



Page from the book *Astronomical Miscellany*, English

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Unknown Artist

English, early 1200s

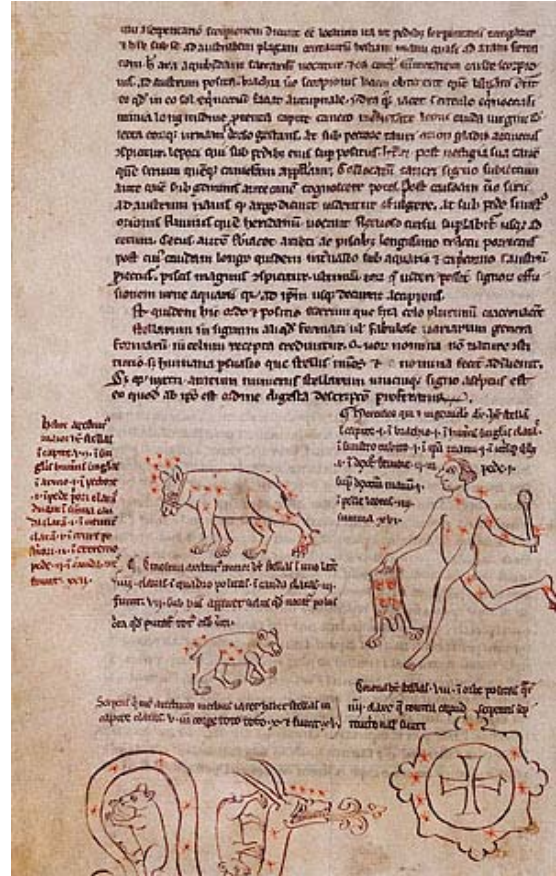
Black, green, and red inks on parchment

9 1/2 in. x 6 1/8 in.

Ms. Ludwig XII 5, fol. 149v

The basic course of learning in the Middle Ages was the study of the seven liberal arts: grammar, rhetoric, logic, arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy. A renewed interest in the natural world in the 1200s ensured a prominent place for astronomy in the growing universities of Europe. This page comes from a collection of scientific theories about the **constellations** and other scholarly texts that were probably compiled as a textbook. The constellations and signs of the zodiac were rendered in a pen-and-ink technique that lends liveliness to the depiction of the positions of the stars in the sky.

On this page can be seen a number of constellations such as **Ursa Major** (The Great Bear), Ursa Minor (The Minor Bear), Hercules (holding a club and lion skin), and Draco (The Dragon).



Other Background Information for Lesson *Constellation Companions*

The Story of Ursa Major

Calypso was a nymph and a friend of Artemis, the Greek goddess of the hunt. Artemis and Calypso spent lots of time together in the forest hunting and having adventures. When Zeus, the king of all the gods, happened to see Calypso he fell in love with her. He appeared before her and told her that he loved her, and she fell in love as well and became his girlfriend. The trouble was that Hera, the queen of all the gods and Zeus's wife, had a very bad temper. Zeus disguised Calypso as a bear so that Hera would not find her.

One day when Artemis was out hunting, she saw a beautiful she-bear and shot it with her bow and arrow. She did not realize that it was her friend Calypso! Zeus arrived in the nick of time and took the wounded bear up to the heavens to keep her safe. That is why when you look up at the northern sky at night, you can see the bright stars of Ursa Major, or the big bear, twinkling down.

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Questions for Teaching

What do you see on this page?

Do any of the images on this page look familiar?

What other kinds of books with illustrations and short descriptions have you used before? What was the purpose of the book?

What are possible purposes for these illustrations?

How do constellations play a role in society today?

Astronomy and astrology were one in the same at the time that this book was made. How do we view the two disciplines today?

