

White in the Book of Kells is typically used for faces, hands, and the heads of animals, such as lions and snakes. It is also used to moderate colours, for example the lightening of blues and greens.

The analyses of manuscripts made in contemporary **Anglo-Saxon England** have shown that the white used was typically **lead white**, or in some instances **chalk white**.

In contrast, the Conservation team at Trinity discovered that the white pigment in the Book of Kells is calcium white derived from the mineral **gypsum**.

Ireland has substantial deposits of gypsum, which is used to create plaster and chalk today.



On the top of the canon table (*folio 5r*), the faces of the man (*Matthew*) and the eagle (*John*) are painted white. Their wings, which are drawn in extraordinary detail, feature a range of white patterns.

The faces of human figures and snakes interwoven underneath them are also painted white.

