

Race of the Printing Press

Mission: Johannes Gutenberg claims his new printing press with movable type will change the world. Race scribes against the press, compare the costs, and figure out how cheap books spread new ideas across Europe.

Big question: How did the printing press change the spread of ideas in Europe?

★ Warm-up: Copy challenge

Imagine copying a whole book by hand.

How long to copy one page neatly? ✓ **Maybe an hour or more.**

How long for a 200-page book? ✓ **Weeks or months.**

Key vocabulary

Movable type	Individual metal letters that can be rearranged and reused.
Scribe	A person who copies books by hand.
Literacy	The ability to read and write.
Reformation	A 1500s movement that challenged the Catholic Church and split Western Christianity.

1 Box 1

Run the race

In the simulator: Run a race of at least 100 days.

What did you notice?

2 Box 2

Record

Record the results of your race.

Shop	Books finished
Scribes	from simulator
Printing press	from simulator

How many times more?

How many times more books did the press make? (Press books ÷ scribe books, rounded.)

Answer: _____ ✓ **varies: check the student's simulator readout**

Show your thinking:

3 Box 3

Cost per book

Look at the cost per book readout. What happened to the price of books?

☐ Printed books cost much less than hand-copied books ☐ Printed books cost more ☐ They cost the same

✓ **Printed books cost much less than hand-copied books**

4 Box 4

Effects

Put this chain of effects in order.

Put in order: Books become faster and cheaper to make · More people can afford books and learn to read · New ideas spread quickly across Europe · The printing press is invented

1. **The printing press is invented**
2. **Books become faster and cheaper to make**
3. **More people can afford books and learn to read**
4. **New ideas spread quickly across Europe**

5 Box 5

World-changing invention?

Was the printing press the most important invention of its time? Use numbers from your race.

Claim

Look for: at least 8 words

Evidence (numbers)

Look for: a number from the simulator; at least 12 words

Reasoning

Look for: Explains the effect on ideas; at least 14 words

6 Box 6

Legend: Luther's pamphlets Legend only

In 1517, Martin Luther's ideas were printed and spread across Germany within weeks. Explain how this could not have happened with scribes.

Look for: a number from the simulator; at least 25 words



Exit ticket: answer the big question in your own words

How did the printing press change the spread of ideas in Europe?

Look for: Gutenberg's printing press (about 1450) could produce books hundreds of times faster and far more cheaply than scribes copying by hand. Cheaper books meant more people learned to read, and new ideas of the Renaissance and Reformation spread quickly across Europe.



Completion codes

Students see a code like **ABC-13** when they finish. The first part must match below. The letter is the level (E = Explorer, I = Investigator, L = Legend), and the number at the end is how many stars they earned.

Level	Code starts with
 Explorer	1HX-E
 Investigator	1NV-I
 Legend	11U-L

! Watch for these misconceptions

- "The Middle Ages were a time when nothing happened." Universities, cathedrals, and legal ideas like the Magna Carta developed.
- "The Magna Carta gave rights to everyone." At first it mostly protected nobles.
- "The Renaissance happened everywhere at once." It started in Italy and spread over centuries.