

# Homeschool Unit Study:

## Johannes Gutenberg and the Printing Press

**Grade Level:** Upper elementary–middle school (4th–7th)

**Subject Areas:** History, Reading, Writing, Technology, Religion/Culture

**Length:** 5–7 lessons (30–45 minutes each)

---

### UNIT OVERVIEW

In this unit, students will learn:

- What life was like before books were printed
  - Who Johannes Gutenberg was
  - How the printing press worked
  - Why printing the Bible changed religion
  - How printing affected education, science, and society
  - Why Gutenberg still matters today
- 

### Lesson 1 – Life Before the Printing Press

**Based on:** Page 1

pasted

#### Objectives

- Understand how books were made before printing
- Learn why books were rare and expensive
- Discuss how people learned without reading

#### Reading (5–10 min)

Read or summarize Page 1 aloud.

#### Discussion Questions

- Why did books take so long to make?
- Who was allowed to own books?
- How did people learn if they couldn't read?

### **Activity (Hands-on)**

#### **Copy Like a Monk**

- Have the student copy **one short paragraph by hand**
- Time how long it takes
- Discuss how long a whole book would take

#### **Writing Prompt**

Imagine you lived before the printing press. How would you learn new things?

---

## **Lesson 2 – Who Was Johannes Gutenberg?**

**Based on:** Page 2

pasted

#### **Objectives**

- Learn about Gutenberg's life
- Understand how his skills helped his invention

#### **Reading**

Read Page 2.

#### **Discussion Questions**

- What was Gutenberg's job?
- Why were metal skills important?
- Did Gutenberg become rich?

#### **Activity**

##### **Inventor Thinking**

- Ask: *What problem did Gutenberg see?*

- Have student draw or write their own invention idea
- 

### **Lesson 3 – How the Printing Press Worked**

**Based on:** Page 3

pasted

#### **Objectives**

- Understand movable type
- Learn how printing made many copies

#### **Reading**

Read Page 3.

#### **Visual Learning**

Use your **plate of movable letters illustration** and **press illustration**.

#### **Activity (Hands-on)**

##### **Movable Type Simulation**

- Write letters on small paper squares
- Rearrange them to spell words
- Compare to handwriting the same sentence

#### **Vocabulary**

- Movable type
  - Ink
  - Printing press
- 

### **Lesson 4 – The Gutenberg Bible**

**Based on:** Page 4

pasted

#### **Objectives**

- Learn why the Bible was important
- Understand why it was printed in Latin

### **Reading**

Read Page 4.

### **Discussion Questions**

- Why print the Bible first?
- Why did it look handwritten?
- Who could read it?

### **Activity**

#### **Bible Page Study**

- Use your close-up Gutenberg Bible page
  - Identify:
    - Big decorated letter
    - Two columns of text
    - Ink color
- 

## **Lesson 5 – Printing Spreads Across Europe**

**Based on:** Page 5

pasted

### **Objectives**

- Learn how ideas spread faster
- Understand literacy growth

### **Map Activity**

- Mark Germany
- Draw arrows to other countries
- Label “Books Travel”

## Writing Prompt

How would your life change if books suddenly became cheap?

---

## Lesson 6 – Religion, Learning, and Society

**Based on:** Pages 6–7

pasted

### Objectives

- Understand religious change
- Learn how printing helped schools and science

### Discussion

- Why did reading the Bible matter?
- How did books help students?
- Why was sharing ideas important?

### Activity

#### Compare & Contrast

##### Before Printing    After Printing

Few books      Many books

Few readers    More readers

---

## Lesson 7 – Gutenberg’s Legacy

**Based on:** Page 8

pasted

### Objectives

- Connect past to present
- Understand why Gutenberg still matters

## Discussion

- How are books like the internet?
- What inventions today spread ideas?

## Final Project (Choose One)

- Create a **mini book** (1 page per lesson)
  - Draw and label a **printing press**
  - Write a **thank-you letter to Gutenberg**
  - Oral presentation: *Why printing changed the world*
- 

## Assessment (Flexible)

- Oral discussion
  - Written responses
  - Final project
  - Vocabulary check
- 

## Optional Extensions

- Compare printing press to computers
- Visit an online museum
- Practice calligraphy
- Add Bible history integration
- Create timeline from 1400 → today

## Answer Keys

### Johannes Gutenberg & the Printing Press

---

#### **Worksheet 1: Life Before the Printing Press**

#### Reading Check

1. **How were books made before the printing press?**  
✓ Books were copied by hand, word by word, by monks and scribes.
2. **Why were books rare and expensive?**  
✓ They took a very long time to make and required skilled workers.
3. **Who usually owned books?**  
✓ c) Churches and rich people

#### Think & Write

✓ Answers will vary.

Look for ideas like:

- Listening to teachers or priests
  - Learning by watching others
  - Memorizing stories
- 

#### **Worksheet 2: Who Was Johannes Gutenberg?**

#### Fill in the Blanks

1. Johannes Gutenberg was born around the year **1400**.
2. He worked as a **goldsmith**.
3. His invention helped make books **faster** (and cheaper).

#### Short Answer

### Why was Gutenberg's metalworking skill important?

✓ He needed metal skills to create movable type and printing tools.

### Draw & Label

✓ Check for:

- Gutenberg
  - Metal letters
  - Tools or press
- 

### Worksheet 3: How the Printing Press Worked

#### Vocabulary Match

- Movable type → **b. Individual metal letters**
- Ink → **a. Thick ink used for printing**
- Press → **c. Machine that presses paper**

#### Sequence (Correct Order)

1. Letters are placed in a frame
  2. Ink is added
  3. Paper is pressed onto the letters
  4. A printed page is made
- 

### Worksheet 4: The Gutenberg Bible

#### Multiple Choice

1. The Gutenberg Bible was printed in:  
✓ **Latin**
2. Why did it look handwritten?  
✓ **To look familiar**

#### Observation

✓ Students should circle:

- Big decorated letter
- Two columns of text
- Old parchment

(All are correct.)

---

### **Worksheet 5: Printing Spreads Across Europe**

#### **Short Answer**

**How did printing help people learn to read?**

✓ Books became cheaper and easier to get.

#### **Map Activity**

✓ Look for:

- Germany circled
- Arrows to other countries
- Phrase like “Books spread ideas”

#### **Writing**

✓ Answers will vary.

Accept ideas about:

- Sharing knowledge
  - Learning from others
  - Improving society
- 

### **Worksheet 6: Religion and Change**

#### **True or False**

1. People could read the Bible themselves after printing.

✓ True

2. Printing slowed the spread of ideas.

✓ **False**

3. Bibles were translated into new languages.

✓ **True**

### **Short Answer**

**How did printing change religion?**

✓ People could read the Bible themselves and ask questions.

---

### **Worksheet 7: Learning, Science, and Society**

#### **Compare & Contrast**

✓ Possible answers:

#### **Before Printing**

- Few books
- Few readers
- Slow learning

#### **After Printing**

- Many books
- More readers
- Faster learning

#### **Circle All That Apply**

Printing helped:

✓ Schools

✓ Science

✓ Governments

✗ Only rich people

---

### **Worksheet 8: Why Gutenberg Still Matters**

## Reflection

✓ Look for ideas like:

- Books are everywhere today
- Knowledge is shared faster
- Printing led to newspapers and the internet

## Creative Option

✓ Any one completed option is correct:

- Drawing
- Letter
- Timeline

---

## Teaching Tip

For homeschool use:

- Oral answers are acceptable
- Spelling and grammar flexibility is encouraged
- Focus on **understanding**, not perfection