

# The Gutenberg's Printing Press:

Breaking The Unbreakable Barrier of Literacy

Ryan Kwon

Senior Division

Individual Website

Process Paper: 499 words

## Process Paper

Without refutation, the creation of the printing press is still considered as one of the most important inventions in the history of human civilization. I learned that this particular invention broke the language barrier, Latin, that prevailed in the society at the time as texts were only available in that prestigious language. Further research led me to believe that the printing press gave an opportunity for the illiterate to learn and utilize Latin and other languages verbally and in writing.

I began my research on the printing press and its relation to the literary culture during the modern European society. First, I wanted to understand the history behind Gutenberg's printing press and its development process by using the following keywords: "printing press," "Gutenberg," "Latin," and "literacy during early modern Europe." From different primary sources, I found that the early versions of the printing press originated in Eastern Asia and were transported to Germany, where it was improved by Johannes Gutenberg. I then returned to the topic of Latin being the barrier in early modern Europe and found more sources. Although there was a substantial amount of general information on Gutenberg's printing press and its well-known influences, finding reliable information that pinpoints on Latin being the language barrier took extra effort.

In the process of researching Gutenberg's printing press, I discovered that the Gutenberg Museum in Germany has had a close relationship with the Cheongju Early Printing Museum. Additionally, I was fortunate enough to have interviewed Dr. Cornelia Schneider at the Gutenberg Museum, Professor Tamara C. Ho from UC Riverside, Professor Eunjae Park from Hallym University, Dr. Eve Houghton from Yale and Dr. Václav Ondráček from Knihtiskárna History Museum for their interpretation and opinion on Gutenberg's impact on the literary culture of Early Modern Europe. With their insightful responses, I was

able to further improve my research.

The website format was a perfect way to present my shrewd research on Gutenberg's printing press and its impacts for several reasons. Firstly, in today's digital world, websites are the easiest and the most convenient way to learn and absorb information. It can be easily done on computers, smartphones, or tablets. Accessibility of information is crucial in delivery. Secondly, websites allow readers to learn about the topic in detail. Lastly, websites visually separate information and clearly present my research.

I believe that Gutenberg's printing press is a great topic for the current NHD theme of "Breaking Barriers in History" since it broke the very basic factor that forms a society: language. This language barrier created an unfair hierarchy, class system, and disparity in education level and job opportunities that followed. With the printing press technology that spread throughout the European continent, the language barrier was no longer a barrier for the people in lower classes, and it allowed more opportunities for them to improve the quality of their life. I strongly believe that, with the invention of the printing press, the world was able to accelerate towards the more literate and civilized society.