

BrainPOP Related Reading - Semicolons



Believe it or not, we have a 650-year-old Italian printer to thank for the semicolon. His name was **Aldus Manutius the Elder**, he lived from 1450 to 1515, and he's considered one of the fathers of modern printing.

Besides being recognized by most printing historians as the first typographer to use the semicolon, Manutius (pictured) is also credited with the invention of italics! He was the founder of the famous **Aldine Press**, the printing office in Venice that published new editions of Greek classics, including the works of Plato and Aristotle.

Aldine Press also introduced the octavo size, a smaller book size that is similar to today's paperback format. It was all part of Manutius' two lifelong goals: to preserve Greek literature for the world, and to provide affordable and plentiful books for the masses.



Before the rise of printing in the 14th and 15th centuries, there wasn't really a standardized system of punctuation. Manutius' work went a long way toward filling that need. One of the best examples was in 1494, the same year Aldine Press was founded. In that year, Manutius published a short text titled *De Aetna*, written by Italian cardinal Pietro Bembo. Within its pages were the first semicolons in printing history! Manutius used these peculiar little punctuation marks to separate words with opposite meanings, and to distinguish between two related statements.