marching over 200 miles from Stamford Bridge to Hastings – something that would have made news. Instead, the same texts are full of mentions of fleets and ships during that military campaign. Besides, after beating the Vikings, Harold had not only his own fleet, but also hundreds of captured Viking ships, and going by sea seemed logical.

Not all historians were convinced. Some thought that traveling by sea in autumn was riskier because the sea tends to be stormy and there was always the possibility that the winds would blow the other way. Besides, Harold's army had horses that could transport the army from Stamford Bridge to London in about a week on the efficient Roman roads.

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Understanding Confusion

Tom Licence believes that the idea that Harold's troops marched over 200 miles came from an interpretation of a sentence in an eleventh-century document that said that Harold's ships "came home" after the Battle of Stamford Bridge. For centuries, historians thought this meant that Harold sent all his sailors home and dismantled his navy. Instead, Licence said that Harold could have very well sailed his army to Stamford Bridge, and that "came home" in other texts from the same time often meant "went back to London," the headquarters. This would have taken only four days, giving the king time to decide how to reach Stamford Bridge after London.

To understand how a text can be interpreted in different ways, think of this example: Imagine that 500 years from now historians read a text message on someone's phone that says, "I am going home for the summer." They would not know exactly what this person meant – is it the home where they normally live or the home where their parents live? The person who received the text message would know, but how can other people know for sure?

Lessons Learned

We can learn different lessons from this story:

1. History is not set in stone, and historians can suggest new theories about events that are not completely clear.
2. Don't believe a story just because everyone repeats it. You must always check the sources. If you cannot do that, read books written by some serious historian.
3. Discuss your opinions with respect for other views, showing your proofs and considering theirs.

Be an Historian

Which of the two theories about Harold's trip do you find more convincing and why? (Write your answers in a separate paper).

Note for Parents and Teachers:

This section introduces your children to **historical thinking**. Many kids assume history is just a list of settled facts. Seeing real historians debate what an old phrase like "came home" meant helps children learn how to weigh evidence, question assumptions, and disagree respectfully.

- **For younger children:** Read the "Two Interpretations" section together and turn it into a quick discussion. You can also look at a map of England together to trace the route from Stamford Bridge to London and Hastings.
- **For older children:** Encourage them to back up their opinion in "Be an Historian" using at least one piece of evidence from the text.

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Writing

Adjust your writing

Anselm adjusted his words for different audiences. You probably do something similar in your own life without even realizing it! For example, you might warn a friend, “Watch out for the slide at the park! There’s a crack that can scrape your butt.”

You wouldn't say that to your mayor, though! How would you rephrase that warning in a letter to the mayor?

If you like, create other similar scenarios with two different recipients of your letters. For example...

Write to a friend complaining that your favorite series of books is not in the public library, then re-write the same note to the librarian.

Write a note to a friend or sibling explaining why your family should adopt a dog or cat, then write the same note to your parents.

Metaphors and Similes

Anselm loved using animal comparisons to explain how he felt. He compared himself as archbishop and William as king to an old sheep and an untamed bull yoked together to a plow. He also compared himself to an owl - in the monastery, he sat happily with its dear owlets, while when he was away he felt like he was attacked by scary crows.

In grammar, these comparisons can be called **metaphors** or **similes**.

A **metaphor** is a direct comparison (it says one thing *is* another). When Anselm told the bishops, “You are yoking an untamed bull to a weak old sheep!” he used a metaphor.

A **simile** compares two things using the words **“like”** or **“as.”** If Anselm had said, “The king is **like** an untamed bull and I am **like** a weak old sheep,” that would be a simile.

Your turn!

Can you create your own animal metaphor or simile? Here are two examples to get you started:

Metaphor: “When I perform in front of people, I am a tiny mouse in a room full of cats.”

Simile: “Cleaning a messy room with a lazy brother is like having a busy beaver build a dam with a sleepy sloth!”

Note for Parents and Teachers:

- **For younger children:** Don't worry about the grammar terms yet. Simply ask your child, "If you were an animal right now, which one would you be and why?" Let them answer out loud or draw a quick picture of their animal comparison instead of writing full sentences.
- **For older children:** Challenge them to write both a metaphor and a simile about the same situation, and underline the clue word (*like* or *as*) in their simile.

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CHAPTER FOUR
First Trip to Rome

What do you remember?

Why did Anselm and Eadmer have to wait at Dover before leaving England?

What did King William's clerk do before Anselm was allowed to depart, and why do you think the king ordered it?

What dangers did Anselm face while traveling by land toward Rome?

Why did Anselm stay in Lyons for eighteen months?

Why did Anselm ask Pope Urban to release him from his duties as archbishop?

How did the pope respond?

How did Anselm help the people of Liberi when they needed water?

What question was Anselm trying to answer in his book *Cur Deus Homo*?

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Why did Anselm reject the idea that Jesus died to pay a debt to the devil?

Why did Anselm believe that Jesus had to be both fully God and fully human

---

How did Anselm's kindness and teaching affect some of the Muslim soldiers at the siege of Capua?

Something to think about

Archbishop Hugh and Anselm believed the church should choose its own leaders, while King William wanted control.

It is easy for us to understand Anselm's side. It would be strange for us to have a head of state or a mayor decide who should be the pastor of our church. But in the Middle Ages, bishops didn't just preach and teach – they also ruled over portions of the king's land. And the pope in Italy ruled over a large territory and had a lot of influence all over Europe. If a pope excommunicated a king, for example, this could encourage the people to rebel! So, most medieval kings wanted to make sure that the bishops in their countries were loyal to them.

Can you think of some practical problems this situation could cause?

Divide your class into two groups: one group can represent the king and nobles and the other the pope and bishops. Discuss how to work together.

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A Little Latin

The title of Anselm's book, *Cur Deus Homo*, literally means "Why God Man" (or, "Why the God-Man")

- In Latin, *Deus* means God.
- In Latin, *Homo* means man or human being (the specific word for a male human being is "vir").

Even though people don't speak Latin as an everyday language anymore, hundreds of modern words borrow pieces from Latin. For example, you may have heard people say *Adios* in Spanish or *Adieu* in French. Both words, translated as "Goodbye," literally mean "To God" (as in, "I commend you to God.")

In English, we find the word *homo* at the root of words such as human, humane, or homicide. Look them up in a dictionary.

Note for Parents and Teachers:

- **Watch out for a common Latin trap!** Not all English words starting with *homo-* come from the Latin *homo* (human). Some, like homogeneous, come from a completely different **Greek** word (*homos*), meaning "same."

Writing

Anselm wrote *Cur Deus Homo* as a dialogue between himself and a monk named Boso. Write a short conversation in which one character asks questions and the other explains an idea.

Step 1: Pick Your Two Characters

- You and a friend, or a character from a book or movie you like.
- A curious kid and a wise grandparent
- You and your pet
- (Your own combination)

Step 2: Pick a Topic to Explain

- Why your family keeps a certain rule.
- Why we go to church on Sunday.
- (Your own topic).

Step 3: Write Your Script

Write each character's name on the left side, followed by a colon, like a play script!

Step 4: Act It Out

Find someone to read the script with you in front of your class or family, each picking a part.

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Science

How Does Water Hide Underground?

While Anselm was staying in the mountain village of Liberi, the local people asked him to pray for them as they dug for water. It seemed like an impossible job because the ground was dry, hard, and rocky. Anselm prayed and encouraged them not to give up, until at last, they struck water.

Even when the ground looks totally dry on top, rainwater and melted snow can soak down through tiny cracks in the soil and then collect deep underground. The spot where the water pools underground is called **water table**.

Today, we have machines to dig the ground and pump the water out, but in the past people had to dig with a shovel – which is hard to do when the ground is hard and rocky. Besides, in dry mountain areas like Liberi, the water table can sit very deep underground, so workers might dig for days without seeing a single drop.

When water is found, it naturally seeps out of the tiny and pools at the bottom of the well, where it can be brought up with a bucket.

Have you ever been to the beach, dug a deep hole in the dry sand, and suddenly watched water puddle at the bottom? That means you dug a well!

Even though the sand on top looks dry and warm, ocean water is soaking underneath the beach through the tiny spaces between the grains of sand. The spot where the sand gets completely soaked is the water table.

Bible Connection: Digging Wells in Dry Lands

Just like the people in Liberi needed water to survive, people in the Bible spent a lot of time digging wells in dry, rocky places. In **Genesis 26**, Abraham's son **Isaac** and his servants dug wells in a dry valley. Twice, angry neighbors argued with them and claimed the water for themselves. Instead of fighting back, Isaac patiently moved on and dug another well, until he could enjoy his supply of water in peace.

Now that you know how difficult it is to dig a well, do you find a new appreciation for Isaac's story?

Think of other stories with wells in the Bible.



Left photo: An ancient well in Lebanon. Some wells were so deep that they had to build stairs to allow people to reach the water.
Photo by Ibrahimamirnaeem, Wikimedia Commons

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CHAPTER FIVE
New King, Old Troubles

What do you remember?

How did King William II die, and why were some people suspicious about his death?

_____

How did Anselm respond when he learned that King William had died?

_____

Why did Henry invite Anselm to return to England?

_____

Why did Henry encourage Anselm to travel to Rome and speak with the pope?

_____

Why did Matilda, Countess of Canossa, support Anselm?

_____

What did King Henry threaten to do if Anselm returned to England without accepting the king's conditions?

_____

How did Countess Adela help prevent Henry from being excommunicated?

_____

What agreement did Henry and Anselm reach after their meeting?

_____

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Some Key Players in the Story

Matilde of Canossa was one of the strongest and most important rulers in Italy—and a loyal friend who helped Anselm when he was in exile.

She would have much preferred to leave everything behind and retire to a quiet monastery to pray and read in peace. Just like Anselm (who wished he could stay peacefully in his own monastery instead of becoming Archbishop), Matilde realized that she had an important job to do, and stood up for what she believed was right.

Bible Connection

Think of Queen Esther in the Bible. Like Matilde, Esther might have preferred a quiet, safe life, but she stepped up with courage because she was placed in a position of power "for such a time as this." (Esther 4:14)

Can you think of times when you did your duty even when you would have preferred to do something else? Describe it here.

_____

_____

Adela the Peacemaker

King Henry I and Archbishop Anselm were locked in a bitter argument. This is when **Countess Adela** (King Henry's sister and Anselm's good friend) stepped in to help. Because both men trusted her, Adela she them together to talk calmly. Her wise **mediation** (helping two arguing sides talk and find peace) led to a **compromise** (an agreement where each side gives a little to solve a problem):

- **King Henry** agreed to return the church property he had taken.
- **Anselm** agreed not to excommunicate the king from the Church.

What Can We Learn from Adela?

1. **A good peacemaker listens to both sides.** Adela cared about both her brother and her friend.
2. **Finding a middle ground.** Adela showed that finding a fair middle ground stops big damage before it happens.
3. **Trust matters.** Because Adela was known as honest and kind, both Henry and Anselm were willing to listen to her.
4. **There are good and bad compromises**. Adela did not ask Anselm to compromise on his faith – only on practical matters.

Bible Connection

Do you remember the story of **Abigail** in 1 Samuel 25, when she stepped between King David and her husband Nabal to prevent a terrible fight? If not, read it again. How was she a peacemaker?

_____

_____

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Create Your Special Logo

Matilda signed her documents (in Latin): *Matilda, Dei Gra[tia] Si Quid Est*, meaning "Matilda, who, if she is anything, it is by God's grace." (She apparently abbreviated the word "gratia," just like we abbreviate words in some of our messages). The SS under the logo is short for the Latin *SubScripsi*, used to say, "I signed below" (Scripsi = I wrote. Sub = under). (See page 48 in your book)

She placed her signature around the sketch of a cross to create what we would call a logo.

MA DA	TIL DEI
GRA QUID	SI EST

Your Turn!

Draw a cross, a star, a heart, or any symbol you like in the space below.

Choose a good message. Notice that Matilda did not say, "Matilda the greatest" or "the best." Even though she was a powerful ruler, she wrote a humble message, reminding herself and others that all we have is a gift of God's grace. Try to keep the same attitude in your logo. Abbreviate words if you can. For example, if your name is Hannah and you are good at science, you could write, "Hannah, gr8ful 4 science." Or, "Hannah, Xploring God's world." Be creative!

A Little Latin

Some of you may recognize the Latin word *gratia* in Matilda's signature from the Reformers' slogan, *Sola Gratia* ("by grace alone"). You might also recognize a form of the word *Dei* in the title of Anselm's famous book, *Cur Deus Homo* ("Why the God Man"), and in another Reformers' slogan, *Soli Deo Gloria* ("Glory to God alone").

Do you know why the Latin word for "God" changes from *Deus* to *Dei* to *Deo*? In English, we add little helper words like "of" or "to" (called prepositions) in front of a noun. In Latin, the ending of the word changes instead.

- ***Deus*** = God *(Cur Deus Homo = "*Why the God Man*")*
- ***Dei*** = of God *(Matilda, Dei gratia si quid est = "*Matilda, if she is anything, [it is] by the grace of God*")*
- ***Deo*** **=** to God (*Soli Deo Gloria* = "To God alone glory")

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CHAPTER SIX
Last Peaceful Years

What do you remember?

How did the people at Dover welcome Anselm when he returned?

_____

What health problems did Anselm have during his last years?

_____

What did Anselm ask Eadmer to do with his notes?

_____

What did Eadmer do instead?

_____

Why did Eadmer later confess what he had done?

_____

What did Anselm call Eadmer that showed how much he valued their friendship?

_____

How does faith and reason go well together?

_____

_____

Why are Anselm's teachings still important to us?

_____

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Something to think about

Anselm was not the only one to offer an explanation of why God had to become Man. Many people thought that, after Adam's sin, the devil had become owner of everyone's soul, so Jesus had to die to take these souls back from the devil. (See page 42). Why did Anselm this this was a bad answer?

Other people said that Jesus came to understand us better and to give us an example of God's love. While Jesus has certainly left us an example of God's love, do you think this can be the only reason? Why or why not? Based on what Anselm wrote, how do you think he would answer?

Eadmer obeyed Anselm only in part by destroying the manuscript Anselm saw, but only after copying it somewhere else so he could keep the second copy. Would you call this obedience? Why or why not?

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Art Appreciation

Knowing that he had not been completely honest with Anselm, Eadmer included the story of his partial obedience in his biography of Anselm, asking his readers to pray for him. The illustrator of your book chose to show Eadmer's troubled conscience by placing Eadmer and Anselm in front of the fire where the original manuscript was burned. Instead of looking at the fire, Eadmer looks at Anselm with a guilty expression.

- **Look closely at the picture:** What details in Eadmer's face, eyes, or posture show that he feels guilty?
- **Think about the story:** What do you think Eadmer is thinking at this moment? Do you think the artist captured his feelings well?

Now look at the other illustrations in the book. Which ones show emotions most vividly? Choose one or two of them and explain how.

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Did You Know? (pages 58-61)

Book History

Compare wax tablets, papyrus scrolls, parchment books, and paper. Why do you think wax tablets were discontinued, and why were bound parchment books easier to use than scrolls? (Older students can research when each of these mediums was adopted and when the first three were discontinued.)

Art

Medieval scribes loved to decorate the the books they copied by hand. These decorated books are called **illuminated manuscripts**, from the Latin word *illuminare*, which means "to light up." Scribes often used real gold leaf on the page so the letters would literally shimmer in the candlelight.

In most manuscripts, the very first letter of a chapter was drawn large and decorated with fancy patterns. Sometimes scribes even tucked a small scene inside the letter itself, like the monks singing in the picture on the left (Photo courtesy of J. Paul Getty Museum, www.picryl.com).



Create your own illuminated page.

- Choose a sentence from a book you like, the Bible, or a quote from Anselm.
- Draw a large first letter in the top-left corner of your page.
- Decorate your big letter with patterns and swirls, or draw a tiny scene from the quote you chose.
- Copy the rest of your sentence following the big letter. Add winding vines, leaves, flowers, or little animals in the margins, just like the medieval scribes did.
- Light it up! Use a yellow-colored pencil or crayon, or a metallic marker to make your page shine.

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