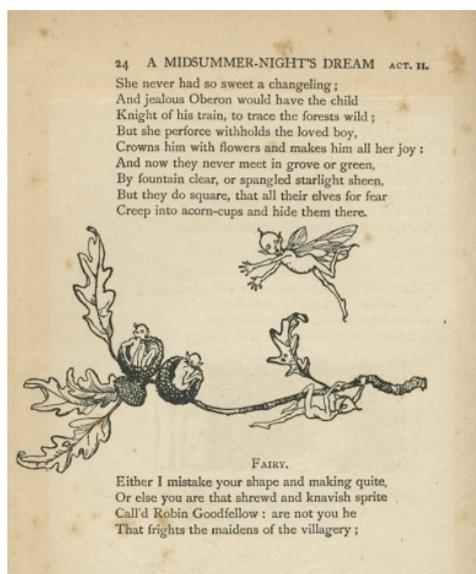


# Tutorial: Aged Documents

## *By Remittance Girl*



This tutorial is a brief explanation of how to make documents that look old, dirty and worn – we're talking pre-20<sup>th</sup> Century here. Newer documents age differently.

### Introduction

In order to really make a document look old, it's important to think about the way documents - especially old books - get used and abused.

- First and most obvious, it's the first and last group of pages that get the most use.
- Secondly, people lick their thumbs and turn pages, so the greatest wear is going to be at the top-right hand corner of the document.
- Thirdly, people put their fingers around, but not on, images, and leave oil and dirt behind. They often used to write little notes to themselves in the margins. This is called marginalia.
- Paper was expensive and hard to come by, so people very often re-used pieces of paper, or wrote on the back.
- Very often, the first couple of pages of old books get torn and ruined, and have been mended or patched in places.
- Dust and grime enters the pages of books around the open edges. So it's normal for three sides to be grungy at the edges, and one side – the binding edge – to be quite clean.
- Older paper is often textured – ribbed or woven – and this is most visible where the pages are dirtiest.
- Moisture usually stains inwards from the open edges of the book, not the binding edge. But damp stresses books from the inside out, so that pages take on a rippled look.
- Ink leaches through. Over time, the inked side of the page is ghosted on the opposite side.

### Starting Off

The first thing to do is to decide how bad, how worn and wrecked, you want your document to look. If you want to place something readable on the document, you might consider backing off and using only mildly distressed bases. But if you want it to look really bad, then go for a source image that is really distressed.

## Finding blank pages.

The first thing to do is find a blank, old page that has approximately the right level of distress. You can do this by visiting scanned book archives, and choose the page after the title, or one of the pages just before the back cover.

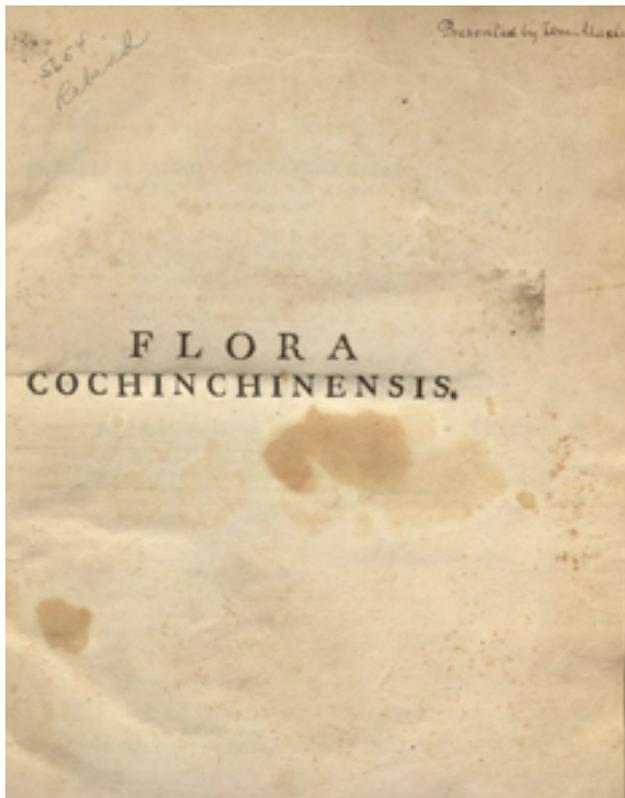
- the <http://www.archive.org/details/texts>
- <http://www.fromoldbooks.org/>
- <http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>
- <http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/ttp/ttpbooks.html>
- <http://www.oldfineart.com/>
- <http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/collections/>

Or you can download my photoshop brushes for aging documents <http://remittancegirl.deviantart.com/art/Make-it-Old-Vol-1-94379890>

If you have trouble finding completely blank pages, don't despair. Find a page with very little on it, and, in Photoshop, use the clone stamp tool with a large, soft-edged brush shape, to get rid of the little bits of text you don't want.

It's important to find the largest images of pages possible, because it gives you more to work with. You can always make an image smaller, but adding pixel degrades the sharpness of your grungy image, and not in a good way. A lot of archives digitizing old books use JP2 format for their large versions. If you are using Photoshop, you will need a plugin to import JP2 images. You can get it for free at <http://www.fnordware.com/j2k/>

## Making use of your images



Here's my original image. I got this from the online biodiversity library. I downloaded a jp2 version of the page, so it was really big and easy to mess with.



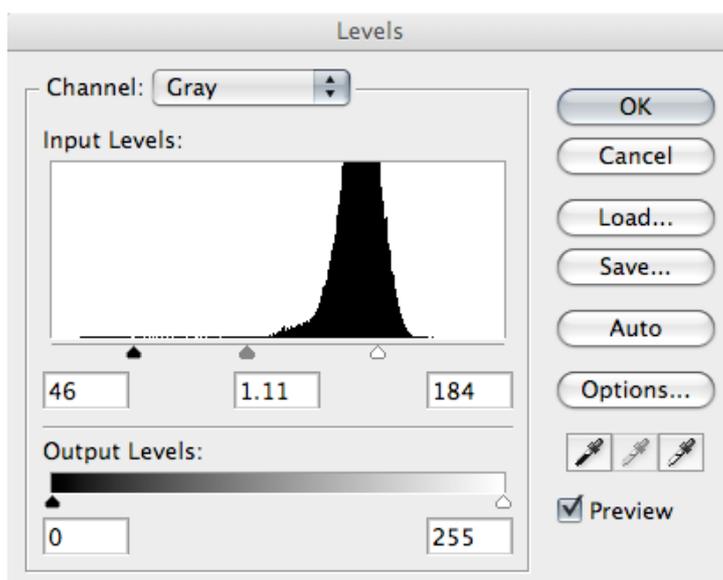
Here's the page without the text I don't want on it. I did this by picking clear areas with my lasso, feathering the edge and laying it on top. For the small text at the top, I used the clone tool.



Now I've turned the page to greyscale, and played around with the **levels** tool. Command or CTRL + L

You want to squeeze the extremes of the dark and the light to the middle.

You could probably do a similar thing with using the **image>adjustments>brightness/contrast**, but I find that **levels** gives me more control.

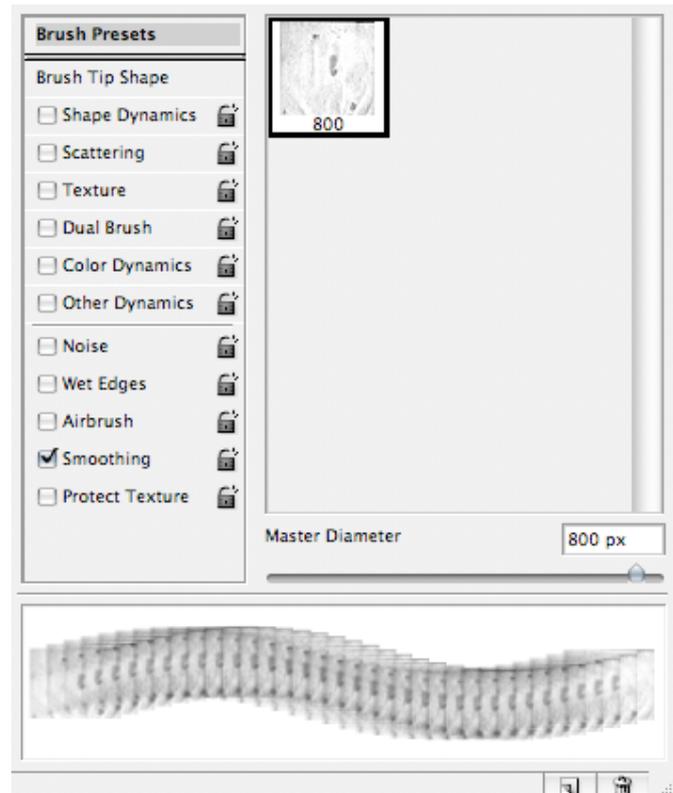


I've squeezed the white and black arrows towards the middle. Just play around with this until you get a really nice contrast and the nasty bits on the page really show.

Since I want this for the web, I've rotated the canvas, to turn the page sideways, and made a brush of the image, so I'll always have it to use, it's transparent, so it will take whatever colour it lies on top of, and I can control the "dirty"ness" by adjusting the transparency of the layer.

Now you can find good individual little bits of smut or stains and add them on top of each other on different layers, building up a nice, convincing symphony of smut!

You can also add little flourishes or printer's marks you find on the flyleaf of books to really make it look old.



### **A note on colours**

Old pages don't actually go "sepia", they actually go a more gold shade, a bit like weak tea. (In fact, forgers used to use tea as an aging device because it gives paper a really convincing old look).

Whatever colours you decide to use, make sure you pull the saturation way, way down. It might have started off as a beautiful, vibrantly coloured illustration, but a century of wear and tear dulls the colours.

### **A note on fonts**

When using fonts, don't go for the ones that "look" oldy-worldy. Unless you are after a hand-made, illuminated manuscript, stay away from the blackletter or the very fancy scripts. The first fonts ever invented were Italian, German and French. Choose fonts like Jansen, Bembo or Garamond. These are digital copies of those very early fonts and will marry well with your recently aged work!



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