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Treasures and Secrets of Writing

Manuscripts from the National Library of France, from the Middle Ages to the Present

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Many works at the National Library of France show how manuscripts served as both material support and historical witnesses to the evolution of the French language.

Drawing on approximately 100 pieces, the reader is invited on a journey through ink, quill, paper, and parchment that highlights the various roles manuscripts have played over the centuries: vehicles of thought and knowledge; bearers of the first texts in French; objects of prestige; precious and fragile testimonies of creativity; and spaces for intimate expression. Considering manuscripts today, in their materiality and uniqueness, allows us to rediscover the meaning, value, and singularity of the act of writing.